



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

JOHN

BIBLE COMPANION



GOSPEL

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the Gospel of John heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/John (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING...

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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LESSON 1

IN THE BEGINNING



Begin with prayer



Read **John 1:1-18**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to *John Introduction* and *John 1:1-18*

The Gospel of John is one of the easiest books to read, yet one of the most profound Gospels to understand. We might get the surface meaning easily enough, but to understand the deep truths, we need the Lord Jesus to be our teacher.

John the Apostle, one of Jesus' disciples and close friends, wrote this Gospel in the last ten years of his life, between 90 and 100 A.D.—more than 60 years after Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven. The other three Gospels were already written, each serving a unique audience and function.

Think of each Gospel as a section of a newspaper:

- The Gospel of Matthew provides the announcements and advertising. *"Behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*
- The Gospel of Mark carries the flashing headlines. *"Behold, My Servant!"*
- The Gospel of Luke records the songs connected with the birth of Jesus and stories like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.
- The Gospel of John reads like the editorial section, exploring the significance of all these things, teaching the deeper meanings. For instance, Jesus fed the 5,000 (something all four Gospels tell), but in John there follows Jesus' sermon on the Bread of Life.

Another interesting note—John tells Jesus’ story in chronological order. Look closely and you’ll see a ladder on which you can fit Jesus’ entire three-year ministry. (“The next day ... the next day ...,” like in John 1:29 and 35.) He also often tells us the city or area where the action took place.

John’s ultimate purpose in his Gospel is to explain that Jesus is God—and also fully man. He tells us of both His eternity and humanity—when Jesus was tired (John 4) and when He cried (John 11:36). Unlike the other Gospels that called Him “Christ,” John uses His human name, “Jesus.” Why? Because God became a man.

John 20:31 is the key to understanding the Gospel of John: “But these [things] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

The Gospel of John was written that we might “believe”—that word is used over 100 times just in this book. To believe in something is an act of the will. That looks like this: When you hear the facts of the gospel, you recognize that Jesus died for your sins according to the Scriptures, and you trust Him as your Savior who died to pay the penalty for your sins. That’s believing.

Now, let’s dive into this marvelous book at the beginning.

“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD”

The first couple verses of the Gospel of John sound like something from Genesis 1:1.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (1:1-2).

Look at four great, earth-shaking statements in these two verses:

1. ***“In the beginning was the Word ...”*** The beginning in Genesis goes back to the creation of the physical universe, a very long time ago. But even then, the beginning was already past tense (“in the beginning was the Word”). Go back a billion more years, put down your stakes, and out of eternity, the Lord Jesus will walk out to meet you. He’s already past tense! He did not begin. He was already there when the beginning was.

2. **“... And the Word was with God ...”** Jesus was separate and distinct from God the Father; He was “with God.” But if He’s with God, can He be God? The next phrase sets us straight.
3. **“... And the Word was God.”** One of the highest and most profound titles we can call God, the Son, is “The Word.” The name for Jehovah was such a holy word that it is never pronounced. But this name, “The Word,” gathers up everything that was said of Jesus in the Old Testament, and presents Him as God, “in the beginning.” This is a clear, emphatic declaration that the Lord Jesus Christ is God! In Greek, the sentence is arranged, *“God was the Word.”*

The first three statements in John’s Gospel tie the truth down: Jesus is God.

4. And who is this God, Jesus Christ?

- He’s the Creator. “All things were made through him ...” (v. 3).
- He’s life itself. “In Him was life ...” (v. 4)
- His life was the light of men. “... And the life was the light of men” (v. 4).

To illustrate that, we meet John the Baptist. John the Baptist bore witness to the light, but he was not the light. Light only comes through the Word of God. Without the Word of God, there’s no light, but we can walk in the light when we come to the Word of God.

Then John tells us the tragic news that though Jesus is the Creator of the world and took our humanity upon Himself, the world rejects Him. He came to His own world, and His own world wouldn’t receive Him.

But not everyone. There is good news. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (v. 12).

When you receive Jesus’ life by faith, you are given a new birth. Your new life doesn’t come through your own effort or by anything you do to earn it—even by learning the Bible. Your new life in Jesus comes through the direct action of the Spirit of God.

HERE’S MORE WONDERFUL NEWS ABOUT JESUS

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14).

“The Word became flesh.” Did you ever notice that John’s Gospel doesn’t mention Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem? It’s because the One he’s talking about is too big for Bethlehem. A little child was born in Bethlehem, but the Son walks out of eternity. He takes upon Himself our humanity. That’s the Christmas story in John’s Gospel.

“The Word ... dwelt among us.” The word “dwelt” means to “pitch a tent.” Our human bodies are just frail little tents in which we live. The Apostle Paul used the same image in 2 Corinthians 5:1,4. The God of Eternity came to this earth and pitched His tent here with us.

“And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Think about it—if God was made flesh, He certainly limited Himself. But John says Jesus was *full* of grace and truth. “Full” means you just can’t have any more. Jesus brought all the deity with Him in one person—full of grace and truth.

Though it’s true no one can see God the Father (v. 18), when you see His Son, you see His glory with your own eyes. When you look at Jesus, “the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,” you understand who God is.

- Jesus didn’t come from God’s head to reveal the wisdom of God.
- He didn’t come from God’s foot to be a servant of man.
- He came to serve God, to do “the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38).
- He came to serve His Father by revealing God’s heart.

Jesus Christ led God out in the open. The God of this universe, the Creator of everything, wrapped Himself in human flesh so that He could bring God the Father out into the open so that men can know Him.

My friend, the only way in the world you can know God is through this One, Jesus Christ! But to do that He had to become flesh. He had to become one of us in order for us to know Him. We could not go up there to understand Him; He had to come down here and bring God to where we are.

NEXT: We’ll meet the first disciples to follow Jesus.

LESSON 2

THE PEOPLE WHO FIRST POINT US TO JESUS



Begin with prayer



Read **John 1:19–2:11**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 1:19–50** and **John 1:51–2:11**

“Who are you?” That was the question the priests asked John the Baptist (1:19) who was ministering in the desert east of Jerusalem. *Are you Messiah?* they hoped.

Tempting as it may have been to make much of himself, John made it clear—*“I am not the Christ. You’re looking to the wrong man”* (1:20).

“Who are you then; are you Elijah?” *No.*

“Are you a prophet like Moses?” *No.*

“Tell us who you are”

He said, “I am ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness: “make straight the way of the LORD,”” as the prophet Isaiah said. –John 1:23

John the Baptist was the voice. Jesus Christ is the Word. John was willing to be no more than just a voice with a message, proclaiming someone greater: *“Get ready for the coming of the Lord.”*

John's words were "make straight"—meaning, get your life ready to meet God since we won't get very far with Him until we are willing to deal with the crooked things in our lives. When we do that, we can be open for fellowship with Him (see 1 John 1:6).

"Then why do you baptize?" the religious leaders asked.

John replied, *"I only use water. There's coming one after me, and He'll baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit"* (1:26, 33). (That baptism by fire—by judgment—is yet to come to the earth. The Holy Spirit's baptism took place at Pentecost.)

When John talked about "the one coming after me," He was referring to Jesus. *"I'm just His servant,"* he said. The rule of the day was that a disciple would do every task of a servant except tie his teacher's shoes. John says, *"I'm not qualified to be His disciple, I'm just a servant—but I'm not even worthy to tie His sandals"* (1:27).

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29).

John not only identifies Jesus as the Messiah, but He also calls Him the Savior. Jesus takes away the sin of the world. He's a perpetual Savior so that anyone can come to Him any time. He's God's Passover Lamb.

Jesus is the answer that Abraham gave his son Isaac back in Genesis. Remember when Abraham took Isaac up a mountain because God had commanded Abraham to sacrifice him (see Genesis 22)? Isaac said, *"Here's the altar and the wood, but where's the lamb?"* By faith, Abraham said, *"God will provide Himself a lamb."* Well, here is the Lamb! Since that day, all the lambs that had been slain on Jewish altars through the ages now find their fulfillment in Jesus.

The next day, when Jesus walked by John and his disciples, again John said, "Behold the Lamb of God" (1:36). Two of John's disciples heard John say this and began to follow Jesus down the road. Then Jesus turned and asked them, *"What are you looking for?"*

They said to Him, *"'Rabbi' (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), 'where are You staying?'"* (1:38). And Jesus might have smiled as He said, "Come and see." That's His invitation to you and me today, "Come and see." So the disciples spent the day talking with Jesus.

One of the disciples was Andrew, Peter's brother. The first thing Andrew did after meeting Jesus was to find Peter and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (1:41). Peter then came to meet Jesus, too. Peter was not yet the man we know he becomes, but even here at the beginning, the Lord sees him. He said to Peter, "*You'll be called, 'The Rock'*" (1:42).

The next day, Jesus went to Bethsaida in Galilee (Andrew and Peter's hometown). Philip, the other one of John's disciples who had met Jesus, found his friend, Nathanael, and told him, "*We have found the one who Moses and prophets wrote about—it's Jesus of Nazareth*" (1:45).

When Nathanael heard that, he made a wise crack. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip just said, "Come and see" (1:46).

And then they both saw Jesus coming towards them. And meeting Nathanael, Jesus said, "Here's an Israelite in whom there's no deceit!" (1:47).

"How do You know me?" Nathanael asked.

Then Jesus said, "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

"Rabbi," Nathanael said, "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

The Lord Jesus had two doubters who were His apostles. Nathanael at the beginning and Thomas at the end. Nathanael, once a doubter and skeptic, who asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" confesses immediately that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus answered and said to him, "*You believe because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree'? You will see greater things than these*" (1:50). In the three years that Nathanael walked with Jesus, he did see many greater things—but Jesus had another lesson in mind in this moment. Still thinking of old Jacob, Jesus tells Nathanael that he would see heaven open and God's angels going up and down.

What did Jesus mean?

This Old Testament story from Jacob's life took place when as a young man he had to leave home to escape his murderous brother, Esau. Jacob spent his first night on the run at Bethel, and there the Lord appeared to him in a dream. He saw a ladder coming down from heaven, with angels going up and down. For Jacob, this was a message that he was not lost to God. God would be with him.

Jesus picks that story up here and says that Jacob's ladder indeed represented Himself. The only way we can connect with God is through Jesus. (See John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.") Jesus is the ladder—but a ladder you don't have to climb. You can trust and rest upon and believe He is the way to God.

JESUS' FIRST MIRACLE

As Jesus invited His disciples to follow Him, He manifested His glory and His (new) disciples believed on Him. The first time He did this publicly, Jesus was at a wedding in Cana. The wonder of this miracle is to watch this One who is in the beginning with God, as God. This Jesus, Son of God, walks out of eternity and is made flesh, and He grows up for 30 years in nearby Nazareth of Galilee. Now He goes over the hill from His hometown to a family wedding (2:1), and there He shows His glory with a miracle. Let's look at it.

You'll recall that the first miracle Moses performed was to turn water into blood. Here Jesus turns water into wine. We're told it was "the third day," probably late February or early March in the year 27 A.D.

Now Jesus' mother had some kind of responsibility at this wedding, and she comes to Jesus with an unusual situation. "They have no wine," she tells him (2:3). What did she mean? Well, simply put, this was a very poor family and they just didn't have enough refreshments.

But she may have meant something else.

Some commentators have said this was Mary's gentle hint for Jesus and His disciples to leave. Others have said Mary hoped Jesus would teach something and distract the crowd from noticing the lack of wine. She might also have been implying that Jesus should perform a miracle. *This would be an appropriate occasion, Son.*

Remember that when the angel Gabriel appeared to her when she was a young virgin and told her she was the one who was to bring forth the Messiah, she was the first to raise the question about the virgin birth. "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And he made it very clear that "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:34-35).

Then Mary made a tremendous statement to the angel. She said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord” (Luke 1:38) and she yielded herself to Him. The moment she did, a cloud passed over her head. From that moment on, people raised questions about Jesus’ conception. She lived with the truth, but no one else fully knew. In light of that, what Mary could be saying here at the wedding is, *Here is Your opportunity to perform a miracle and demonstrate I was telling the truth when I said You were virgin born and that You are the One who I claimed You to be.*

But Jesus makes it very clear. *This is not the occasion. I’ll clear your name, but not here* (John 2:4).

In a few short years, when Jesus hung on the cross and Mary stood beneath it, He looked down and said to her, “Woman, behold your son” (John 19:26), and His hour had come. He would die and three days later, He came back from the dead. And when His disciples and followers were together in the Upper Room after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, Mary could look around and say to them, *“I told you He was the Son of God!”* (See also Romans 1:4.) Jesus’ resurrection proves who He is, and it proves His virgin birth—because He is who He claimed to be.

Back at the wedding, after Jesus’ objection, Mary tells the servants to do whatever asked (that’s good advice in any circumstance). Near to where they were standing were six stone water pots, the 30-gallon kind used in ceremonial cleansing. This was a poor family, and the pots were evidently beaten and battered, pushed aside so that none of the guests would see them. The Lord asks the servants to fill these water pots with water up to the brim. Then He tells them to draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. And they did.

When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!” –John 2:9-10

And here is something wonderful—Jesus took the empty water pots and had them filled with water. Then they ladled out the water. The miracle took place when they took the water and served wine to the guests.

Do you see the great spiritual lesson here for us? We're just beat up old water pots that ought to be pushed aside and covered up. But the Lord wants to fill us with water. What is water, in this case? The water is the Word of God! He wants to fill you with the water of the Word of God, and then you can ladle it out to others. Inexplicably, when that water leaves the water pot and gets to those for whom He intends, the water becomes the wine of joy. That joy is the work of the Holy Spirit. And we're told, "And do not be drunk with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit takes that water and performs a miracle in the life of His child.

To each of us who want to do great things for God, remember that you're nothing but a beat up water pot whom God wants to fill with the Word of God! What you need is the wine of joy in your life, and nothing but the Word of God can bring that to you.

**NEXT: We'll visit with an important religious leader
who came to Jesus with a question.**

LESSON 3

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN AGAIN?



Begin with prayer



Read **John 2:12–3:36**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 2:12–3:4** and **John 3:5-36**

In our last study, we witnessed Jesus' first public miracle, turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana. After that, Jesus went down to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, where He later moved His home base.

When it was time to celebrate “the Jew’s Passover,” Jesus went down to Jerusalem as it was required for all men three times a year—to celebrate Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. This holiday is just a religious feast now that the One of whom it speaks has come, Jesus Christ our Passover.

The first thing Jesus does in Jerusalem is go to the temple. What He sees there makes Him furious. People looking to make a profit from religious rituals had filled the courtyard with oxen, sheep, and doves. Even worse, money changers were taking advantage of the people who came to worship. Only temple money was able to be used in offerings, so they exchanged Roman coinage with Jewish coins—at a high price. They were there for the convenience of the worshippers, they said, but they made religion cheap. The whole scene smelled like a religious racket. It was an opportunity, also, to make religion very easy. Even today, we do the same—we make our churches comfortable and convenient. You have to wonder if this is one reason why people think of Jesus as an anemic, weak Savior. They don't realize who He is.

Jesus walks into the temple and the dishonesty and merchandizing enrages Him with zeal. (See John 2:15-17.)

When the religious leaders ask Jesus on what authority He does this, Jesus answers, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (2:19). Jesus was actually referring to His own body when He said this, but the religious authorities misunderstood and thought He was talking about Herod’s temple where they stood—a building that had taken 46 years to build and wasn’t yet completed.

The Apostle Paul put it like this: *“The holy place today is not a temple made with hands, but the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit”* (see 1 Corinthians 6:19).

Three years after Jesus said this, after He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that Jesus promised to raise the temple up again. They finally understood and believed this word from Jesus from His first days in ministry.

This temple cleansing was Jesus’ first public act in Jerusalem, but in days to come, many people witnessed Jesus performing miracles and “many believed in His name” (2:23). This belief wasn’t saving faith; they just acknowledged the miracles He did. Jesus knew their hearts. Literally, it says, *“He did not believe in them”* (2:24). He knew their faith was not genuine faith.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY YOU BELIEVE IN JESUS?

Do you believe the facts of the gospel? Do you believe He died for your sins? Do you trust Him as your Savior from sins? Is He the living Savior at God’s right hand today? These are important questions since He’s the only hope you have!

Some people in Jerusalem were genuinely interested in Jesus. Like Nicodemus—a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Jews. That means Nicodemus belonged to the best group in Israel. They believed in the inspiration of the Old Testament, in the coming of the Messiah, in miracles, and in the resurrection. Nicodemus came to Jesus as a sincere seeker, but first Jesus needed to get Nicodemus to take off his masks.

Nicodemus’ first mask was as a Pharisee. These were his people, caring about the things he cared about.

His second mask was as a ruler of the Jews. When Nicodemus walked down the street, the people would make way for him. His robes, phylacteries, and prayer shawl, all spoke of his prestige and power.

Underneath these two masks Nicodemus wore, he was just plain, old “Nick.” He was just as tired and searching and needy as any of us.

When he came to the Lord Jesus that night, Nicodemus spoke as a Pharisee. “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (3:2).

Nicodemus begins their conversation with a genuine compliment and makes it clear he wants to talk about how to establish the kingdom of God. The Pharisees wanted to throw off the yoke of Rome. When Jesus came along doing miracles and gathering a crowd of followers, the Pharisees thought perhaps Jesus could establish the kingdom and help overthrow Rome.

But Jesus abruptly interrupts Nicodemus and says: *“You can’t even see the kingdom of God unless you’ve been born again”* (3:3).

Born again? Nicodemus is confused. *How can a man be physically born again?*

But the Lord was talking about a spiritual birth. To be born “again” is to be born “from above.” “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (3:5).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN AGAIN?

We learned in our last study that water represents the Word of God. Later in this gospel, Jesus prays that we will be sanctified by the cleansing, sanctifying power of the Word. God’s method has always been for the Spirit of God to use the Word of God. That’s the reason it’s so important to share God’s Word today.

So why must we be born of the Spirit? Jesus says that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (3:6). God never tries to save our old nature. He hasn’t any program to try to improve it or develop it or save it. Our old nature will go down in the grave with us. That’s why a spiritual birth is necessary. We must be given a new nature. We must be born again.

About this time in the conversation, Nicodemus takes off his masks. He really wants to understand what Jesus is talking about. Jesus continues by comparing the wind to how we are born of the Spirit. (See John 3:8.)

We can't tell where the wind comes from nor know where it's going. You can look at a tree and see the leaves flutter and notice how the trunk bends. Jesus said this is like the Spirit at work in the ones who are born of the Spirit. We can't fully explain it nor understand it, but that's exactly how the Spirit of God operates. When God moves in the lives and the hearts of His people, we can see it happening.

Back to Nicodemus—the man that stands before Jesus now is no longer the man of the Pharisees. He stands there just plain old Nick and humbly asks the simple question, “How can these things be?” (3:9).

We can identify with Nicodemus. We put up our masks in front of each other. The masks hide our real selves. When you come to the Lord Jesus, you have to take off your masks. You have to be the “real you” and come as you are. That's the way Jesus deals now with Nicodemus.

Jesus says He is the only one who can speak about heaven because He's the only one who has been there. In the Old Testament when one of God's own died, he went to Paradise. After Jesus died and ascended to heaven, He led those in Paradise into God's presence. Since then, when a child of God dies, they are “*absent from the body; present with the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 5:8). Jesus paints a glorious picture here of what death is like for us who know Him as Savior.

Jesus then tells Nicodemus about things to come.

Just like in the desert when Moses put that serpent on a pole and all they needed to do to be healed was to look to it, now Jesus said He was going to be lifted up. The serpent represented the sin of the people, and Jesus Christ was made sin for us on the cross where He bore our sin there. “... That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (3:16).

Jesus shows us how two important truths are related:

1. We must be born again.
2. The Son of Man must be lifted up.

It takes the death of Christ to bear our sin's penalty, and the resurrection of Christ (Him lifted up) to regenerate us. That's the only way God can receive us.

Why would God do this? Because “God so loved the world.” But God didn’t save the world with love. His love never saved a sinner. God saves us by grace. (See Ephesians 2:8-9.) God’s love motivated His gift of salvation.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever [write your name in there] believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. –John 3:16

To “believe in” Christ means to trust Him as the One who bore the penalty for your sins and who died in your place.

When Jesus came the first time, He came as the Savior, not a judge. “For God did not send His Son ... to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (3:17).

When the world crucified Jesus, the world chose to be judged by God. Next time Jesus comes, He will judge the world.

WHAT JOHN THE BAPTIST SAID ABOUT JESUS

Around this time, Jesus and His disciples traveled to Judea where John was preaching “*the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” John essentially walks out of the Old Testament onto the page of the New Testament and announces the coming of the Messiah. He points to Jesus and says, “He’s the One,” and gives this wonderful testimony:

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. –John 3:36

John the Baptist’s life and ministry sums it up: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved from your sin. If you don’t believe on Him, you will not see life, but are lost without Christ.

NEXT: Meet the woman Jesus made an appointment with at a well.

LESSON 3



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. John 2:25 says that for good or for bad, Jesus knew their hearts. What do you think about that? What does He see in yours?

2. What motivates God to invite us to be saved? Why does He do it?

3. Who do you relate with in John 4?

The people who believed in miracles but are not sure about Jesus
Nicodemus, who, though confused, **still wanted to believe in Jesus**
People who believed Jesus was the One sent from God

4. Nicodemus was a really good guy—sincerely wanting to get to the truth about God. What can you learn from his example?

IF YOU WILL JUST
look for Him.
YOU'LL FIND JESUS ON
every page
OF THE BIBLE.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 4

THIRSTY FOR LIVING WATER



Begin with prayer



Read **John 3:17–4:54**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 3:17–4:20** and **John 4:21-54**

In Jerusalem, Jesus' ministry was stirring up a lot of controversy and so, rather than create a crisis before the right time, Jesus leaves for Galilee, back to His home base. The Lord Jesus was moving on a schedule, a heavenly schedule set by the Father. He had come to do His Father's will (John 10:18) and no one could touch Him until His time had come (John 13:1).

On His way north to Galilee, Jesus could have taken three different routes. He could have gone up the coast (where the highway still exists), He could have taken an east road on the other side of the Jordan (the common way Jews took to avoid Samaria), or the most direct route was through Samaria—the one Jesus took. Because it was the shortest? No, because He had a divine appointment with a woman by a well.

Jesus said in this passage, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (4:34). He had to go through Samaria to reach this woman.

So at a fork in the road near the city of Sychar, under the shadow of Mount Gerizim to the northwest and at the well that Old Testament Jacob gave to his son Joseph, Jesus stops to rest. He was weary from the journey. It was near noon and so the disciples went into town to get food. This scene is so

perfectly human. Think of it: The Son of God, “the Word made flesh,” was tired. For a time, the God of eternity pitched His tent here among us. He intentionally went through Samaria and sat down at a well in order that He might reach this woman of Samaria.

When she arrived at the well (at an unusual time to be drawing water), there sat Jesus, waiting just for her. He asked her for a drink.

What a contrast to how Jesus talked to Nicodemus in our last study. With Nicodemus, religious to his fingertips, our Lord was blunt and a bit harsh. But notice how gentle He is with this woman. He asks a favor. He appeals to her sympathy. He was thirsty and asked for her help in getting a drink. He was the Water of Life, and He asked for water.

But racism was thriving in Israel, pitting Jews and Samaritans against one another, and she acknowledged the conflict and objected. (It was said Samaritans would sell to the Jews, but they wouldn't drink out of the same cup or eat at the same table.) She also recognized the spiritual conflict.

But Jesus dealt skillfully and sympathetically with her. He doesn't give her a talk on integration or civil rights. He wasn't a candidate raising support. He just appealed to her curiosity. He created an interest, a thirst.

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water” (4:10).

Her attitude changed immediately. Now she's interested. “Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?” (4:11).

She was thinking of physical water and she identifies with Old Testament Jacob who first drank from this well. But Jesus made it clear He's not talking about water in Jacob's well. He's contrasting people's search for physical water but overlooking the spiritual.

Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” -John 4:13-14

Now Jesus has created a desire in the woman's heart for the spiritual water. "The woman said to Him, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw'" (4:15).

Then Jesus laid out the condition. He asked her to get her husband. Now Jesus knew full well that she didn't have a husband, that she had had five husbands and the man she was with now was not her husband.

He first created a thirst in her, now He asked her to acknowledge that she was a sinner.

And the woman is actually shocked into reverence. So now she opens up a religious argument. That happens often when the subject of sin comes up. People don't want to talk about their sin, but instead they'll argue religion. When that happens, when there's a cover-up of sin, our churches become honey-combed with hypocrisy. To not face up to sin, we compromise with evil. To be truly free, we have to deal with sin in our lives.

Our Samaritan friend wanted to change the subject and discuss the core disagreement between Jews and Samaritans: the proper place to worship. Samaritans said Mount Gerizim; Jews said Jerusalem. But the Lord insists on getting to the heart of the problem. He moves beyond the religious arguments and any cover-up that this woman has for her sin because He wants to deal with her and give her the Water of Life.

The Lord did not avoid or side-step the issue and addresses the issue that was important to her: *Where should we worship? In this mountain or in Jerusalem?* Jesus said the day's coming when you won't worship Him in either place. Why?

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. –John 4:23-24

In that day, it will be irrelevant *where* you worship God. The important thing is *how* you worship God. Jesus said that God is a Spirit. You don't have to run to this place or that place, but true worshippers worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Our Samaritan friend was well-informed. She knew a Messiah was coming. How interesting that even the Samaritans were looking for Him.

Today, those who love Jesus Christ look for His return. Yet there are many who do not know Him who are fascinated and frightened by a nagging feeling that the Bible might be true and Jesus *is* coming back. And if He comes again, they would certainly be in trouble.

Notice that the Samaritan woman is profoundly interested, and there's wistful longing in her heart. How majestic and sublime that she is brought face to face now with the Savior of the world and the Messiah! Friends, whoever you are, have you come face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ as this woman did? She found herself in His presence. He said to her, "I who speak to you am He" (4:26). And she turned in faith to the Lord Jesus, left her water pot, went back to her city, and let everyone know who she found. That's the test of her faith—the fact that she witnessed to others.

"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

–John 4:29-30

A great company was reached in Samaria through this woman who brought them to Jesus. "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman And many more believed because of His own word" (4:39, 41).

The one condition was "to thirst," and you'll never know that you thirst until you know you're a sinner. Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (7:37). And many of the Samaritans came to Him, the Living Water, and they drank!

Many people are led to know Christ through the influence of another. In fact, it's the effect of life upon life, impact of one personality upon another, but our faith must stand on surer ground than the other person. Let that one person's influence take you to Christ and then have your own story with Him.

JESUS HEALS FROM A DISTANCE

After a couple days with the townspeople in Samaria, Jesus traveled to Cana where He had made water into wine. His reputation as a miracle worker preceded Him and it drew people who wanted to see signs and miracles. In Cana, a nobleman approached Jesus, asking for Him to heal his son who was near death in Capernaum (15 miles away).

He had seen Jesus do miracles, but more than wanting to see a show, he believed Jesus to be his boy's only hope.

Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!" Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household. -John 4:50-53

Both the Samaritan woman and this faithful father came face to face with the Lord Jesus and it changed them. Then they shared their faith with someone else and it influenced their faith. Every one of us can reach somebody that no one else can reach. You have that influence over someone else's life—be sure you exercise it!

**NEXT: What healing marked the turning point
in Jesus' ministry?**

LESSON 5

HEALED



Begin with prayer



Read **John 5**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 5:1-24** and **John 5:25-47**

As Jesus' ministry of healing became more popular, Jesus got the attention of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Jesus had come to Jerusalem for a feast day (as every Jewish man was required to do for the three feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) and entered the city through the Sheep Gate. He had a divine appointment with a paralyzed man who sat at the pool of Bethesda, just inside the walls. Bethesda has been translated "House of Mercy," and that's what Jesus showed a paralyzed man that day.

This miracle marked the turning point in Jesus' ministry in that it set the bloodhounds of hate on His track, and they never let up until they put Him to death on the cross.

Let's meet the man Jesus healed.

When Jesus approached him, he was sitting by the pool of Bethesda. Jewish folklore said this pool had supernatural properties and when the water moved, it meant an angel was stirring it and it would heal whoever got in the water first.

This man had been at that pool for 38 years watching the water, waiting for it to move. But because he was in such a bad state, others got in the water in front of him.

Jesus' first words to him are, "Do you want to be made well?" What an odd question to ask a sick man! Why did the Lord ask him that?

First, to stir hope in him. The light of hope had gone out of his life, and he sat there in despair. More importantly, Jesus wanted to get his eyes off the pool and to look to Him. So our Lord startles him with the question, "Would you like to be whole?"

Even today, many people wait in vain for something to move them. They wait for great emotion before they turn to Christ. They look for something amazing to happen—something that happened to someone else that they want for themselves. Perhaps their hope is in seeing a sign or in some individual.

Just like on that day when the man is healed yet many were left at the water. Isn't Jesus willing to save them? Well, they haven't looked to Him. They're just waiting for something to happen, and nothing is going to come.

Are you waiting for something to happen? Look instead to Jesus. That's what the paralyzed man did. The minute he got his eyes on the Lord Jesus, something did happen. And our Lord now said to him, "*Get up and walk*" (v. 8). And he did! At Jesus' command, a man paralyzed for 38 years picked up his bed (proof that he was healed) and walked.

But the religious leaders objected to this miracle because it happened on the Sabbath.

Jesus had clashed with them before over the Sabbath Day, saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). But they never forgave Him, and that hatred for Him put murder in their hearts. They never let up until they folded their arms beneath His cross.

The religious leaders went to the man and asked him who had healed him. The man didn't know. But our Lord found him in the temple later, and that is where He forgave his sins. "Sin no more," He said to him (v. 14). Now the man was able to tell them who had done it.

John 5:18 says about this turning point, "Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."

Jesus put down three great principles about Himself:

- "I'm God. I do what God does. I can forgive sin." **Read John 5:19.**

- He raises the dead because He's God—this is also the reason He can give us everlasting life today. **Read John 5:20, 21.**
- He came to save the first time, but He will come to judge the next time. **Read John 5:22.** But if you'll hear His Word and believe on Him, you won't come into judgment but will pass from death to life.

Jesus said if you'll hear His Word and believe on Him, you won't come into judgment but will pass from death to life. The Judge Himself tells us that.

But the thing that made the Jewish leaders hate Jesus was that He made Himself equal with God. Jesus explained that everything He did, He did in step with the Father. He came to do His Father's will.

You can have everlasting life if you hear His Word and believe on Him. Why? Because He does what God does; because He raises the dead and because He's going to judge all men someday. Whether saved or lost, we're all going to appear before Him—the believer to see whether he receives a reward at the Bema Seat of Christ or the lost who will be judged by Jesus at the Great White Throne.

Today, those who are dead spiritually can hear His voice. To hear His Word and believe (v. 24) means we can pass out of spiritual death into the life that He gives.

The Lord Jesus is a life-giver (v. 26). Not only does He have life, but He gives life.

Jesus talks about two resurrections. The next thing on God's agenda is the Rapture of those who are saved sometime in the near future. At any moment, God will call His own out of the world—both living and dead. First Thessalonians says we will be "caught up," which means "be raptured."

The second resurrection is for judgment at the Great White Throne, where the unsaved of all the ages will be raised. God is just and righteous, and they will have an opportunity to stand before a holy God and plead their case. But He's made it very clear, no man can be saved according to his works.

We all have a will, an old nature, that's not able to obey God. Our natural state is to rebel against Him. That's the reason Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*You must be born again.*" In our flesh we can't please God.

The Jewish leaders hated Jesus because Jesus said He was on par with God. *What is your proof?* they asked. Jesus then presented His argument.

Scripture says that in the mouth of two witnesses a thing is established. But Jesus did not need nor accept human "testimony" to establish His identity. He said the first witness of His identity is Himself, but He knew that wouldn't stand up in court. His Father's witness was the only one He needed. Jesus then pointed to His miracles as proof of who He claimed to be (He had healed thousands). But even in this, Jesus pointed to the Father. Everything Jesus said and did pointed to the Father.

Another "witness" to His identity is Scripture itself, Jesus said.

Jewish leaders of Jesus' day were serious students of the Old Testament, but they studied for the wrong reason: To earn eternal life through hard work. Jesus was the living Word of God, yet they had little time for Him. Even though they looked for God in the pages of Scripture, they didn't recognize Jesus for who He was.

If you will just look for Him, you'll find Jesus on every page of the Bible. Even Moses spoke of Jesus, but Jesus said, "If you don't believe him, how will you believe in Me?" (vs. 45-47). The Old Testament is the foundation of what we believe about Jesus. Look for Jesus throughout the entire Bible.

NEXT: We'll hear from Jesus why He came.

LESSON 6

MIRACLES BY THE SEA



Begin with prayer



Read **John 6:1-54**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 6:1-21** and **John 6:22-54**

What we call miracles, Jesus called “signs”—which gives us the key to understanding the entire Gospel of John. John 20:30-31 sums it up like this: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

One sign Jesus gave to His identity as the Son of God took place on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee. We know from the dates of the feasts that it was six months before Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, and now it was Passover, one year before Jesus would go to Jerusalem to die for our sins.

By now in Jesus’ ministry He was famous for the miracles He did. Crowds began to follow Him, not because they believed He was Savior, but because they wanted to make Him King and because they wanted to see miracles.

Jesus saw through their motive; He knew what was in man.

On that day in Galilee, Jesus sat with His disciples on a mountainside. But they weren't alone for long. As the crowds gathered around Him, Jesus put one of His disciples to the test. He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (v. 5).

Now Jesus never asks for advice; He knew what He was going to do, but He wanted to draw Philip out.

Phillip looked over the crowd coming over the hill—more than 15,000 people—and he was overwhelmed with what it would take to feed them all. "*Two hundred denarii wouldn't even be enough*"—that was about eight months' wages for a working man. Philip, as an accountant, put his mental calculator to work and concluded the situation was hopeless.

Andrew, another disciple, had been circulating through the crowd, and he found a little boy who had a lunch of five barley loaves and two small fishes. Barley was the poor man's bread, about the size of hamburger buns.

Some of the other disciples advised Jesus to send the crowd away. Feeding them wasn't their problem to solve. The math would never add up to enough.

But what's needed in this equation is Jesus. When you have the five loaves plus two fishes plus Jesus, you've got something. Without Him, you don't have anything at all.

And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost." Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. –John 6:11-13

What a miracle! When you put Jesus in the equation, you have more than enough—in fact, you have 12 baskets of sandwiches that weren't even touched. The crowd got all they wanted to eat. In that day in Israel, people often went hungry. For many in the crowd that day, this was the first time their tummies were filled. When the Lord Jesus does it, He does a good job of it.

When the people saw the miracle, they conspired to take Jesus by force and make Him their king. It must have taken another miracle to get through that crowd! (Jesus did come as a king, but not in this way. He's not the king of a full stomach, but king of an obedient heart.)

STORM AT SEA

Later that evening, Jesus wanted to get alone to pray, so He put the disciples in a boat and sent them to Capernaum, just a short way away. But a storm blew in over the mountains and threw the disciples off course. The storm was so huge they thought they were going to die. As the waves threatened to topple their boat, the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water in the middle of the lake. And it terrified them!

But Jesus said, *“Don’t be afraid, it’s Me”* (v. 20). And they took Him in the boat and immediately the ship was at land. Jesus knew it had been hard rowing and the storm was frightening, so He took them right to shore.

The next day, the crowds looked for Jesus and the disciples, but they were gone. Eventually word got around that Jesus was on the other side of the lake. When they found Him, they asked, *How did you get here?* Instead of answering their question, He asked them their motive.

“Is it just because I fed you till you were full?” (v. 26). In essence, He said, *“Stop working for food that spoils; work for food that endures for everlasting life, which food the Son of Man will give you, for on Him, God the Father has set His seal.”*

Jesus had said the same thing to the woman at the well (John 4), only that time it was about water. Bread and water are essential to maintain life—and Jesus is both the Bread of Life and the Living Water!

The people responded eagerly with *“what can we do to earn this bread?”* and Jesus said the only way was for them to *“believe in Him whom God sent”* (vs. 28-29).

God has already provided this bread; you don’t have to work for it. He’s invited us to a banquet—a free and lavish meal of spiritual food.

But the people didn’t believe and wanted to go right back to the dinner table, asking Jesus to do another miracle.

JESUS IS THE BREAD OF LIFE

Perhaps because they were about to celebrate Passover, they remembered that God had once given them bread from heaven to eat. Every day for 40 years, God fed them manna that sustained their physical life in the wilderness. *Give us food like that*, they said. The people think Jesus is

promising physical bread (just like the woman at the well wanted literal water.) But Jesus wants to give them spiritual bread that gives spiritual life. He answered them,

I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. –John 6:35-37

Jesus puts bread and water together. “*He who comes to Me shall never hunger...*” Christ is the manna—He is the one who came down from heaven and gave His life for the world that we might have life—that’s salvation! But we’ll see that He’s also the Bread that we’re to feed on constantly, that we might grow by that. After all, manna was miracle food.

You want bread? Jesus said, “*I’m the Bread of Life! But you’ve seen Me, and still you don’t believe.*” Even though they rejected Jesus as the Son of God, Jesus didn’t reject them. He said that anyone who comes to Him for salvation will be received.

This great verse illustrates both election and free will:

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me [that’s election ... but, wait a minute ...], ***and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out*** [that’s free will]. –John 6:37

Election and free will are both true! It’s beyond our ability to reconcile them. We don’t know how God runs that computer of election, but we do know He’s given us a free will and we have to exercise it.

Jesus said it’s the will of God for you to be born again. The only way to have eternal life is for you to come to the Lord Jesus by faith. And Jesus promises He would take care of those the Father gives Him until the very end.

This is a beautiful promise of completion. Jesus says when a person accepts Him as Savior, He justifies them and someday He will glorify them. When He starts out with 100 sheep, He’s going to come through with 100 sheep!

As usual, some of the people who heard Jesus say all these things believed and some complained. They realized Jesus was teaching that He was God, “bread which came down from heaven” (v. 41).

Jesus said He came down from heaven to do His Father's will—and some understood exactly what He was saying and they scoffed.

“We know His father and mother—how can He say He came down from heaven?”

But Jesus told them not to murmur to themselves and that He knew ultimately it was His Father who draws people to Him. The important thing to remember is that every person who listens to the Father and learns of Him, will come to Jesus. Today, when you really listen to the Word of God, you'll be drawn to Jesus.

Jesus' invitation is that when you believe in Him, you will have everlasting life. He is the Bread of Life—not like the bread that fed the people in the wilderness who ate it and eventually died. Jesus said He is the Bread of Life from heaven that if anyone eats it, he will live forever. He is the Word made flesh. Very soon, He said, He was going to lay down His life as a sacrifice to pay for our sins. When you believe that, then you are saved! When we accept by faith what He did for us, we will trust and rest in Him.

NEXT: If not Jesus, where else are you hoping to find life?

**If you're thirsty today
and you're tired of drinking
at the mud holes and find
they're not satisfying,
then get to Jesus.**

*You can come to Him and receive
Him as your Savior.*



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 7

A BREWING STORM



Begin with prayer



Read **John 6:55–7:53**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 6:55–7:6** and **John 7:7-53**

Last time we learned from Jesus that He is “the Bread of Life” and that if anyone eats it, they will live forever. Jesus is the Word made flesh and very soon, He said, He was going to lay down His life as a sacrifice to pay for our sins.

As Jesus explains further what it means that He is the true manna that came down from heaven, He says some difficult things that point to His soon death on the cross.

Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.” –John 6:53-58

As Jesus describes how He is the “Bread of Life,” He prepares His disciples for their last Passover together and the establishment of the Lord’s Supper. He was standing there in front of them, so obviously He is not saying they should eat Him and drink His blood. He was saying simply that He’s going to give His life. His blood is the symbol of life “the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11). Moses had first told them that, and it is actually medically true. Jesus said He will shed His blood on the cross and give His life for them.

This is the basis for the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Christians have long disagreed on what Jesus means when He says, “This is my body.” No miracle is taking place here—the bread Jesus holds will always be bread. It doesn’t turn into the Lord’s body when we eat it. The wine is always just what it is. But drinking the sweet wine (or grape juice) reminds us that He bore the bitter cup for us on the cross so that we can have this sweet cup. This sweet cup reminds us of the spiritual blessing He gave us when He shed His blood for us and that His words are spirit and life. “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (6:63). Jesus clarified, *“You’re not going to literally eat me. I’m going back to heaven.”*

In the Lord’s Supper, the important thing is that it’s bread in your mouth, but Jesus Christ in your heart.

But there is a spiritual blessing in observing the Lord’s Supper. Jesus Himself ministers to us spiritually through our obedience in observing the Lord’s Supper. The manna in the wilderness was temporary, but now Jesus offers something that’s eternal life. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

When Jesus taught this in the synagogue in Capernaum, He got a reaction from four different groups.

- Some of His followers turned away, saying, *“This is too hard to hear…”* (6:60). And they stopped following Him.
- Some people following Him never believed. Jesus was willing for them to come, but they wouldn’t (6:64-65).
- Some in the crowd were hostile religious leaders
- And there were Jesus’ own disciples, the 12, including Judas.

Jesus knew His disciples were confused by His statement and so He asked, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (6:67-69).

What a great question ... and response. Many wonder today if the Lord Jesus is really the Savior. The question that must be asked is: *Where are you hoping to find life? Who will give that to you?* The ones who followed Him most closely answer that for us. The Lord Jesus is the One, and the only one who can give you eternal life.

JESUS TEACHES IN THE TEMPLE AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

A storm is brewing because of Jesus’ ministry, drawing Him closer to Jerusalem and the cross, now just six months away. During this last year of His ministry, Jesus stays mostly in Galilee because the religious leaders in Judea want to kill Him. Jesus was guarding His time on earth, to live according to His Father’s schedule.

But now, six months before His death, it’s time to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles, sometimes called the Feast of Tents/Booths, was given in Leviticus, celebrating the Jews coming out of the land of Egypt and living in tents in the wilderness. It’s a joyful feast—families camp out in tents and decorate them with flowers and fruit. In the temple, people blew trumpets and poured water from the Pool of Siloam, commemorating the water that flowed from the rock in the desert.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, the temple’s inner court were lit with pillars of fire, commemorating God’s presence with them every night in the wilderness. This was the perfect backdrop for Jesus to explain in John 8 that He’s the Light of the world. “He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (8:12). The pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire that led the children of Israel both picture the Lord Jesus Christ.

If possible, every Jew was required to celebrate the Feasts in Jerusalem. Jesus’ half-brothers, who at the time did not yet believe in Him, told Jesus to go to Jerusalem where He could teach His followers. (We know from Matthew 13:55 that these half-brothers were James, Joseph, and Simon

Judas. Someday, James would write the Epistle of James, and Judas, the Epistle of Jude.) But Jesus knew it was not the Father's time for Him to be in Jerusalem, so He told them, "My time is not yet come" (7:6, 8).

Jesus had decided He would go, but not with them and not at the same time. Down in Jerusalem, the religious rulers were looking for Jesus, but people were afraid of being arrested, so no one said a word about Him.

But then, right in the middle of the feast, Jesus showed up in the temple and taught (7:14, Malachi 3:1). In God's calendar, this Feast of Tabernacles sets before us a picture of the coming of Christ again to the earth and the events and stages which lead up to it as the prophet Malachi said.

As Jesus taught, the religious leaders marveled, saying, "*How did this man get learning without having been taught?*" meaning, He never followed another rabbi (7:15).

Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him." –John 7:16-18

Jesus said that to reject His message is to reject God's message (as He had previously said in John 4 and 5. To reject Him is to reject God. He made it clear He was equal with God.

Jesus invites anyone who chooses to taste of the Lord and see for himself if God is good. The wonder of God's Word is that if you're willing, God will make it real to you. Human knowledge must be known to be loved, but divine knowledge must be loved to be understood. So the steps of understanding what God says are: knowledge, love, and obedience.

Do men want to hear God? If they do, God will speak to them in His Word. Some read the Bible and it is foolishness to them (1 Corinthians 2:14). And that's the way God said it would be.

Jesus then confronted them with their own hypocrisy. He pointed out that none of them keeps the Law, even in their legalism, yet they want to kill Him.

The Law is a mirror; it lets us see that we're lost sinners and we need a Savior. The Law is our school master to bring us to Christ.

The religious leaders then accused Jesus of having a demon.

Others in the crowd thought they recognized Jesus as the one the religious leaders wanted killed. Jesus made it clear He was sent by God. Some believed in Him; others dismissed Him; the leaders were furious, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

Jesus knew what everyone was saying and said, *You will take me at the proper time; not until then.* “I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come” (7:33-34). Jesus was speaking about after His resurrection and ascension, but it confused the religious leaders.

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles during the water ceremony when they poured out all the water, Jesus cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink” (7:37). *You want real water? Come to Me,* He said.

“If anyone”—that means you! Here’s a gift God offers you. If you’re thirsty today and you’re tired of drinking at the mud holes and find they’re not satisfying, then get to Jesus. You can come to Him and receive Him as your Savior.

When the crowd heard this, some believed and turned to Him. Some drank and they were satisfied. Others didn’t believe and it caused a division among the people, same as today. But everyone was astonished by Jesus’ authority when He taught. He was the greatest teacher who ever lived, but His teaching doesn’t save you—only by believing His death and resurrection was on your behalf can you be saved.

NEXT: Watch Jesus stand up to the proud religious rulers.

LESSON 7



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. “Jesus invites anyone and everyone to Himself who wants to investigate if God is really good.” Do you want to look closer? The answers are waiting in God’s Word.
2. Some believed Jesus; some dismissed Him. Some were confused; some were angry. Which are you? What would help you turn to Jesus in faith and humility?
3. Even those who trust Jesus Christ sometimes drink from mud holes. What areas of your life do you need to give to Jesus and let Him satisfy?
4. Jesus doesn’t save you with good teaching; He only saves you when you turn to Him in faith and humility, receiving that He died for you on the cross. Who in your life needs to know this?

LESSON 8

JESUS FORGIVES A WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY



Begin with prayer



Read **John 8**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 8:1-11** and **John 8:12-59**

Imagine the scene: The Lord is sitting in the temple area, teaching. From the corner of the temple mount there's quite an uproar. Everyone turns to see what is happening. Some religious rulers are dragging in a woman. She's half-dressed and disheveled. They rush her through the crowd to where Jesus is teaching and throw her on the ground in front of Him, shouting this crude charge: "This woman was caught in adultery, in the very act" (v. 4). This is brutal and cruel to the woman and a trap to catch Jesus.

They think they've got an unanswerable dilemma for Jesus. They say, "*The law of Moses says she should be stoned. What do you say?*" They think they're tempting Jesus to disregard the Law. Will He contradict Moses or will He offer some other explanation?

The real motive behind their question had nothing to do with the woman. They weren't interested in stoning her; they were interested in stoning Jesus! The Lord knew that. So He countered their question with a surprise.

The woman stands in utter humiliation, guilty. But our Lord doesn't look at her. He stoops down and writes on the ground. This is a very interesting thing that He did.

Jeremiah 17:13 says, “O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake You shall be ashamed. ‘Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.’”

Who had forsaken the Lord? This woman? Yes. But so had the religious rulers. What did our Lord write in the dirt? We don’t know. This is the only recorded time He wrote anything, but it was written in sand and tramped out by the crowd. Here’s a suggestion of what He wrote.

Just like Jeremiah 17 says, *“Those that have turned against God will be written on the earth,”* perhaps Jesus wrote the names of those in the crowd who had also committed adultery and thought no one knew about it. Then He stood up and said, *“Now, if you’re without sin you go ahead and throw a stone”* (v. 7). That takes us all out of the stone-throwing business. (Read what happened: John 8:8-9.)

The older leaders left first because they had more sense than the younger ones. Eventually, Jesus is the only person left who could throw a stone at her.

The mob dispersed; all the noise quieted down.

This One who is the son of a virgin, who Himself was under a cloud all of His life in order that He might take our place on the cross to cover even the sin of this woman—this is our Savior. He wasn’t going soft on adultery; in His kindness, He’s giving her a chance to repent.

John, the writer of this Gospel, often told us about an incident or miracle from Jesus, then he told us how Jesus taught about it. In the Gospel of John, when Jesus says, “I AM,” He’s telling us about God.

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” –John 8:12

Jesus sheds a whole lot of light on who God is! We also discover here that He takes the commonplace—like bread and light and water—and uses them to speak of the remarkable.

He said:

- “I am the bread of life” (6:35).
- “I am the light of the world” (8:12).
- “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved” (10:9).

- “**I am** the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep” (10:11).
- “**I am** the resurrection and the life” (11:25).
- “**I am** the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (14:6).
- And finally, “**I am** the vine, you are the branches” (15:5).

In the Old Testament, Jehovah God said, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14).

We’re not told very much about God other than the Lord Jesus reveals God to man. Jesus uses the ordinary to speak of the extraordinary.

The physical to speak of the spiritual.

The temporal to speak of the eternal.

The here-and-now to speak of the here-and-the-hereafter.

The earthly to speak of the heavenly.

The limited to speak of the unlimited.

And the finite to speak of the infinite.

Jesus reveals here that He is “the light of the world”—probably the highest statement He’s made about Himself so far. He just exposed the sin of the scribes and Pharisees who brought the guilty woman to Him. They were just as guilty, and they had to run. He’s just turned on the light, and sin and rats and bats and bedbugs cannot stand the light!

First John 1:5 tells us “God is light.” He’s holy, righteous, and just. The Lord Jesus Christ is spiritual light. Just as the sun is physical light, He is spiritual light. Just as we have enough sense to turn on a light in a dark room, any sinner, though he be a fool, can come into the presence of Jesus Christ.

Jesus promises that whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness. The religious leaders scoffed at Jesus’ claim, calling Him a demon one minute and illegitimate the next. They understood very little of what He was saying. First Corinthians 15:47-48 explains that human knowledge today can be understood by anyone who has a human nature. But divine knowledge must be loved to be understood, and only the Spirit of God can take the things of Christ and show them to us.

Jesus summarizes His argument with a sober word: “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (v. 24).

And all they could say to Him was, “Who are you?” (v. 25). Even though He had told them He is the Messiah, the Savior, they wouldn’t acknowledge Him or His mission. They wouldn’t believe that Jesus was the Son of God and that He was there to do the will of His Father. They missed the whole point. Why? Because they’re of this world.

Jesus explained that someday, after He died, some would believe. And many did believe after His death and resurrection. The redemptive death of Jesus Christ explains Him—why He came and who He is. You can’t know who He is until you know what He’s done.

Some even believed Jesus now as He stood up against the religious leaders (v. 30). To these people, Jesus offered two words of encouragement:

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” –John 8:31

In other words, faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone—it’ll produce something. It will produce fruit and more faith.

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
–John 8:32

And what is the truth? That Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. He is who He said He is—and this is what makes you free!

The Pharisees, incited by all that Jesus was implying, fell back on their old standard, “Abraham is our father” (v. 33)—meaning, their religious heritage will save them.

Jesus cut to the chase and said, “Before Abraham was, I AM” (v. 58).

He wasn’t going to argue His virgin birth. He would just declare the truth about who He is. The same is true today. Jesus stepped out of eternity and into our story—which is really His story. Jesus said He is the Son of the Living God, the third member of the Trinity, the Creator and Savior of the world, Jehovah of the Old Testament, the eternal God. We must each accept or deny this today, too.

Jesus Christ could have called this world out of existence with a single word that afternoon.

Yet instead ...

Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. -John 8:59

The religious leaders understood Jesus was saying He is the God of the Old Testament. If that wasn't true, then this was blasphemy and He should have been stoned.

But it is true. And to believe Him means eternal life.

NEXT: What does faith look like?

LESSON 9

JESUS RESTORES A BLIND MAN'S SIGHT



Begin with prayer



Read **John 9**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 9:1-23** and **John 9:24-41**

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (8:12). Now, logically, we have a story of when He restored a blind man’s sight.

One day Jesus and His disciples were walking in Jerusalem, and saw a man who had been blind since birth. The disciples asked Jesus the cause of this man’s blindness—was it sin? Jesus answered in an unusual way. He said, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned” (v. 3). Jesus said the important thing is not to probe around to find out who’s guilty, but instead to cure the man. Do something for him! It’s not a question of who sinned because “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Remember Jesus had just said, “I am the light of the world.” Now He says the nighttime makes us blind. We cannot see. Without Jesus, the spiritual light of the world, we’d all be blind. He must bring new life to the dead spiritual optic nerves.

Without Him today, millions are spiritually blind. Unless the Spirit of God opens your spiritual eyes to see, you cannot see. We need to let Christ touch our eyes so we can see.

Jesus did this for the blind man here. He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and then He covered the man's eyes with the clay. He then sent him to wash his face in the pool of Siloam. The man did all that and came back seeing. Our Lord had him go through this ritual as a means to trust and obey Him. It comes down to that: Jesus touching us and us obeying Him.

Jesus healed this man in an unusual way. Another time He healed a man with a simple word. Another time He healed, the man wasn't even present. The method doesn't matter—it's God's power that does the miracle. Many will argue about a ceremony or an experience, but the all-important thing is to come to Jesus Christ, believe Him, and obey Him. Jesus said, "the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (6:37).

When the man's neighbors saw the formerly blind man, they didn't recognize him. *He's not the same man*, they said. *Some great change has happened*. The man said, "I'm the one!" *What happened?* they asked.

And he simply said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight" (v. 11).

It's as simple as that. Salvation is really a simple matter. It's coming to the Lord Jesus and experiencing the power of God. And we need the power of God today.

Up to that point, the man hadn't even seen Jesus. But he knew the important thing was not to see Him, but to believe Him.

Now, here comes the snag in this wonderful story. All of this happened on the Sabbath. You'd think everyone would have rejoiced in this changed life, but some in the crowd accused Jesus of disregarding the Sabbath (healing was work, and you shouldn't work on the Sabbath). Others defended Him and it divided the religious leaders. Some even questioned if a real miracle had taken place, so they called the man's parents. They wanted to dig up anything to get away from the truth. But they couldn't deny a miracle had taken place. The parents were afraid of being ex-communicated from the temple by the religious leaders, so they wouldn't commit themselves. They said, "*He's our son and he was born blind. Now he's an adult; ask him how it happened*" (vs. 20-21).

The religious leaders were now in a tight spot. They had to admit a miracle had taken place, but now they wanted to take the spotlight off of Jesus. *“Don’t give Jesus credit for this miracle. He’s a sinner,”* they said, *“Give God the glory instead”* (v. 24).

Now the healed man fires back. He said he couldn’t speak to whether Jesus was a sinner or not, but he said, *“One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see”* (v. 25).

But how did He heal you? they asked.

He answered them, “I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?” –John 9:27

That made them mad. He’d told them what happened, and they would not accept it. They couldn’t hear the truth. They not only were blind and couldn’t see, but they were deaf and couldn’t hear.

The man had not yet seen the Lord Jesus, but he knew He was more than an ordinary man. The religious leaders couldn’t argue with his story and resented his attitude, so they threw him out of the temple. This meant the man was shut out of the temple and everything religious and social. He was now out of business

Jesus heard that the man had been ex-communicated, and He looked for him. When He found him, He asked him, *“Do you believe in the Son of God?”* (v. 35).

“Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” (v. 36) the man replied. The Lord had been preparing this man all along. When confronted by the religious rulers, he defended the Lord Jesus. In so doing, his own faith was strengthened. Now, confronted by Jesus’ question, *“Will you believe?”* he’s open and honest. He wants to go further. He wants to come to know him.

And Jesus said, *“You’re talking to Him”* (v. 37).

Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him. –John 9:38

Here is one of the finest instances of faith that we have in the entire Word of God. Our Lord took this blind man step-by-step to saving faith.

And so are the steps of a sinner today: We're blind at first. We're not only lost, but we don't even see that we're lost. Then we come to Christ, and when we see Him, our eyes are opened, and we see who He is. We know what He's done for us and we believe. The next step is to worship Him.

The Lord Jesus tells us next that this is not always what happens.

And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." –John 9:39

Some people physically see but can't see spiritually. We're told in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

If you are presented the gospel yet say, "I don't quite get it. I don't see that He's my savior," then you have eyes, but you're not seeing at all. If a person wants to know God, the Lord will get the gospel to them. But if someone hears the good news about Jesus Christ and has no interest, then they are spiritually blind and living in great darkness, even if the light is right in front of them.

When Jesus was talking about this, some Pharisees interrupted. *Are you saying that we're blind, too?* Our study began with a blind man, now we end with blind religious leaders. Jesus answered them by explaining that it comes down to recognizing your own sin.

In Jesus' presence, there is light. If that light allows you to see sin in your life, and to confess it to Jesus for forgiveness, then you have spiritual eyes to see and hearts to discern. But if you don't see that you're spiritually blind, then you will reject Jesus Christ and your sin remains.

But today, if you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, open your heart and mind to receive Him. Say like the man born blind, *"Once I was in spiritual darkness, now I am in spiritual light. Once I did not know Jesus, now He's my Savior!"*

NEXT: Jesus explains why we can trust Him.

4. “And so are the steps of a sinner today: We’re blind at first. We’re not only lost, but we don’t even see that we’re lost. Then we come to Christ, and when we see Him, our eyes are opened, and we see who He is. We know what He’s done for us and we believe. The next step is to worship Him.” Reflect on your own faith journey. How could you worship Jesus today for drawing you to Him?

In
Jesus'
presence
there is
light.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 10

JESUS COMES THROUGH THE DOOR



Begin with prayer



Read **John 10**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 10:1-10** and **John 10:11-42**

From our last lesson we know the religious leaders were waging a conflict with Jesus and they rejected Him as Messiah. Now Jesus explains His credentials—why we can trust Him as our Savior.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. –John 10:1-2

Using the picture of a sheepfold, Jesus says to the religious leaders that He came in by the door, making Him the shepherd of the sheep. Others have had to climb over some other way, but He came in legally and in an orderly manner.

- He came in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
- He was born in Bethlehem according to prophecy.
- He is in the line of David according to prophecy.
- He was born of a virgin according to prophecy.
- He was born under the Law in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4).

- He came in according to the Mosaic Law and was circumcised and dedicated at eight days old in the temple.
- Jesus said He didn't come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it.
- He was the Messiah, and He came in by the Door, and the one that enters by the Door is the Shepherd of the Sheep.
- No one else could have fulfilled prophecy as He did.
- No one else could have the credentials that He did, because He said, *"The works I perform testify to Me"* (v. 25).
- Those works, proof of who He is, are His teaching, His life, and His miracles.

Not only that, but Jesus was welcomed by the doorkeeper. "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (v. 3).

The doorkeeper is the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ did everything through His power.

Jesus also said, "and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice" (v. 4). Jesus says the sheepfold of Israel have responded to Him; they know who He is. In John 9, the religious leaders rejected Jesus as Messiah. They were spiritually blind. Now we see that they don't even hear His voice. They can't see Him; they can't hear Him. But there are plenty of testimonies of people hearing Jesus and leaving all, following Him. He called His sheep by name and His sheep responded.

In ancient Israel, as well as today, a sheepfold will protect the sheep at night. At times, many flocks would mingle together. In the morning, the doorkeeper would open the gate, the shepherds would call their sheep, and the flocks would follow their own shepherds. They won't follow a stranger because they don't recognize the strangers' voice.

Jesus said all these things as a metaphor, a figure of speech, to teach us something about God. In other places of the Gospels, Jesus tells parables. In this Gospel, He gives us allegories.

- "I am the bread of life" (6:35).
- "I am the light of the world" (8:12).
- "I'm the water of life" (4:9-14).
- "I am the vine" (15:5).

JESUS IS THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP

Now Jesus says that not only did He come in by the door, but He is the door (v. 7).

In ancient times, the doorkeeper would sleep in the doorway of the sheep's night enclosure. He protects his own. Jesus is the one who stays in the doorway. He is the Door that opens to eternal life.

JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

In addition to being the door to the sheepfold, Jesus also said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (v. 11).

Jesus compared Himself to the sheepfold door and the shepherd of the sheep, but some didn't understand what He meant. In Matthew 11:15, He said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," but many have ears, but don't want to hear the truth of the Word of God. Many see physically, but never see Him as Savior.

But the ones who do see Jesus as Savior come to know Him as the source of abundant life.

JESUS IS THE LAMB OF GOD

This is one of the most wonderful metaphors used in Scripture.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (v. 29). He came down from heaven to identify Himself with us, and we're called sheep!

Jesus as a sheep emphasizes His humanity. Jesus as the Good Shepherd emphasizes His deity. He alone is worthy and able to save. No other human being could have; He had to be God.

In addition to being called the Good Shepherd, He is also called "the Great Shepherd of the sheep" in Hebrews 13:20.

He is called the "Chief Shepherd" in 1 Peter 5:4.

In Psalm 22, the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

In Psalm 23, He's the Great Shepherd of the sheep that is able to keep His own.

In Psalm 24, He is the Chief Shepherd that is coming again.

In Ezekiel 34:11-15, He is the shepherd who leads and loves and protects His own.

A shepherd, unlike a hired worker, will give his life for the sheep (v. 12). The difference between the Lord Jesus and any other religious leaders is that Jesus will give His life for the sheep. Other religious leaders demand people do something for them. But a shepherd protects the sheep. He knows them and his sheep know Him.

And as the Great Shepherd, He's got many flocks—more than that are from the fold of Israel. (Read 10:16.)

Today He is calling out a people, both Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, black and white, people from all nations, out of every tongue and tribe and nation, into one flock under one Shepherd. Then He says, "All this is in the will of the Father!"

The Father loves Jesus because He laid down His life for us (v. 17). We ought to love Him because He died willingly for us. He had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it. Later we'll read about Jesus' death, but we should never forget that Jesus set the time of His death. The trials happened according to His will. No man could touch Him unless he had His permission. He is never more kingly than when He approaches that cross. He's in absolute charge! We were condemned to die in Him for He died for the sins of the world. He didn't have to die; He did it willingly, "...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus' claims caused people in that day—especially His enemies—to raise some questions (v. 19). They wondered if He was mad. Or if He was a demon. But could a demon heal people? Others knew He was the Divine Son of God, the Savior of the world.

One day in Jerusalem, Jews gathered around Him in the temple and asked Jesus to tell them clearly who He was. Jesus had not yet revealed publicly that He was the Messiah. He had confirmed His identity to individuals along the way—the disciples, and even to the town in Samaria, and recently to the blind beggar. But Jesus knew these people had faith to believe He was who He said. These religious leaders did not. But now, He declares His messiahship.

“I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” –John 10:25-28

Jesus said that His miracles and teaching prove He is the Messiah and all the ways His life fulfilled prophecy—but they wouldn’t believe Him. And He said basically, it makes sense that they don’t believe because they are not His sheep. *My sheep, Jesus said, hear My voice and follow Me.*

You see, the brand on the sheep of ownership is obedience. If you want to know whether a person is saved or not, look at His relationship with the Savior. Are they following Him? Do they obey Him?

All of Jesus’ sheep have a hearing aid—that hearing aid is tuned to hear His voice. Proverbs 20:12 says, “The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the LORD has made them both.”

To His sheep, Jesus gives eternal life. They don’t earn it, He gives it. And it’s for forever. He gives to us eternal life and we’ll never perish. Our Shepherd said He won’t lose any sheep. He started out with 100 sheep, and if one of them gets lost or even gets in the pigpen, He’s going out to get him and bring him in because He starts out with 100 sheep and is coming through with 100 sheep.

This talk made the religious leaders angry. Then Jesus topped it off by saying, “I and My Father are one” (v. 30). Jesus claimed to be God, and that was the tipping point for the religious leaders. They picked up rocks to stone Jesus for blasphemy. He had told them His credentials—more than could be questioned. The evidence was there, but they wouldn’t accept it. He was who He said He was, and you can’t be right unless you think rightly of Him.

NEXT: Does Jesus have power over death?

LESSON 10

FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Have you ever heard Jesus described as a shepherd, seeking to lead, protect, and rescue you?
2. In what three ways did Jesus prove who He was?
3. How would you describe what it's like to hear Jesus' voice?
4. Think of people in your life; whose example prompted you to follow Jesus more closely? (And who's watching *your* life?)

LESSON 11

POWER OVER DEATH



Begin with prayer



Read **John 11**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 11:1-17** and **John 11:17-57**

The Gospel of John is like climbing a mountain. Each chapter brings you a little higher. We have come to a high point in the story, but not yet the highest.

The big question in life is this: Does Jesus Christ have power over death? If you don't have hope after this life, then this present life is meaningless. Life is so brief. Compared to eternity, it's nothing. Will the dead be raised?

Many critics have thrown out the miraculous in Scripture. But read it closely and you simply can't get rid of Jesus' bodily resurrection. Critics argue that they want a practical faith, not theoretical. But trusting Jesus as your Savior here and now gives you a lot of great benefits, but by far the greatest is eternal life in Christ Jesus!

So, does Jesus have power over our death?

To answer that, the Gospel of John takes us to the home of siblings Martha, Mary, and Lazarus—good friends of Jesus. The sisters get word to Jesus that Lazarus is sick. Jesus tells His disciples, *"This sickness is for the glory of God"* (v. 4).

Jesus loved this family—and He loves your family. Whether you're a Christian or not, He loves you! You can't keep Him from loving you—you can only put up an umbrella to keep the love of God from entering your life.

Surprisingly, Jesus deliberately and purposely delayed going to Bethany until Lazarus died. It's true—sometimes He lets one of His own die. When that happens, He's really just saying, "*Come on home now.*" Lazarus' death was for a purpose, so that Jesus could raise him from death. All this is written that we might believe.

For a believer, death has a new name. It's been robbed of its terror; the sting is gone! The word for "resurrection" means "the standing up," and it always refers to the body. The body dies but the soul never does. It's our body that Jesus will raise from the dead. Death means "separation"—the body of the believer goes into the grave, and that body's put to sleep because it's going to be raised one of these days. But the soul of the one who trust Jesus Christ goes to be with Him: "*absent from the body; present with the Lord*" (see 2 Corinthians 5:8). But whether you are saved or lost, you're going into eternity. Many would like to believe death is extinction, but it's not.

Jesus said they could now go to Bethany (in spite of those who wanted to kill Him). "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Jesus meant waking up Lazarus' body. When the disciples misunderstood, He clarified, "Lazarus is dead" (vs.11-15). Someday you may hear those words about a loved one. What about your hope? What about your relationship to God today? Do you have any hope at all?

Jesus said about Lazarus' death, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe." Something very wonderful is about to take place in Bethany!

Four days earlier, Lazarus had died. Martha and Mary are hurt and puzzled why Jesus had not come. When He finally showed up, their first words to Him were, "*If you had only been here, Lazarus would not have died*" (v. 21).

Martha revealed a wonderful faith in Jesus, but not one that reached beyond death. She believed in the resurrection and that she would one day see her brother again, but Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (vs. 25-26).

Jesus crafts His words carefully. He said that if those who are spiritually dead believe in Him, they will live. And that the one who trusts in Him shall never die. What about you—do you believe this?

Martha calls for her sister Mary and tells her that Jesus wants to see her. When Mary runs out of the house, the mourners think she's going to Lazarus' grave. When Jesus sees her weeping—and all the others weeping—He is troubled.

If you want to know how God feels about the death of your loved ones, be comforted here. Jesus groaned in His spirit when He saw Mary and the mourners. Death is frightening, and you can be sure that He enters into grief with you. He joins you in shedding tears. Jesus wept at Lazarus' grave. This is the way God feels at a funeral. Not for the loved one who's in Christ, because it's far better to go be with Christ—but for you, in your loss.

Those watching Jesus thought He cried because He loved Lazarus, but really He cried because He loved the living who were there weeping.

Jesus then asked that the stone that sealed Lazarus' grave be rolled away. Martha, ever the practical one, reminded Jesus that decay would have already set in and that the body would stink.

“Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” Then they took away the stone And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.” Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” –John 11:40-43

Jesus didn't need to pray this prayer. He prayed to help the faith of those who were there. And after He prayed, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” And there at the mouth of the cave came Lazarus, bound hand and foot in his grave clothes, even his face wrapped up. Jesus asks someone to untie Lazarus and let him go.

Have you noticed the difference between the resurrection of Lazarus and the resurrection of Jesus? Lazarus' miracle was an old body restored. But when Jesus rose to life again, He just came right up out of His grave clothes, out in a glorified body. Nobody rolled away the stone for Jesus to come out. The stone was rolled away to let those outside in.

Because of this miracle, many believed on Jesus (v. 45) but others began to stir up the Pharisees for trouble. For this reason, this miracle marked Jesus' last public appearance before His death.

You'd think Lazarus coming back from the dead would have convinced the most skeptical or uncertain people of Jesus' real identity. Miracles don't convince those with hard hearts. The unbelieving crowd has never gone after Jesus.

The bloodhounds of hate are on Jesus' trail again. The Pharisees feared that because of Jesus' many miracles, a great mass would turn to Him and spark a revolution, and Rome would then pounce on them. Fear kept them from believing—the same reason many run from Jesus today.

John 11:53-57 marks the beginning of the end—from this day forward, the Pharisees conspire together how to kill Jesus. Jesus showing His power over death is the breaking point.

When we begin chapter 13 through to the end, we're in the last week of His ministry—in fact, the last few days! John spends almost as much time on the last 48 hours of our Lord before the cross as He does on the first 32 years, and 11 months, and 3 weeks, and 5 days of His life. In fact, all the Gospels place the emphasis on the last eight days. Friends, you misrepresent the Bible if you don't put the emphasis upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—that's the gospel! (Read 1 Corinthians 2:2.)

NEXT: Walk with Jesus in the last weeks of His life.

LESSON 12

JESUS' FINAL WORDS



Begin with prayer



Read **John 12**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 12:1-24** and **John 12:25-50**

In the last weeks of Jesus' life, He turns His focus to the people closest to Him. In John 12, he visits a godly home of his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Yes, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead is now in fellowship with Christ. Martha is serving, as we expect from Martha. Everywhere you find Martha, she's putting on a meal. That's her gift, as it is so many wonderful saints. And here's Mary, too, sitting at Jesus' feet, as we often find her. She's learning. If we're to have fellowship with Him, we must know Him as Savior and then grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. It's the place of adoration and worship. This is a marvelous picture of those who are His own.

Mary is in this place of worship and adoration when she anoints Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair, and the house is filled with the odor of the ointment. This act was met with different responses. Judas reveals his true nature and criticizes Mary's extravagance, saying the money should have been given to the poor (when really he was a thief and wanted to steal a percentage).

Jesus defended Mary's action, which revealed she entered into His death. She sensed that He was to die for the sins of the world, and she was anointing Him for death ahead of time. The wonderful fragrance of this incident not only filled the room at that time, but it's filled the world. What a

lovely thing she did! And what a contrast of light and darkness between her and Judas Iscariot. Mary entered into the death of Christ while the others missed it altogether.

While Jesus visited with His friends, many curiosity-seekers came out to see Lazarus. The chief priests also conspired how to kill Lazarus.

The next day, which we celebrate as Palm Sunday, the people followed Jesus into Jerusalem.

According to Old Testament prophecy, Jesus offers Himself publicly as their King, which they, of course, rejected. His disciples didn't understand the significance of what He was doing (but it made sense to them later, after His death and resurrection).

This was a brief moment of triumph for Jesus right before His death. He could have gone to the crown without going to the cross, but then we could never have been saved. He has to go to the cross if He's to be our Savior.

In the crowd that day were Greek men who came to worship at the feast in Jerusalem. They heard about Jesus raising a man from the dead and wanted to meet Him. Jesus directed their attention to the cross.

Jesus now is living in the shadow of the cross. He's conscious of the hour for which He's come out of eternity. His concept of the cross was far different than that held by the Roman and Jewish population. For them, it was a place of disgrace and shame; a scaffold where criminals died. It was the hangman's noose, the electric chair, the lethal gas chamber.

But for Jesus, the cross was the place where He could redeem us from the curse of the law. That's why "He ... became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8) and then "...for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

The glory of God is seen in that cross. Jesus was glorified when He died for you and me and when He came out from that tomb. Mercy and pardon and forgiveness are found at that cross, and it's a beautiful thing, like a grain of wheat that is put in the ground. It dies, but it doesn't stay there. First comes the blade, then the ear, and the harvest grows from the death of the seed.

Jesus gave His life in death that you and I might have life. Many today think they've seen Jesus because they've read the Gospels, but you haven't really seen Jesus until you've seen He's the one who died for you on the cross, and died a redemptive death for the sins of the world.

In John 12:25, Jesus tells us something that sounds strange to us today: "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." What did He mean? Jesus contrasts two kinds of life here. First, we have a physical, natural life—a life that finds satisfaction with life here on earth. One day, we're going to lose this life. Better to invest in the second kind of life, your eternal life that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our eternal life is what the Lord is dying to give us. He suffered on the cross in ways we cannot fully understand. It was bad enough that He suffered at the hands of men, but He suffered beyond that. Our sin was put upon Him. He was "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" there on the cross (Isaiah 53:3). He was actually made sin for us and his soul was made "an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10). So our sin was put on the One who was holy and undefiled and separate from sinners. His soul stood in horror before that cross, but this was why He came—to go to the cross, to endure the shame of it. This was the glory in the cross and we ought to make more of it. (Read Galatians 6:14.)

And so with a troubled soul, Jesus cries to His Father in heaven and in loving response, His Father speaks back to Him.

"Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." –John 12:28

Heaven couldn't remain silent. But when that voice came from heaven, some heard thunder (a natural, unbelieving explanation to the supernatural), while others said they heard an angel.

Jesus said the voice was for our sakes and that as He is lifted up in a redemptive death, He will draw people to Him. But even when He walked among men, they saw His light, but refused to believe He was their Savior. These could have opened their eyes; they would not. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," but most people harden their hearts and choose instead to walk in darkness. This was one of the last times Jesus spoke publicly.

**NEXT: Jesus prays the longest prayer in the Bible—
and you can read it in three minutes.**

My sheep,

JESUS SAID,

*hear my voice,
and follow me.*



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 13

JESUS' PRIVATE SERMON



Begin with prayer



Read **John 13**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 13:1-16** and **John 13:17-38**

Jesus' "Upper Room Discourse" (John 13-17) is one of the greatest and longest sermons we have on record. It's meaningful for us today because it's a private talk for just His own and reveals new truth. There's nothing quite like it.

In John 13, Jesus is with His men in an upper room, preparing to observe the Passover together. In the last chapter, we looked at Jesus' feet as He was anointed with the fragrant spikenard that tells of the Lord's sweet savor and wonder. Now we're going to see the disciples' feet as they get a needed washing. Jesus used water to wash them, not blood. When we come as sinners to Christ, it's His blood that once and for all cleanses us and gives us a standing before God. But we need to be purified along the way because in our walk through the world we get a little dirty, and we need the washing.

Our Lord washed His disciples' feet for a very definite purpose. First, because He knew the time was coming for Him to leave. He takes the place of a servant and identifies Himself with His people. Today through His servants, Jesus still washes the feet of His disciples.

Jesus' second reason for washing His disciples' feet was because He loved His own. Friends, Jesus died down here to save us; He lives up in heaven to keep us saved. We have a wonderful Savior who loves us right on through to the very end!

The third reason Jesus washed their feet is because evil was afoot. There was an uninvited guest in the upper room, and that uninvited guest was Satan. It should have been just 13 in the room, but the devil came in, making it 14.

Right as the Passover celebration was ending, the devil entered the heart of Judas and others were affected by it. Satan today gets into Christian works and churches, and people get soiled and dirty. The Lord must wash us if we're to have fellowship with Him.

So as the meal is ending, Jesus does a beautiful thing. He takes off His robe, ties a linen cloth around His waist, pours water into a bowl, then He washes their feet and dries them with the towel.

He takes the place of a servant. Today He still washes the feet of those who are His own. He does this because He loves His own right on through to the end.

The Lord Jesus came to this earth, took on our humanity, and was made in the likeness of a servant. He took that character because He loved us, and He died on a cross that He might provide salvation for us. He did all this because He wants to have fellowship with us. And He calls us to be His servants today.

When He washes us, Jesus cleanses those who are His own. We see this when He came to wash Simon Peter's feet. When Peter objected to Jesus' humility, Jesus told him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (vs. 7-8). Then Peter wanted Him to give him a bath!

Some say this instance of Jesus' humility is an example for us. Certainly it is that, but perhaps it is also something more. This scene takes place during the Passover Feast—a meal that speaks of His death. He rose in resurrection, went back to heaven, girded Himself with a towel of service, and He's saying to us today, *"If I don't wash you, you'll have no part with Me."*

How does He wash us today? We're clean, Jesus says, through the Word that He's spoken to us. (Read Psalm 119:9 and Ephesians 5:25-26.) Jesus loves the church and He cleanses us so we can have fellowship with Him. When we come to Jesus for salvation, we're cleansed by His blood. All we need then is to have our feet washed of dirt that comes when we sin.

How does He cleanse us? First John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The feet speak of our walk. When we’re not walking in His way, that is sin and needs to be confessed. We need to go to Him, pray Psalm 139:23-24, and recognize we’re sinners and need to be cleansed. None of us can go through a day and live without sin. We need to pray, “Lord, forgive us our trespasses!”

To have fellowship with Jesus requires that as a believer you deal daily with sin in your life. You see that sin in the light of God’s Word. You can’t have fellowship with Him until you completely yield to Him. “If we confess our sins” means you put your feet in His hands for Him to cleanse and for Him to wash. He’s still in the business of washing feet. When you came to the cross, you were washed all over, but when you walk through this world, you get dirty; we become disobedient and sin gets into our lives.

But if we walk in the light [that is, the Word of God] ***as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son*** [just keeps on cleansing] ***us from all sin.*** -1 John 1:7

When Jesus was done washing their feet, He asked them if they understood what He did. If it was just a lesson in humility, they’d have gotten the message, but something more was going on. He said in effect, *You want joy in your life, Christian? Keep your relationship with God current and clean. Confess your disobedience. Confess wrong thoughts and actions.* Unless you do, Jesus says you can’t have fellowship with Him.

What’s more, if Jesus is your Master and Lord, wash one another’s feet. How can we do that? Paul says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Friend, instead of beating a fallen brother on the head and criticizing him, go to him and try to restore him. When you do that, you’re washing feet.

Isn’t this a beautiful, wonderful thing Jesus did? He’s in heaven right now, girded with a linen cloth, and wants to take your dirty feet and cleanse them.

Into this beautiful scene, our attention now turns to the greatest crime of the ages—Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. We do not witness a man losing his spiritual life, but rather this scene reveals that Judas never had any spiritual life to begin with.

This man Judas had been so clever that not a person in the room believed he was the one Jesus said will betray Him. Each one thought it might be the other. Some even asked, “Is it me?” Peter asked the Lord who it was and for the first time, Jesus reveals it’s Judas by handing him the sop—which was like a piece of toast. It was a token of friendship given to a guest of honor.

Judas stood at the crossroads. This is his last chance. Jesus kept the door open to him up to the very last moment. Even in the garden when Judas kissed Him, Jesus said in effect, *“You’ve fulfilled prophecy, Judas, but it’s not too late for you to accept Me.”*

Then Satan saw Judas’ weakness and entered into Him, and Judas made his decision. God never sent a man to hell who did not first of all send himself there. You see, God ratifies human decisions. He just seconds the motion.

But having made his decision, Judas is not beyond God’s control. Even the religious rulers didn’t want to arrest and crucify Jesus during Passover. They wanted to wait until it was over. But our Lord whispered to Judas, *“You’ll have to move quickly”* (v. 27). No one at the table even suspected Judas was the betrayer.

Now that Judas is gone, our Lord talks to His men. Already the shadow of the cross has fallen over that little group in the upper room, and they’re frightened. Our Lord tries to lift their focus from the here-and-now to the hereafter, from the material to the eternal, from that which is secular to that which is spiritual! He tenderly calls them “little children” (v. 33) and prepares them for what’s coming: *I’m going to leave you.*

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

–John 13:34-35

Not “they’ll know you are My disciples if you are fundamental in your doctrine,” but if you love each other.

Unfortunately when His disciples heard Jesus say, “I’m going away,” that’s all they heard.

“Where are you going?” Peter asks.

“Somewhere you can’t follow,” Jesus said.

“But I will die for you, Jesus!” Peter said—and he meant every word of it. That night he got a sword and used it when he tried (badly) to fight for his Lord. He was sincere but devastated when our Lord told him he would deny Him that night.

NEXT: A message for emergencies.

LESSON 14

JESUS COMFORTS HIS DISCIPLES



Begin with prayer



Read **John 14**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 14:1-6** and **John 14:7-31**

Some messages are for emergencies to be delivered in crisis times. Jesus delivered that kind of message here in John 14 to bring them through that dark night. This chapter has cushioned the shock for multitudes of people from that day right down to the present hour. It has been a great comfort to God's people through the centuries.

Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me" (v. 1). Clearly, Jesus is saying He is God. He also makes it clear it's not enough just to believe in God, but you must also have a personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Next, Jesus hints at what He's doing today. "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (v. 2).

The "Father's house" is this vast universe we live in today. It's a speck in space. Look up at the sky on any night and see just a part of the Father's house. In the Father's house are many mansions—many "abiding places."

"If it were not so, I would have told you." The Lord Jesus puts His entire reputation on the line here. You either believe Him or you don't. He then says, "I go to prepare a (special) place for you." This is quite wonderful! In this

vast universe, filled with so many abiding places, Jesus has gone to prepare a place for those who are His own. Once He's ready, He'll come again and gather His own together with Him (v. 3).

This is the first time Jesus tells us He's taking a people out of this earth to be with Him—but it's not the last time. The apostle Paul talked about a future time when we will be with the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

John in Revelation shows us a city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. This is a new concept in city living and urban dwelling, where the church will dwell throughout eternity. We are to comfort each other with this hope.

Hope is what the disciples needed that night in the upper room when they heard the news about Jesus' death. Our Lord Jesus lifts them from the here and now to the hereafter. He shifts their focus from the material to the spiritual, from the earthly to the heavenly, and now He says, "And where I go you know, and the way you know" (v. 4).

"But how can we know the way?" thinks the one disciple willing to ask the question. Every time we meet Thomas, he's asking a question, raising a doubt. He had a question mark for a brain. It took our Lord a long time to make an explanation mark out of it, but He did.

Thomas asked a good question—one that Jesus answers with the whole gospel in a nutshell. Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (v. 6).

When Jesus said He was "the Way," He answers the question, *How do I get to God?* A church or a ceremony can never bring you to God. Only Jesus Christ can bring you to God. He says, "I am the way!"

When Jesus said, "I am the truth," He didn't say "I *tell* the truth," although He did. He says, *"I am the touchstone of truth."*

He also said, "I am the life!" He didn't say He was merely alive, but He's the source, the origin of life. Everything that has life draws life from Him.

He concludes with, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." He made a dead-end street out of all the alternative religions. The only way to get to God is through Jesus Christ.

Do you have Him, friend? Are you trusting Him as your personal Savior and nothing else? He alone can save you. All He asks you to do is to come to Him.

Jesus continues His comforting instruction by assuring them that to know Him is to know the Father (vs. 7-8). Then Phillip interrupts Jesus with a request: *“Show us the Father and that would be enough.”* Philip expresses the highest desire of us all. He said, *“I’d love to see God! I’d like to spend the first million years in eternity looking at the Father.”*

Jesus answered him, *“Do you still not recognize me, Philip?”* (v. 9). What He meant was, *“When you see me, you are seeing the same person as the Father, in power, in character, in love, in everything else.”* The Lord Jesus never appealed to His own mind and His own will to make a decision. *“I’m doing this because it’s the will of the Father,”* He said every time. What He said and what He did was the Father’s will.

He says, *“If you can’t believe what I’m saying, believe what you’ve seen”* (vs. 11-12).

The Lord Jesus did tremendous miracles while on earth, but the supreme accomplishment is bringing men and women into a right relationship with God. He is still doing that. Today He’s working through frail human flesh. The fact that we can share the gospel with someone and they turn to Christ—that’s a greater work!

Jesus then shares a marvelous promise. He says, *“Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son”* (v. 13). Look at that carefully. Don’t misunderstand—God is not giving you a blank check. The promise is tied to the next verses, *“If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep My commandments”* (vs. 14-15).

A prayer that will enable God to glorify the Son is the prayer He’ll answer. When we stand before God, we are pleading the merits of His blessed Son. He only hears your prayer when you pray in the name of Jesus Christ. That’s not just something you put on the tag end of your prayer. Your prayer must be for His glory, not for our selfish ends. It must be for Him to be glorified down here.

Friends, when you pray in the name of Christ, you’re praying for Him! Not for yourself—that the Father’s name may be glorified in the Son down here. That first comes when we’re obeying Him out of our love for Him.

How are you doing in that area, friend? Do you love Him? It’s important! God doesn’t hear just any prayer; He listens when you come in the name of Jesus.

JESUS PROMISES TO SEND A HELPER

Even though Jesus told the disciples He was going away, He promised that God will send a Helper—the person of the Holy Spirit—who would live in them. *I'm not leaving you alone.*

“... Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” –John 14:19-20

That's the most profound statement in the Bible! No philosopher can plumb the meaning of that expression, yet a child knows the meaning of each word.

“You in me.” My Friend, that's salvation! To be saved means to be “in Christ.”

“And I in you.” That's Christian living down here (see Galatians 2:20).

One is our position; the other is our practice down here.

And speaking of our practice, Jesus says those who love Him will obey Him. And you can't say you love Him if you don't obey Him. To those who love the Lord, He promises to make Himself known to them. Isn't that a marvelous promise?

A disciple heard this and asked, *“How, Lord? And what about the world? Have you forgotten about the world?”* (That disciple has a missions heart!)

Jesus says, *“I'm thinking of the world. The reason I've given you this truth is that you might take it to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. The only way this can be taken to the world is through you.”*

Again, the question is *how?* And the answer is: Through the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (v. 26).

Jesus' last conversation with the disciples draws to an end and He says,

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” –John 14:27

This glorious, wonderful peace comes to the heart of those who are fully yielded to the Lord Jesus.

And with that, Jesus heads over to the Garden of Gethsemane where He had another siege with Satan, the prince of the world. And after winning that battle, He'd go to the cross for the sins of the world and the Holy Spirit would come into the world. Our prayer is that even right now He's making the Lord Jesus real to everyone reading this.

NEXT: What does it mean to "abide" in Christ?

LESSON 15

WHAT IT MEANS TO ABIDE IN CHRIST



Begin with prayer



Read **John 15**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 15:1-3** and **John 15:3-27**

Somewhere between the upper room and the Garden of Gethsemane, our Lord taught John 15 and 16, and then prayed John 17. As He taught John 15, Jesus began by saying: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.” The group was traveling on their way to the garden via the temple. It was Passover and the beautiful bronze gates to the temple were open all night. Into the metalwork of the gate, a golden vine was woven representing the nation of Israel. (See Psalm 80:8-9 and Isaiah 5:1, 7.)

Jesus’ words were revolutionary: “*I am the genuine vine.*” He’s telling these men whose roots run deep in the Old Testament that your religion or nationality is not important anymore, but you must be joined to Him.

He says, “Abide in Me” (v. 4). In this passage, notice three important words. The first is the word “in” (used seven times total). “Every branch *in* Me.” To be saved means to be “in Christ.” When you trust Jesus Christ as Savior, you become a child of God through faith in Christ, born again by the Spirit of God. But the Spirit does something else; He not only indwells you, He also baptizes you, and that’s what puts you in the Body of Christ.

The next word is “fruit” (used six times).

The third word is “abide” (nine times). Abiding in Christ is how we bear fruit. So here we have “in Christ” and we have “fruit”—more fruit and much fruit—and then “abiding in Christ.”

When a branch that is in Christ does not bear fruit, He trims it off (v. 6) either by setting it aside or by death. This doesn't mean we lose our salvation, since we're talking about fruit-bearing here. The fruit, of course, is the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit in the believer's life is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, etc. (see Galatians 5:22-23). But there is other fruit rarely mentioned. You have effective prayer (v. 7), perpetual fruit (v.11), and joy celestial. If a person has those in their life, they will bring men into God's presence by their very lives if not by their spoken word.

If a branch is bearing fruit, the Father may prune it so it bears even more fruit. Sometimes it hurts when He prunes us, friends. Often He takes out of our lives the things that hinder us. Hebrews 12:6 says that whom God loves, He *chastens*. He's not against you; He's trying to get fruit out of your life. If you complain and move away from Him, you'll miss the blessing. Draw near to Him in times of pruning and it won't hurt nearly as much.

When the Father cultivates us in order to bear much fruit, He also cleanses us through His Word (v. 3). Do you know the ways the Word cleanses us? First with new birth (1 Peter 1:22-23). Psalm 119:9 tells us we are cleansed when we obey God's Word. Second Corinthians 7:1 tells us God's promises compel us to turn from the things that dirty us. Some think today that believers can live any kind of a life just as long as in the end you're saved. But God reveals a person's faith as genuine by his relationship to the Word of God and whether it's having its way in his life. When we are obedient to Him, there will be fruit in our lives. (Read Psalm 119:67, 71.)

God cleanses us by the supernatural power of His Word—the only way to abide in Him is to allow Him to cleanse us daily.

Next, to abide in Christ we must keep His commandments (v. 10). The Lord Jesus says we're His friends if we do what He commands. He's more than your friend, He's your commander in chief. You must obey Him to abide in Him.

Jesus also said that to abide in Him, we must continue in His love. That means constant communion. You can't live like the devil all week and expect to have close relationship with Jesus on Sunday. That means you're in fellowship with Him at your kitchen sink and the office and on the street.

It's our choice whether we abide in Christ. We have been joined to Him by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but we have free will and can break that fellowship by not abiding in Him, by allowing sin in our lives, by stepping out of God's will, by worldliness. Many Christians think producing much fruit is entirely out of the question—but it's not! Our Lord Jesus wants to help us produce fruit. He also wants us to have a good time! One of the fruits of the Spirit is to have joy in your life. But only the Spirit of God can produce this in our lives.

Jesus has given us a model to follow. Listen to Him, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (vs. 13-14).

Loving people like Jesus wants us to love them doesn't come to us naturally, only super-naturally. Believers are continually finding fault one with another, criticizing and picking out each other's weaknesses. That's why Jesus gave His own life as an example to follow.

His example also gives us a standard by which we see sin. Until people rejected Jesus as the Savior of the world, our sins are as nothing. If we hear the gospel and reject it, we compound our guilt. The worst sinner is the one who like Judas Iscariot has been in Jesus' presence, heard about Him, and then turned his back on Him.

Jesus laid down His life for us and asks us to obey Him, and when we do He says we'll be His friends. The world won't be our friend; it can't love a real child of God. The world loves the darkness. When the Lord turns on the light, the rats and the snakes and the bugs run for cover. They hate the light and the One who turns it on.

Jesus said all these things to comfort and strengthen the disciples on the way to the garden of Gethsemane.

NEXT: Why it was better for Jesus to leave.

LESSON 15

FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Do you know anyone who is a Christian whose life seems different—special, somehow? They are kinder, more loving, more patient; they have joy, peace, etc.? This is called the “fruit” of knowing Jesus. Would you like to know more about how you could have that, too?

2. This part of God’s Word describes how a Christian’s life is different than someone who doesn’t know Him. What about your life is different/better/more like Jesus’ life?

3. Do you see fruit of abiding in Jesus in your life? Think about your life before you knew Him and compare it to how you think and live today. How are they different?

4. The Gospel of John describes the person who abides in Jesus as inviting people into God's presence by their very lives. Specifically, how would you like your life to invite people to God? By how you speak to people, help them, encourage them, show them how to live in God?

*Glorious,
I wonderful peace*

COMES TO THE HEART OF THOSE
WHO ARE FULLY YIELDED TO

the Lord Jesus.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 16

WHY IT'S BETTER FOR JESUS TO LEAVE



Begin with prayer



Read **John 16**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 16:1-7** and **John 16:8-28**

This is one of the richest and most rewarding studies we possibly could have.

In John 16, Jesus finishes up His last private sermon while He and His men walk to Gethsemane. Back in John 14, Jesus promised them a glorious future with Him (14:3), but He made it clear that to follow Him means to forsake all and sacrifice. He reminds them He is not only despised, but rejected here. He is “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). His followers will likewise be “in the world,” but not “of the world.” The world will hate us. But if we suffer with Him down here, we’ll reign with Him in the future.

The Lord told the disciples then and now, *“It’s not going to be easy for you here.”* If you stand for the Word of God, you’re going to have enemies and they’ll attack you. He said all these things to strengthen them (and us) and to let them know what’s coming. But Jesus loved them right on through to the very end, identifies with what they’ll suffer, and assured them He’ll be with them.

He knew they will fail (like Simon Peter would deny Him), but He promised to sustain them through it. They were responsible to God for their lives, but He promised He would help them.

In every generation since, standing for Jesus costs you something. Decide beforehand if you're willing to pay the price.

So why will the world hate the person who genuinely believes God? Jesus traced the hatred right to the source: Because they do not know the Father or Him (v. 3). *Be prepared for it*, Jesus said.

You can imagine that this heavy talk made the disciples have a heavy heart. Jesus saw this sorrow was overwhelming them. He sees how many Christians let one experience embitter them, a disappointment in some individual. He knows how an experience in a church turns them from God. But He says, *"That's not the way it should be."*

"It's best for me to leave because," the Lord Jesus says, *"I'm going to send the Comforter to you"* (v. 7). Why was it best? Here are a few reasons:

- Jesus' purpose in coming to this world was to die and "give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Once that was accomplished, He went back to the Father.
- When Jesus became a man, He limited himself to being in one place at a time. But when the Holy Spirit came, He can be in all places at once.
- The Holy Spirit will be the Comforter, the Paraclete, and He'll come to us and perform several unique ministries in this present world (15:8-9).
- He convicts us of sin. Like a prosecuting attorney, the Spirit of God presents evidence in your heart that makes you decide to turn from your sin that leads you to faith and trust in Jesus Christ. But God has no remedy for unbelief. If you do not trust Him, then you're lost. The decision to believe is every person's choice to make.
- He convicts us of righteousness. Our Lord Jesus Christ not only died on the cross—He died a judgment death; He took our guilt and was delivered for our offenses, but He was raised for our justification! That is, He was raised that we can not only have sins subtracted, but that we could have righteousness added. Not only are our sins forgiven, but we now can stand in God's presence with Jesus' righteousness. (See Philippians 3:8-9.) If you have any standing today before God, it's in Christ, and He is your righteousness. You have as much right in heaven as He has, or you have no right there at all.
- He convicts us of judgment. The prince of this world, Satan, has already been judged. We live in a judged world. The world is like the man waiting in death row for execution. God is no politician trying to run for

office—He’s already in office. He’s the Judge of the earth. When man stands before Him for judgment someday, they’re not going to plead their case; all they’ll get is a guilty verdict.

- The Lord Jesus had so much He wanted to tell His disciples, but He knew they wouldn’t be able to bear it. They needed to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of Him, just as we need to. Just reading the Bible is not the answer alone. We need the Holy Spirit to be our teacher. He promises to guide us into truth. He does not speak of Himself but points us to Jesus. My friend, when you’re in church or in a Bible study and all of a sudden you get a glimpse of the Lord Jesus, and He becomes wonderful to you, and the Savior becomes very real and meaningful to you, that’s the Holy Spirit working in you. He’s hiding himself and revealing Jesus Christ!
- He’ll take the deep things of God and show them to you—something He alone can do (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

In His closing thoughts with His disciples, Jesus told them they would be separated. He would be arrested, and they would scatter like sheep. He would be crucified, be buried, but the third day, He would come back and they would see Him again. They did not know exactly what He meant. So, He explained the “little while” was for them three days, but there’s to come another “little while” when He ascended back into heaven (v. 16). But He promised He would come to them in the person of the Holy Spirit. “I will not leave you orphans” (14:18), He said. *I’ll be with you through the Spirit of God. And He’ll take the things of mine and make them real to you.* And that’s where we live today.

Jesus describes this time of waiting like a woman in labor (v. 21). After she delivers and is in the joy of holding her baby, she doesn’t remember the anguish. Someday in God’s presence, we’ll look back on this life, and if we have any regrets, it will be, “Why didn’t we trust Him more? Why didn’t we stand for Him? Why didn’t we do more for Him?”

Jesus then invites the disciples (once again) to pray to the Father in His name (v. 24). They had never done this before. Some may argue, “Can’t I just pray to the Father?” Yes, but why would you rob yourself of an intercessor? Pray to the Father in the name of Jesus because He’s up there praying for you! God wants to hear and answer prayer, but they must come from the heart of one who loves Jesus Christ, is in fellowship with Christ, and who is obeying Christ!

As Jesus concludes His final instruction, He says, “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father” (v. 28). This verse is bigger than Bethlehem, it’s wider than space, it reaches back into eternity past and moves into eternity future beyond the boundaries of space to the Throne of God. God became a man and the Word was made flesh. No human being could make that statement except the Lord Jesus Christ!

And the disciples believed—a great conviction came over them, formed not just from faith but of knowledge based upon facts. Now they are convinced Jesus Christ is God.

The last thing He said to them is an axiom for the Christian life.

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” –John 16:33

In Christ you may have peace. It’s only found in Him. His victory is our victory! The only one who ever lived a victorious life was Jesus Christ.

When we learn to identify ourselves with Him, come into close fellowship with Him, and make real these things that are just theories to the average Christian, then we will begin to experience the peace of God in our hearts, we’ll be of good cheer, and there will be joy in our lives.

NEXT: The real “Lord’s Prayer.”

LESSON 17

THE REAL LORD'S PRAYER



Begin with prayer



Read **John 17**



Listen at TTB.org/John to **John 16:29–17:1** and **John 17:2-26**

In John 17, Jesus turns from talking to the disciples to talking with His Father. Jesus, the Great Intercessor, lets us all eavesdrop on His prayer. John 17 is the real “Lord’s Prayer,” a sample of the communication which constantly passed between the Lord Jesus here on earth and the Father in heaven. It’s recorded so we might know what He prays for us today. It is the longest prayer in the Bible—yet you can read it in three minutes.

As you recall, His was a life of prayer. (See Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12.) Again and again we read about our Lord praying.

You may ask, “Who’s He praying for and what’s He praying about?” He’s praying for you, and He’s praying for me. If you forgot to pray this morning, He didn’t. He prayed for you this morning. God always hears and answers His prayer just the way He prays them. Now He answers our prayers, but not always the way we pray it. John 11:41-42 records Jesus saying, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me”

In this beautiful chapter, Jesus prays for Himself (vs.1-5), He prays for His own (vs. 6-20), and He prays for His church (vs 21-26).

First, Jesus prays for Himself. Every instrument should be tuned up before it plays the tune, and before we pray for others, we need to pray for ourselves in order to get our hearts and lives in tune with God. Far from being selfish, praying for ourselves is essential.

Notice Jesus' posture when He prayed. Instead of bowing His head, He lifted up His eyes to heaven. You can pray with your eyes open. You can pray as you walk along.

First, Jesus prays, "Father, the hour has come" (v. 1). The time they set in eternity past for the Lamb of God to be slain is now striking the hour.

The hour had come for Him to pay for our sins. The hour had come for all creation to see the love of God displayed and lavished upon that cross when He took our sin, and die a vicarious, substitutionary, redemptive death for us.

Jesus Christ demonstrated that God is not a brutal bully, but He is a Father, one who loves the world so much He gave His only begotten Son. Jesus prayed, "Glorify Your Son that Your Son may glorify You." Oh, the wealth of what that means! Jesus is praying for His relationship with His Father.

It's a startling statement to say that Jesus has power over all flesh. The Lord Jesus could make bow to Him our little universe and each person in it. But that's the last thing He wants! We are God's love gift to Jesus. His invitation is "*whosoever will may come*" (Revelation 22:17), offered to every person. If someone turns down the offer, that's their condemnation.

Jesus gives eternal life to everyone who hears the call and responds in their hearts and comes to Him of their own free will.

What is eternal life? It's to "know You, the only true God" (v. 3). It's not the amount of knowledge you have, but the kind of knowledge you have. It's who you know that's important. In the same way it's not the amount of faith you have, it's the kind of faith. Faith doesn't save (that's just the instrument)—it's Jesus, the object of your faith, who saves. You can believe in the wrong thing.

What is the right thing to believe in for eternal life? What does the Word of God say? The gospel is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. If we know that and respond in faith when we trust Christ as Savior, that is eternal life.

Jesus' work for your salvation is finished. In John 17:4, Jesus essentially hands in His final report to the Father. "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." He hasn't yet died on the cross or risen from the dead, but God speaks of things future just as if it has already happened. Future tense for God is just as accurate as past tense.

Our redemption is finished. He's done all that is necessary for you to be saved. The gospel and salvation is never what God asks you to do to be saved but instead, it's God telling you what He's already done for you. Do you believe that by faith?

Jesus continues in prayer, asking the Father to glorify Him as He did before the world.

When Jesus—the Word, become flesh—as a baby slept on Mary's bosom, He could have spoken this universe out of existence. He was 100% God, but He emptied Himself of His prerogatives of deity. He laid aside His glory. All of creation should have celebrated His birth. He could have claimed it, but He laid it aside.

Now, as He's ready to return to heaven, He hands in His report and asks: *"I'd like my glory back"* (v. 5).

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

Now Jesus begins to pray for His disciples. He rehearses with the Father the beautiful relationship He's had with this team. They now know that God sent Him. And now, with the love of the greatest teacher for His students, He intercedes for them. Notice He says He doesn't pray for the world but that He intercedes for His own who are in the world. Someone might say, "That's terrible that He doesn't pray for the world." My friend, He died for the world! What else do you want to ask Him? It's the Holy Spirit's ministry to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and of judgment. Jesus prays for the ones God gave to Him. Somehow God's gift merges our election and free will for the purpose of saving us and bringing glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This Great High Priestly prayer of Christ is for the present hour and for you. He prays for the unity of believers, an organic unity that only God can make. Our salvation is such that only God can accomplish it. Our joy is only fulfilled in God. We have God's Word, and it delivers us from the hatred of the world.

God's Word is the most revolutionary book there is in the world. Its radical message is that you can't save yourself. Only Jesus Christ can save you. You can't make this world better; only Jesus Christ can. That's revolutionary and runs counter to the world's do-it-yourself philosophy.

It's amazing that Jesus doesn't pray that we'll escape the world, but wants to keep us in the world. He gets more glory by keeping us in the world today than He would in taking us out of the world. His Word sanctifies us—sets us apart as His witnesses.

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS CHURCH

Finally, Jesus prays for the church and especially for us to be unified in His name. Only He can make this unity possible—the important thing is to be joined to the Living Christ and to believe together that God sent Jesus Christ into the world to die for our sins.

God loves us today just like He loves the Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful is that! Because of that love, Jesus prays that we love each other.

This is the real Lord's Prayer!

NEXT: The last supper together and capture in a garden.

LESSON 18

JESUS' FINAL DAY



Begin with prayer



Read **John 18**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 18:1-11** and **John 18:11-40**

In John 18, we'll walk with the Lord in His final day before the cross. Through John's eyewitness account, we'll get a different perspective than the other Gospel books. Matthew, Mark, and Luke witnessed to Jesus' humanity and suffering, but John looks at the Lord Jesus' deity. He is the God-man in this Gospel who very soon will return to the Father.

We begin our journey outside. In His majesty and meekness, Jesus seems to have spent many nights under the open sky. As far as we know, He never slept inside the walled city of Jerusalem; usually He stayed with friends in Bethany, over the hill. On this last night, He wants a quiet place to pray and then an easy opportunity for His enemies to take Him.

After an evening celebrating the Passover in the upper room, Jesus leads His men across the Kidron Valley, over the Kidron brook, to their usual spot among the olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. But of course, Judas knew that.

In the Old Testament, you might remember another crossing of this same brook by King David who was also betrayed. He crossed the Kidron on the run when his son Absalom and his friend and counsellor, Ahithophel, led a rebellion against him.

Notice that John doesn't tell us anything about Jesus' agony in the garden. Why? Because this book speaks of Jesus' glory, not His humanity. We don't hear about Jesus' praying nor His extreme suffering. Rather we see Jesus in full dignity and intentionality.

Why would Jesus go to the place where He knew His enemies could find and take Him? They wouldn't dare lay hands on Him in the temple or in the streets of Jerusalem because it would cause a riot among the people. So Jesus finds this quiet place outside the city and in the dead of night for them to arrest Him. The reason: Jesus is now resolved to go to the cross. He's now the Lamb of God who offers no resistance. (See Isaiah 53:7 and Acts 8:32.) It's an outrageous thought that He yields Himself to His enemies.

Going to the Garden of Gethsemane also gave Judas Iscariot the edge in betraying Him. Previously, when His enemies closed in on Him, Jesus disappeared miraculously into the crowds (John 8:59, 12:36). Now He lays Himself wide open to be taken.

And so on that dreadful night, after Jesus did business with His Father, here come hundreds of soldiers with torches and weapons, led by Judas. Why so many soldiers? Since everyone knew Jesus could perform miracles, they weren't taking any chances. They thought if they brought enough armed men, they had a chance at capturing Him. Now notice Jesus' dignity.

But Jesus, knowing what was ahead of Him, stepped out of the shadows and asks, *"Who are you looking for? And Why bring all of these weapons?"* Jesus wasn't a poor, weak man who has been trapped by some clever religious rulers and the power of Rome. If He had not yielded Himself to them, their weapons would have been worthless.

"We're looking for Jesus of Nazareth." They do not give Him the dignity that belongs to Him. They didn't recognize Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, as Simon Peter did. Someday Jesus' name will be above every name and on that glorious day, even hell itself will bow to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Isn't it curious that even when Jesus identified Himself, for a moment, nobody recognized Him? Even Judas didn't know Him initially as Jesus stood there as the Lord of glory. He pointed Jesus out in a minute, but not at first.

As many times as you may have read this passage, have you noticed verse six? *"Now when He said to them, 'I am He', they drew back and fell to the ground."*

This is amazing! For just a few moments, Jesus reveals His glory. He let these men know He was absolutely in charge, and they couldn't even arrest Him without His permission. One glance and the soldiers fall backward—not forward in worship, but backwards in fear and absolute dismay. For a moment, confusion broke out. Just for a moment, they see more than Jesus of Nazareth in front of them; they see the Lord of glory, God revealed in human flesh. This all happened to fulfill prophecy (see Psalm 27:1-2, 35:4, and 40:14). For the briefest of moments, even in this dark hour when He's yielding Himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (see John 1:29), Jesus reveals who He really is.

Then, notice what the Lord Jesus did next.

Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way," that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

–John 18:8-9

He commands the soldiers to let His disciples go, and they did. He's still in charge of everything—He tells them whom to arrest and whom not to arrest. The disciples wouldn't be captured nor brought in as witnesses or accomplices. This validated the words in His prayer, *"I didn't lose one of those You gave Me"* (v. 9).

Just then Simon Peter, who was carrying a sword, pulled it from its sheath and struck the Chief Priest's servant, Malchus, cutting off his right ear.

Poor Peter. His heart was likely racing. Earlier that evening, he had asked the Lord why he couldn't go with Him where He was going. *"I would lay down my life for You,"* he said. And he meant it. But the Lord had told him he didn't know himself, that he would deny Him even that night.

Peter's problem (and ours at times) is we are sincere in our desire to live—or die—for Jesus. The problem is we can't produce this in our own strength. We want to follow Jesus, but in our own strength we can't do it. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can produce this life yielded to Christ. Peter may have been thinking, *"I'll show Him that I'll die for Him."*

So it would seem that Simon Peter was better with a fishing net than with a sword. He went after the man's neck and he only got the ear. We're grateful for that. Dr. Luke told us Jesus put Malchus' ear back on, His final miracle before the cross (Luke 20:51). But why wasn't Peter arrested for this?

Because the Lord Jesus said, *“Let these men go”* (v. 8). He is in command.

Jesus then told Peter to put up the sword. Why? Because Jesus is now yielding Himself into the hands of His captors, and He’s getting ready. As He says, *“Do you think for a moment I’m not going to drink this cup the Father gave me?”* (v. 11).

What cup is He talking about? The Bible describes several cups: the cup of salvation, (Psalm 116:13), the cup of consolation (Jeremiah 16:7), the cup of comfort (Psalm 23:5). This cup that Jesus dreads is the cup of judgement. This is the cup of everyone’s sin, and it’s repulsive to Jesus.

In Matthew’s Gospel, we eavesdrop on Jesus’ prayer request that the cup would pass from Him (Matthew 26:39). But He was willing, nonetheless. Only He could drink this cup of judgment the way He did, because in His perfect sinless life, He became sin for us.

Even in His revulsion of sin, Jesus said He would drink the cup His Father gave Him. Not reluctantly, not out of duty. Out of love, Jesus was willing. There is no willingness higher than that. He never lost sight of where He was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God. He would do whatever it took along the way to obey His Father and rescue us.

Willingly, Jesus let the band of soldiers and the religious rulers bind Him, though it wasn’t necessary (v. 12). He’s the Lamb who was slain even before the foundation of the world. As a Lamb, He doesn’t resist them (Isaiah 53:7), but He’s going forward in dignity and in glory.

NEXT: A dark night in Jerusalem.

GOD'S WORD IS
THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY BOOK
THERE IS IN THE WORLD.

ITS RADICAL MESSAGE IS THAT
YOU CAN'T SAVE YOURSELF.

ONLY JESUS CHRIST
CAN SAVE YOU.



THRUtheBIBLE

LESSON 19

A DARK NIGHT IN JERUSALEM



Begin with prayer



Read **John 18:14–19:6**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 18:11-40** and **John 19:1-37**

It is the middle of the night, outside the palace grounds. We've just left the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was led away by hundreds of armed soldiers.

They first take Him to Annas, the former high priest and a clever, satanic old politician who knew how to handle Rome. All through these dark events, Annas' hand directs from the background.

John, Jesus' disciple, followed the guards to the palace. He apparently had an "in" with those in Jerusalem, and got someone to let him in. However, it was fatal for Simon Peter to go in there. John gets permission from the girl at the gate to allow Peter into the courtyard. Simon Peter, scared to death, had never been in that crowd before. He's nervous, so he talks and they call him out as a Galilean. All the gate girl does is ask Peter if he was one of the prisoner's disciples. He says, "I am not" (v. 17), and walks on through. A little wisp of a girl makes Peter deny the Lord.

It's early morning. The palace guards are there to keep order. They build a fire, and Peter stands with them warming himself.

Inside, the Jewish religious rulers had already decided they would kill Jesus, making these six trials a mockery. First He was brought before Annas. We have no record of that trial. Annas was the religious high priest, and he was a conniving rascal. Satanic to the core, he likely planned the whole thing. Then the Lord stood before Caiaphas to make it legal. This was a mockery, of course, for they had already predetermined His death. When they realized they couldn't hand down a death judgment, they decided to take Jesus to Pilate.

He is struck, mocked, ridiculed, and scourged, yet He yields Himself to the humiliation. He is the Suffering Servant the prophet told about. However, He does call their attention to the fact that what they are doing is illegal and contrary to the Mosaic Law. They have no witness that He has done evil, and yet they smite Him. They are the ones who are breaking the Law. For one thing, no trial is to begin at night nor end at night. A trial is not to begin and end on the same day. They are not to strike a prisoner who has not yet been proven guilty.

In the courtyard, Peter, following the Lord from a distance, warms his hands at a fire. Others, hearing his accent, say, *"That guy is from Galilee."* Someone remembers him from the garden (a relative of the man whose ear he'd cut off!). But Peter intensely denies both. Immediately the cock crows—the sign of his denial Jesus had told him about earlier. And just then, the guards storm through the courtyard with Jesus, Peter glimpses Jesus' face all bloody and beaten, and he caught His eye. Peter ran out of the courtyard and bitterly wept for denying the Lord. But, thank God, the Lord was on His way to die for him and had already told him He had prayed so that Peter's faith would not fail.

Why is it that Simon Peter, who did a deed as shameful as Judas, could make his way back to the Lord? Because he was a child of God, it broke his heart to know what he had done. A child of God may get far from God, but God is never far from him. He is always there and He is always available. The Lord never said to Peter, *"I'm sorry, but because you failed Me, I just can't use you anymore."* No, He appeared personally to Peter after His resurrection, and He chose Peter to preach the first sermon on the day of Pentecost. Thank God for a Savior and a Lord like that. He will always take you back!

Everyone was in a hurry to get a verdict against Jesus, so they brought Him to Pilate. But Pilate senses right away Jesus is innocent, and he wants nothing to do with the trial. He tries to turn Jesus over to the religious rulers—*"You should judge Jesus"* (v. 31)—but they need Gentiles (Rome) to execute Him under the guise of political treason.

And he couldn't quite fathom all that was taking place. At that moment he called Jesus inside and asked him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (18:33). His question was an honest one. Jesus confuses him, saying His kingdom doesn't come from the world's politics or sinful collusions strategized in people's sinful hearts. Jesus had appealed to the head of this man, Pilate. He asked him the logical question of where he got his evidence. Pilate sneered at that and said the Jews had brought the accusation. Now Jesus will appeal to this man's heart. Jesus is dealing with him, man to man.

"You say rightly that I am a king." Jesus continues, "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (18:37).

Pilate then asked the question, "What is truth?" Was he being sarcastic or sincere? Was Pilate a cynic? Was he simply puzzled? He stood in the presence of the Lord Jesus who was and is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. John tells us later in his Gospel that he has written all these things so we might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Friend, do you ask, "What is truth?" Is He truth to you? Have you faced reality in *Him*?

Pilate then took Jesus back outside and said to these religious rulers, "*I find nothing to accuse this man of. He's done nothing to deserve a death sentence against Him*" (18:38).

Pilate then proposed Jesus be released, as was the custom at the Passover Feast to release a prisoner. But the people, riled up by the religious rulers, cried out for Barabbas to be released. Pilate is startled by their choice since Barabbas was a known criminal.

Pilate is trying hard to escape making a decision. He was the one on trial here, not Jesus. He was certain of Jesus' innocence, saying at least seven times, "I find no fault in Him" (see Matthew 27:18, 24; Mark 15:10; Luke 23:20-22; John 18:38, 19:12; Acts 3:13). Even his wife urged him not to sentence Jesus. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, only for Herod to send Him back.

Pilate, afraid of what would be reported to Rome, is a cheap politician. He decides to scourge Jesus to placate the crowd—maybe then they would agree to release Jesus. But torturing a prisoner was entirely unlawful and entirely wrong.

After scourging Jesus within an inch of His life, He became unrecognizable as a man (see Isaiah 52:14; 53:1-12). Pilate presented Him, “Behold the Man!” (19:5), but we should also say, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Pilate calls for a basin of water and washes his hands in front of the people, symbolizing he was done with this mockery of a trial. Jesus is now delivered into the hands of sinful men, both religious and political, and on His way to the cross.

NEXT: How should we view Jesus' death?

LESSON 20

THE DEATH OF OUR LORD



Begin with prayer



Read **John 19:1–20:18**



Listen at [TTB.org/John](https://www.TTB.org/John) to **John 19:1-37** and **John 19:38–20:18**

The death of our Lord Jesus can be viewed from several viewpoints. From God's standpoint, the cross was a mercy seat where He can extend you mercy. It was where full satisfaction was made so that a holy and righteous God could reach down and save sinners. The judgment throne of God becomes a mercy seat because Jesus bore our guilt.

From the Lord Jesus' standpoint, He's the Savior, and His death was a sacrifice. It was a sweet-smelling savor as He made Himself an offering. It was also an act of obedience. (See Philippians 2:8.)

From our standpoint, those who are believers, Jesus' death was a substitution. He took our place. The One who was sinless, suffered for the sinner. The One who was just, suffered for the unjust. (See 1 Peter 2:24.)

From Satan's standpoint, Jesus' death was both a triumph and a defeat. It was a triumph from way back in Genesis 3:15 where now the heel of the woman's seed is being bruised. But it's a defeat because the head of the serpent can now be crushed. (See Hebrews 2:14.)

From the world's standpoint, the death of Jesus was nothing but a brutal murder.

The Gospel of John doesn't give us a picture of the crucifixion at all—none of the details, only that two others were crucified with Him and it was outside the city. Little did people realize that with each detail of that horrible ordeal, they were fulfilling 28 Old Testament prophecies.

Pilate wrote a sign and put it on the cross. It read, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. It was written in Hebrew, the language of religion. In Greek, the language of culture and education. And in Latin, the language of law and order. It was written for the world to see that Jesus died for all.

What is the gospel? That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.) These are the great, central facts of the gospel.

Do you believe this? Do you trust in Jesus Christ and believe what He did for us on the cross? Do you believe He died in your place? Do not delay answering this question before God.

After Jesus was pronounced dead, two secret disciples of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, asked permission from Pilate to take down Jesus' body. Both of these men were respected and wealthy. They had a lot to lose to identify themselves as Jesus' disciples. Yet at this precarious time when the eleven disciples had scattered, Joseph and Nicodemus came out in the open.

Joseph had a new tomb where Jesus could be buried. Nicodemus brought 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes to wrap the body. And they wrapped the linen and the spices around Jesus' body just like a mummy. The myrrh and aloes formed a sort of glue that sealed in the body. They worked quickly because they needed to get this done before Passover began at sundown.

On Sunday, Mary Magdalene arrived first at Jesus' tomb to finish caring for Jesus' body. It was still dark, but she saw the stone rolled away from the tomb's entrance. She didn't imagine Jesus was raised from the dead but thought someone had moved His body. She left to tell Peter and John and they went to investigate. They didn't go to the graveyard looking for the living, either. They expected to find a dead body.

So, John and Peter ran to Jesus' tomb. John's first look at the evidence in the empty tomb convinced Him that Jesus was back from the dead. He saw (literally, he "inspected the evidence" and believed! (God uses the little things like the folded linens to bring conviction to our hearts.)

So as Peter is stooping down, looking in, he sees the linen clothes there intact. How would you get a body out of a mummy without unwinding it all? All that was left in that tomb was just a shell of cloth that Jesus had been wrapped in. But He wasn't there—He had come forth in a glorified body.

Peter and John went home, but Mary Magdalene stayed, weeping at the tomb. Then she looked in for the first time and saw two angels sitting where Jesus' body had lain. And if that wasn't shock enough, she turned around and saw Jesus standing behind her. She didn't recognize Him—perhaps because she did not believe He was back from the dead. Unbelief is blind. All that was needed to convince her that it was Jesus was Him saying her name. John 10:27 says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them," and they know Him, and they follow Him when He calls.

Mary recognized her Lord and Master and ran to Him. Jesus asks her not to touch Him because He hadn't yet ascended to the Father. At the Throne of God, the Lord Jesus presented His blood and it became the mercy seat for all time. His blood is there now to remind us throughout eternity of the price that was paid for us.

NEXT: Meet Jesus back in Galilee.

LESSON 21

BACK IN GALILEE



Begin with prayer



Read **John 20:19–21:25**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **John 20:19-31** and **John 21**

What do you do when you're afraid? The disciples hid behind locked doors. But that didn't stop Jesus from coming through them in His glorified body. He showed them His hands and His side to convince them it was Him, and they were glad. There was a strange similarity of Jesus' glorified body to the one that had been nailed to the cross. The scars were there, a reminder throughout eternity of the sin He bore for us so that we can be presented without spot or blemish before Him.

Then He wished them peace. This is the peace when deity touches humanity; when the supernatural touches the natural. This peace comes from being justified by faith—peace *with* God. This is the peace of those who are in the will of God, who are in fellowship with God, who are doing His will.

This day was in the unique interval between Jesus' resurrection and the Day of Pentecost at the coming of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the church. So, Jesus said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (v. 22) and He breathed on them. This is the same word from Genesis when God breathed into Adam the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Now that's exactly what He's breathing into these men, the breath of eternal life, the Holy Spirit.

But not all the disciples were in the upper room that day. Thomas was missing. When the disciples told him Jesus had come to them, Thomas didn't believe them. "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (20:25). He's a doubter! He's got enough evidence to make him a believer, but he's not. So, eight days later, our Lord appears again in a locked room and says, "Peace to you" (20:26).

Of course, Jesus addressed Thomas' doubts directly. "*Touch my scars; put your hand in my side ... believe!*" (v. 27). We don't know if Thomas touched the Lord; he didn't have to. He simply said, "My Lord and my God" (v. 28)—one of the great confessions in the Bible.

Jesus then said, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (v. 29). This is a special blessing on those today who believe the evidence of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Is that you?

This blessing marks the end of the Gospel and the key to understanding what John wrote. He said our Lord did many other signs that are not recorded—many more blind people see, multitudes of others are healed of crippling diseases and problems. No doubter in that day could deny Jesus had done things. Now "these are written," John says, for a purpose: That you might believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; that He is the One who died for your sins, rose again as is recorded here. When you believe, you have life! You become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ!

But we're not done yet. John 21 is a beautiful epilogue with three incidents of our Lord meeting with His disciples. It takes place at the Sea of Galilee where so much of our Lord's ministry took place.

The angel at the empty tomb told the disciples to go up to Galilee and there Jesus would meet with them. So they did. And it was springtime in Galilee. It's the Easter season. Warm zephyrs from the south made ripples near the shore, there were whitecaps out on the Sea of Galilee, the surrounding hills were green, and there were wildflowers in profusion.

While they waited for Jesus, they went fishing. They fished all night, and they caught nothing. They certainly knew how to fish, but that night a failure was in the plan and purpose of God for them.

Now it's morning. It must have been a glorious morning there at the Sea of Galilee. Jesus stood on the shore and shouted to the men in the boat something like, "*Lads, did you catch anything? . . . Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.*" And they caught so many, they couldn't draw in the net (vs. 4-6).

The thought here is that Jesus directs the lives of His own, all the details. And now when they fish according to His instruction, the net's full. It didn't break this time because they're fishing now with a net that is the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. They're witnesses to those things.

John then knew right away it was the Lord. And Peter threw himself into the water to get to Jesus.

Jesus said, "*Come and dine*" and He had breakfast prepared for them on the shore. What a wonderful reunion it must have been, there in the place where they spent so much of their lives together. He's the Lord of their hearts now, and they are going to serve Him.

After breakfast, the Lord Jesus turns His attention to Simon Peter. He calls this faltering, failing, fumbling disciple to service. Three times our Lord interrogates him—one time for each of Peter's denials. Three questions, three affirmations, three exhortations. Wouldn't you like to have heard the Lord Jesus speak to Simon Peter? "*Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?*"

Jesus chose His words carefully. The word He uses for love is the highest and noblest word for love. He asks, "*Do you love me with all your heart?*" Salvation is really a love affair. We love Him because He first loved us. It's a greater compliment to be trusted than to be loved. Faith will die when the object proves unworthy, but love lives on. Simon Peter failed, the Lord no longer could have confidence in him, but He loved him. (See John 15:13, Romans 5:8, and 1 John 4:19.)

When Simon Peter answered Jesus, he didn't match Jesus' word for love. Instead, he used a word that means, "*I have an affection for you.*" He didn't say, "*I really love you, Lord,*" because he already boasted, and he's afraid he'll fail again. He says instead, "Lord, you know my heart." And Jesus exhorted him: "*Be grazing my little baby lambs*"—give them the Word of God.

The third time Jesus asked Simon Peter if he loved Him, Peter is grieved. He tells the Lord again, *“You know my heart.”* Then Jesus says: *“Be grazing the sheep. And the sheep need feeding also, you see, as well as the lambs.”*

Jesus was teaching him the secret of service—it’s loving Him more than anything else! He’s the Lord not only of our will, as we saw in the fishing; but He’s the Lord of our heart. Today He wants your love above everything else. He wants to be the Lord of your mind as well as of your heart and of your will. Unless He’s Lord of all, He’s not Lord at all.

To end our glorious study in the book of John, we could only wish to know the many other things Jesus did that would fill up the books of the world. That’s not an exaggeration! The One we’re talking about not only died upon the cross and rose again from the dead, but, my friend, He is God the Creator. The world wouldn’t hold the books of the things He’s done.

Oh, that we might press on to “know Him and the power of His resurrection” (Philippians 3:10)!

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and greenery.

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