

Reading the Gospel of John

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Purpose

This study leads the reader through a reading of the Gospel of John.

Translations

Various English translation use various words. This study will quote from:

CSB: The Christian Standard Bible, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers.

<https://csbible.com/>

NET: The New English Translation, Copyright © 1996 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C.,

<https://netbible.org/>

Some Study Aids

The Gospel of John is a fairly long text comprising almost 20,000 words. To help keep track of themes, I include study aids I call Recap. I will use:

Recap: Names Given to Jesus

Recap: Miracles of Jesus

Recap: I'm Talking About Something Else

Let's expand her on this last Recap. Jesus spoke in parables. Jesus also said one thing and then explained what was meant. One example is the conversation with Nicodemus when Jesus spoke of being borne again. Nicodemus didn't understand that phrase, so Jesus explained it. I find this type of thing often in John's Gospel.

Recap: Names Given to Jesus

The Word, Chapter 1

The Light, Chapter 1

Son from the Father, Chapter 1

Lamb of God, Chapter 1

Rabbi (Teacher), Chapter 1

Son of God, Chapter 1

King of Israel, Chapter 1

Son of Man, Chapter 1

Messiah, Chapter 1

Bread of God Chapter 6

Bread of Life, Chapter 6

Living Bread, Chapter 6

Holy One of God, Chapter 6

Light of the World, Chapter 8

Light of Life, Chapter 8

The Good Shepherd, Chapter 10

The Gate, Chapter 10

The Resurrection and the Life, Chapter 11

The True Vine, Chapter 15

The Lord, Chapter 20

Recap: Miracles of Jesus

Changing water to wine, Chapter 2

Healing the son of the royal official, Chapter 4

Healing the lame man by the Sheep Gate, Chapter 5

Feeding the five thousand, Chapter 6

Walking on water, Chapter 6

Healing the man born blind, Chapter 9

Raising Lazarus from the dead, Chapter 11

Rising from the dead, Chapter 20

Many other signs, Chapter 20

Recap: I'm Talking About Something Else

The Word, Chapter 1

Children of God, Chapter 1

Life and light, Chapter 1

Rebuild the temple in three days, Chapter 2

Living water, Chapter 4

Food, Chapter 4

Eat the flesh and drink the blood, Chapter 6

If anyone is thirsty, Chapter 7

The light of the world, Chapter 8

Physical and spiritual healing, Chapter 9

I am the gate, Chapter 10

The Shepherd and the sheep, Chapter 10

Lazarus' death and sleep, Chapter 11

The grain of wheat, Chapter 12

Walking in the light, Chapter 12

Washing feet, Chapter 13

Seeing and not seeing Jesus, Chapter 16

The Beginning

Chapter 1

The Gospel of John literally begins with "In the beginning." (CSB) and provides the spiritual rather than physical background of Jesus. Jesus began at the creation with God as God. Jesus was the Word. In Jesus everything was created including the world. The people of the world, however, did not recognize the Creator of the world. Those people who did recognize Jesus, became the spiritual children of God.

Jesus came as a shining light. That light overcame the darkness. God sent John the Baptist to testify about the light, i.e., Jesus. That true light came into the physical world in the form of physical flesh and blood.

I'm Talking About Something Else

In the opening verses, there are several of these.

First, Jesus is the Word. A couple of paragraphs into Chapter 1 states that the Word became flesh. We know that Jesus became flesh, so “the Word” here means Jesus.

A second case is that in Jesus was life which was the light of men. That light overcame darkness. Jesus is a flashlight or a fire. No, that’s not what it’s talking about: the life brought by Jesus overcame the sins of the world. Moses brought laws from God to help people live in the physical world. Surpassing this law, Jesus brought grace and truth to overcome sin.

A third case is being children of God. This does not mean God is the physical father of people. The text states the opposite, “who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh.” (CSB) The children of God were born spiritually from God.

The Testimony of John

The Pharisees in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites out to John the Baptist to learn who he was and what he was doing. John told them that he was not the Messiah, Elijah, or a prophet. John said, “I am a voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord—just as Isaiah the prophet said.” (CSB)

The First Disciples or Followers

John didn’t know who the Messiah was. When John’s cousin Jesus walked by, it all became clear to John. John said,

“I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him. I didn’t know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on—he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” — CSB

John said that Jesus was the Lamb of God.

When John said that, Andrew, the brother of Peter, and another man left John and followed after Jesus. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus, and Jesus gave Peter, whose name was Simon, the nickname of rock or Peter. The next follower was Philip, who was from the same town as Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathaniel and convinced him to follow Jesus as well.

Nathaniel called Jesus the Son of God and the King of Israel.

Note: a disciple is a follower. The two terms can be used interchangeably.

The First Sign

Chapter 2

A couple of days later, Jesus attended a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus of was there along with a few of the disciples of Jesus. Jesus quietly changed about 150 gallons of water into high-quality wine.

This was the first sign or miracle that Jesus performed.

Chasing the Swindlers Out of the Temple

It was time for the Passover Festival, so Jesus and the followers went to Jerusalem. In the Temple, people were buying and selling livestock for sacrifices. This was a normal practice commended in the Old Testament. Those doing it, however, were doing it in the wrong manner. They were cheating people and price gouging those who wanted to buy animals worthy of sacrifice.

Jesus made a whip and chased the swindlers and their animals out of the Temple. Jesus hinted that he was the Son of God with the statement, “Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!” (CSB)

Some of the Jews challenged Jesus on that statement. They wanted a sign or a demonstration to show what Jesus claimed.

I’m Talking About Something Else

Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days.” (CSB)

“Impossible,” replied these Jews. They explained how building the Temple took forty-six years.

Jesus was talking about something else: His body. When crucified, His body would be restored in three days. Building the Temple in three days would be an unbelievable miracle. Raising Himself from the dead was also an unbelievable miracle.

The Signs

Jesus and the followers remained in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival. Jesus performed signs that were not described in detail. Many people believed in His name when seeing these signs. Jesus did not entrust Himself to them, i.e., Jesus did not put Himself into their care and protection. Jesus knew that bad things would happen at this moment; it was not yet time.

Nicodemus, Born Again, For God So Loved the World

Chapter 3

Nicodemus came to Jesus to talk. This is one of the more famous conversations in human history and is an example of Jesus teaching one person at a time. Nicodemus came from the Pharisees and stated that the Pharisees knew that Jesus was a “teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs you do unless God were with him.” (CSB)

Jesus’ reply was about what it means to be with God. It was to be spiritual. Nicodemus, an educated man in a position of religious leadership, was confused. Jesus was disappointed. Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel but didn’t understand these basic truths. How will the people know these things if the teachers don’t?

Jesus goes back to the example, well known by the Jews, of Moses and the snakes. The statue of the snakes was erected by Moses to heal people. This leads to one of the more famous statements in the Bible,

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” — CSB

This is followed by a lesser famous, but just as important,

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” — CSB

Moses put the sculpture of the snakes on a pole to heal physically. Jesus would be put on a pole, i.e., crucified to heal spiritually.

Here is the judgement or the difference: some people go to the light so their lives are seen while some people go to the dark, so their lives are hidden. Are we in Jesus, i.e., the light? Do we run away from Jesus to the dark?

I’m Talking About Something Else

In the conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus had two cases of this.

First, Jesus’ reply is the famous, “unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (CSB)

Nicodemus protested. How can a person be born twice? That is physically impossible. Jesus explained that He was talking about being born spiritually, not physically.

Second, Jesus spoke of the statue of the snakes erected by Moses in the wilderness. That statue was to bring physical healing to the people who were inflicted by the deadly snakes. Then Jesus switched to the spiritual realm and spoke of Himself. He would be crucified to bring spiritual healing to the people who were inflicted by deadly sins.

Which Purification is Pure-er?

Jesus and the followers went to the Judean countryside where they were baptizing people. Meanwhile, Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist, was baptizing people in another region.

A dispute arose about purification. Baptism, immersing a person in water, was a sign of purification or washing from the times of the Old Testament. What was pure-er? The baptisms practiced by Jesus and the followers, or the baptisms practiced by John and his followers?

John set the record straight: John was not the Messiah. Jesus was the Messiah, the one anointed to save mankind from sin. Just like the friend of a groom is happy for the groom, John was happy for Jesus.

John expanded on this. John was a physical man born in a manner that could be explained by biology. Jesus, on the other hand, was spiritual born via super-natural or spiritual means that could not be explained by biology. Accepting Jesus and his super-natural birth meant accepting God and the spiritual supremacy of God.

The Woman of Sychar

Chapter 4

This is another example of Jesus teaching one person at a time: the woman of Sychar at the well. A Samaritan woman came to the edge of town to the well to draw the day's supply of water. This woman had a bad reputation in that she had run through a bunch of husbands and was living with a man unmarried.

Jesus spoke to the woman who had an impure culture and religion. That act was socially forbidden as Jews didn't associate with Samaritans. Jesus spoke of living water and told the woman about her life. A person couldn't possibly know all this if he were not a prophet.

The talk turned to religion. The woman knew that the Jews were waiting for the Messiah to come, and Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah. Note, this was the first time Jesus told someone this, and Jesus first told a Samaritan.

The disciples returned and were surprised to find Jesus talking to this woman of Samaria. The woman went back into town to tell the people there about this Jewish prophet.

The disciples urged Jesus to eat lunch. After all, they had left Jesus at the well while they went in search of food. Here was the food they had found for Jesus. Jesus' reply, "I have food to eat that you don't know about." (CSB) confused the disciples.

Meanwhile, this woman evangelized the entire town. Disregarded for her stained life, she convinced many in Sychar to listen to this Jew she met at the well. "He told me everything I ever did," (CSB) was her simple testimony. The people of the town convinced Jesus to stay two days; that was simply not done in that day and place. Many people in Sychar believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

I'm Talking About Something Else

The time that Jesus and the disciples spent in Sychar provides two more instances of Jesus mentioning one thing and then explaining it as something else.

First, Jesus told the woman that he had water than quenched the thirst forever. The woman wanted that! If she had one drink forever, she wouldn't have to go to the well every day and haul buckets of heavy water back to her home. Jesus wasn't talking about physical water and physical thirst. Jesus was talking about living water or spiritual water. The living water would quench the desire to be with God forever. We all have this desire; it is hidden deeper in some of us than in others. Still, we desire to be with God. Jesus offers the path to this.

Second, Jesus told the disciples about how He had all the food he needed. The disciples were confused because they had gone out looking for physical food as they had nothing of the sort. When they returned with physical food, Jesus told them He already had it. Jesus, however, was talking about the spiritual food provided by God—the food of doing the will of God. We all desire to do the will of God. With some of us, that desire is buried under mountains of physical desire for shiny objects of this life. Still, the desire is there.

After the two days in Sychar, Jesus and the followers returned north to Galilee. They were welcomed there as many Galileans had seen Jesus perform signs or miracles at the Passover Festival in Jerusalem.

The Second Sign

Jesus returned to Cana, the place where He performed the first sign of turning water into wine at a wedding.

A royal official had a son who was ill to the point of death. This man believed that Jesus could heal his son. There was such talk among everyone who had seen Jesus in Jerusalem. The man believed that Jesus would have to see the ill son face to face to heal.

Jesus told the man to go home as the son was healed. Notice how the man obeyed. There was no reason to obey as no one had ever healed from a distance. The man returned home and learned that his son was healed at the time Jesus said so.

At this miracle, the royal official and his entire household believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Third Sign

Chapter 5

Jesus returned to Jerusalem for a Jewish festival. By the Sheep Gate next to a pool called Bethesda, disabled people sat. One man had been disabled for thirty-eight years. Jesus asked the basic question, “Do you want to change?”

The man claimed that he couldn’t change in that he couldn’t put himself into the healing waters. Jesus didn’t tell the man he was healed. Instead, Jesus told him to stand, pick up his mat, and walk. The man did so.

This occurred on the Sabbath—the day of rest. Carrying a mat violated the regulations of the Sabbath. Healing the sick also violated the regulations of the Sabbath.

Some Jews confronted the healed man about violating the Sabbath. The man didn’t know who had healed him. He later found Jesus. Jesus told him, “See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.” (CSB) The man told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him on the Sabbath. The Jews began persecuting Jesus.

The Father, Son, Life, and Death

Jesus responded to the Jews with a discussion of God the Father, Jesus as the Son of God, and passing from death to eternal life. This incensed the Jews even more as Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God. That was a perfectly normal reaction by the Jews. Anyone claiming to be the Son of God was guilty of heresy.

Jesus replies, “Truly I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.” (CSB)

Jesus continues by telling the Jews that they have not listened to God the Father. God testified about Jesus, His coming Son. The Jews, however, have not accepted God and God’s words.

The Fourth Sign

Chapter 6

Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee. A crowd followed Jesus because of the signs that Jesus performed healing the sick. Jesus, knowing what was about to happen, asked Philip how they would feed such a large crowd. Andrew brought a boy, who had five barley loaves and two fish, to Jesus.

Jesus had the crowd sit, gave thanks for the small amount of food they had, and distributed it to the crowd that included 5,000 men. After the crowd had eaten, Jesus had the followers collect what had not been eaten. They collected twelve baskets of bread.

The crowd of people realized what had happened and declared that Jesus was a prophet. They wanted to make Jesus a king, so Jesus withdrew to a mountain by himself.

The Fifth Sign

At evening, the followers boarded a boat and started to row back across the Sea of Galilee. After a few miles, the sea churned. The followers saw Jesus walking on the sea. The followers were afraid. Jesus called out to them, “It is I. Don’t be afraid.” (CSB) Their fears gone—the followers welcomed Jesus into the boat.

A Hard Teaching

The crowds followed Jesus across the Sea of Galilee. Jesus chided them because they were searching for free food such as Jesus had given them earlier. Jesus told them,

“Don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him.”—CSB

Jesus continued talking to the followers and teaching them about the bread of life, eternal life, and the role of Jesus in all these things.

Those present expressed their frustration with these teachings by saying:

“Isn’t this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I have come down from heaven?’” —CSB

and

“How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”—CSB

They concluded with:

“This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?”—CSB

and then,

“From that moment many of his disciples turned back and no longer accompanied him.”—CSB

This is a theme throughout John’s writing. Jesus said many things that just weren’t very nice. They were bold statements about Himself, God, and the Jewish leaders of the day. The Jewish leaders were so mad at Jesus for these statements that they eventually had Jesus executed.

I'm Talking About Something Else

Jesus clearly told the crowds,

“Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.”—CSB

This, taken literally, is cannibalism. It is the worst violation of decency and the law of God.

Jesus, however, was talking about something else. Jesus told them, “No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again.” (CSB) This is the same language Jesus used when talking to the woman of Sychar at the well when Jesus told her about living water.

Jesus had also contrasted manna, the physical food manna given to the people in the desert, to the true bread from heaven,

“Truly I tell you, Moses didn’t give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”—CSB

Outward Appearances and Righteous Judgement

Chapter 7

Jesus secretly went to Jerusalem for the Jewish Festival of Shelters. Jesus had told the followers that he was not going as Jewish leaders in Jerusalem wanted to kill Him, but the time for that had not come yet.

Many people in Jerusalem were looking for Jesus at this time and place. There was an undercurrent of belief in Jesus, but people only murmured about Jesus from fear of the Jewish leaders. Everyone knew, but no one said anything.

Halfway through the Festival, Jesus went to the Temple area and taught people. They were amazed at the knowledge of an uneducated son of a carpenter from Nazareth. Jesus replied that God, who had sent Jesus, had taught Him.

Jesus asks the Jews why they were trying to kill him. “No one is trying to kill you,” they replied. “You are possessed by a demon! That is crazy talk!” (CSB)

Jesus told them what they already knew. They wanted to kill Jesus because he healed people on the Sabbath, a technical violation of the Jewish law. Jesus taught them about their own loopholes in the law that they allowed. Why wouldn’t they also allow healing?

Jesus ended this discussion with, “Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment.” (CSB) This is another form of, “I’m talking about something else.”

More Murmuring

Jesus was saying things that outraged some of the Jewish leaders. Still, Jesus was publicly proclaiming these things, i.e., no one arrested or stopped Him. The people saw this hypocrisy. If the Jewish leaders were not doing anything to stop Jesus, did that indicate their belief in Jesus? The murmurings continued. No one stood up and loudly proclaimed the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders because they were the Jewish leaders and could make life difficult for anyone who openly challenged their authority.

Who was this Jesus? Was he a prophet? The people had seen prophets from God for thousands of years, and many of the healings performed by Jesus had been performed by prophets. Was Jesus the Messiah or Christ, i.e., the one sent by God to redeem the world?

This final question spurred talk about geography and tribes. The Messiah was to be from Bethlehem; Jesus was from Nazareth. No one checked the birth records to learn that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. There was fact and there was also a matter of faith.

The Failed Arrest

The Jewish leaders had enough of Jesus. Some tried to seize Jesus, but that failed. How was it that they couldn't just grab Jesus? He was standing right in front of them. Next. The Jewish leaders sent a group of servants to arrest Jesus. The servants later returned without Jesus saying, "No man ever spoke like this!" (CSB). The leaders dismissed the servants and accused them of being fooled by a charlatan. Nicodemus half-way defended Jesus by reminding the leaders of legal procedure. He was accused of being from Galilee just like Jesus.

I'm Talking About Something Else

Jesus provides two more instances of talking about something else in these verses.

First, Jesus told the people, "You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." (CSB) Was Jesus leaving the country and venturing out into other parts of the Roman Empire? They were sure to find this heretical man wherever he went. Jesus, however, was speaking of being with God in Heaven.

Second, Jesus tells the people,

"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him."—CSB

This is the same language Jesus used when speaking to the woman at the well near Sychar and also when calling Himself the Bread of Life. Jesus wasn't speaking of physical thirst and water. Jesus was talking about the Spirit to be sent from God. The Spirit is the sustaining life force for the believer.

The Woman Caught in Adultery

Chapter 8

The next day, Jesus returned to the Temple. The scribes and Pharisees had a plan to trap Jesus and show everyone that Jesus was violating the Law. Their plan centered on a woman caught in adultery. The Law was plain: she was to be stoned to death. What did Jesus have to say about all this?

Halfway ignoring the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus told them something like, “Well, okay, let’s stone her. Which one of you fellows will begin? How about the person who has never sinned?”

The crowd of accusers slowly and quietly disbursed. Jesus told the woman to stop doing the type of thing that brought her to stoning to death.

The Father and the Truth

Jesus told the crowd several things relating to Himself, the Father (God), and the truth. Countering an accusation from the Pharisees of lying, Jesus told them that His testimony was true. The testimony of Jesus was true and legal as it was the testimony of two witnesses as required by law.

“And if I do judge, my judgment is true, because it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.”—CSB

Here is the truth: it is the word from the Father, God sent through the Son, Jesus.

Jesus told them this again and again. One instance is,

“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own. But just as the Father taught me, I say these things. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him.”—CSB

Jesus contrasted this by telling the Pharisees that their father was the devil, and they did the devil’s works. Again, as a contrast, there was no truth in the devil.

These words and others infuriated the Pharisees. They went from wanting to arrest Jesus to wanting to kill him on the spot. They even picked up stones to throw at Jesus until they had killed Him. Somehow, “Jesus was hidden and went out of the Temple.” (CSB)

I’m Talking About Something Else

During his talk on the Father and the light, Jesus had several more instances of talking about one thing while actually talking about something else. Jesus claimed to be the light of the world so that those who follow Him would never walk in darkness. Jesus didn’t glow in the dark. The testimony or words of Jesus were true. Those who lived in the words of Jesus would need no other guidance in their lives. His words would always guide them through whatever troubles came their way.

Jesus again told the Jews “Where I’m going, you cannot come.” (CSB) This is a repeated statement. They Jews, however, still didn’t understand. This time they considered the possibility of Jesus killing himself. Instead, Jesus wasn’t talking about the physical world, but the world above, i.e., the heavenly world.

In the discourse on what is true, Jesus said

“If you continue in my word, you really are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”—CSB

Human masters, slavery, and freedom were not the subject. Jesus was talking about serving, i.e., be a slave to sin or serving God, i.e., being free to walk in the light of the truth from God.

The Jews focused on the word “free.” They were not slaves to anyone (not quite true as they were subject to an occupying army from Rome).

Jesus later told those present, “Truly I tell you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” (CSB) The Jews fussed about that claim. Abraham died and so did the prophets. Everyone would die. Jesus, however, was talking about spiritual life and death. The words of Jesus led people along the path of everlasting spiritual life.

The Sixth Sign

Chapter 9

As Jesus left the Temple while the Jewish leaders wanted to stone him, “He saw a man blind from birth.” (CSB) The disciples asked Jesus who had sinned to cause this blindness. Jesus told them that God doesn’t punish like that. There are other reasons for things in life that we simply don’t understand.

Jesus rubbed mud in the blind man’s eyes (we are never given the name of this man) and told him to wash off the mud in the pool of Siloam. The man did this and returned seeing.

This was an example of “I’m talking about something else” demonstrated and not said. In the rest of the story, the people concentrated on the elements that can be explained by nature. They forgot the super-natural or the miracle of the event.

The miracle or super-natural was told by the man who was healed, “Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind.” (CSB)

The people there were confused. Some recognized the man born blind who now could see. Others denied this. Giving sight to the blind was impossible; this must be a trick. The Pharisees investigated. Note that Jesus was not part of the investigation as the Pharisees could not find Him. The natural concentrated on the usual questions:

Who: Jesus and the man born blind.

What: a man born blind can now see.

Where: Uh oh. The healer cannot be found. Where is he?

Why: to illustrate the power of God and the Son of God.

How: mud in the eyes.

When: the Sabbath day.

The “when” question caused the greatest attention from the Pharisees. The blind man walked to the pool of Siloam and washed his eyes. Both actions violated the regulations of the Sabbath.

The healer, suspected to be Jesus but not confirmed in the investigation, was also guilty of violating regulations.

The Pharisees questioned the healed man several times. They also questioned the man's parents. The parents understood the point of the questioning (condemn Jesus), so they answered carefully.

The Pharisees concluded the investigation with this statement directed at the healed man, "'You were born entirely in sin and are you trying to teach us?' Then they threw him out." (CSB)

I'm Talking About Something Else

After the Pharisees' investigation, Jesus returned to the man He healed. Jesus told him, "I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind." (CSB)

Some Pharisees heard Jesus say this. Coming right after the physical healing of a man with physical blindness, they asked about physical blindness. Jesus told them that He wasn't speaking of physical blindness. Instead, Jesus was speaking of spiritually knowing right from wrong.

The Shepherd, The Sheep, and The Gate

Chapter 10

Jesus continued talking after healing the man born blind. Jesus described the well-known roles of a shepherd and sheep. Sheep follow their rightful shepherd because they recognize the voice of the shepherd.

The Jews were divided over what Jesus told them. Some said, "He has a demon and he's crazy. Why do you listen to him?" (CSB) Others referred back to healing the man born blind, "These aren't the words of someone who is demon-possessed. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (CSB)

I'm Talking About Something Else

In this passage, the text states that Jesus was using a figure of speech that the crowds didn't understand. Jesus talked about being the gate, i.e., Jesus is the one-any-only way to salvation. Jesus is the one-and-only true shepherd. A hired hand didn't care for the sheep. The real shepherd was committed to death to care for the sheep. Jesus used the phrase, "I lay down my life" five times while describing Himself as the good shepherd.

Tell Us Plainly

Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the Festival of Dedication, which is another name for Hanukkah, an eight-day Jewish festival that commemorates the rededication of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in the 2nd century.

The Jews wanted Jesus to tell them plainly if he was the Messiah.

I'm Talking About Something Else

Jesus returned to the figure of speech about the shepherd and the sheep. Jesus had plainly showed the Jews that he was the Son of God doing His Father's works. Many of the Jews, however, did not recognize the things that Jesus had done.

Blasphemy

The Jews charged Jesus with blasphemy. This was not out of jealousy or political aspirations. They felt this honestly. Claiming to be the Son of God was wrong, but Jesus was truly the Son of God. The people picked up stones to execute Jesus, but somehow Jesus walked away untouched.

“If I am not doing my Father's works, don't believe me. But if I am doing them and you don't believe me, believe the works. This way you will know and understand that the Father is in me and I in the Father.” —CSB

Jesus left Jerusalem and crossed the Jordan River where people told Him, “John never did a sign, but everything John said about this man was true.” (CSB)

Lazarus, Mary, and Martha

Chapter 11

There was a man named Lazarus who had two sisters named Mary and Martha. They lived in the town of Bethany which was two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus knew and loved these three. Lazarus became seriously ill, and the sisters sent this news to Jesus hoping Jesus would come and heal Lazarus.

This was near Jerusalem where Jews had tried to kill Jesus by stoning him. The followers warned Jesus against going to this dangerous place, but Jesus eventually told them they were going. Thomas, called “Twin,” was so afraid of the threat of stoning that he said, “Let's go too so that we may die with him.” (CSB)

I'm Talking About Something Else

Jesus told the followers that Lazarus had fallen asleep. Knowing that sometimes rest cured illnesses, the followers were initially happy to hear this. Jesus corrected them. Jesus was talking about physical death: Lazarus was dead and buried.

Logical Martha and Emotional Mary

Jesus arrived at the site of the tomb and met the sisters Martha and Mary one at a time. Martha was logical. She discussed life, death, and life after death with Jesus. She knew that Jesus was the Messiah and believed that whoever believed in Jesus would never die spiritually.

Mary was emotional. She was crying at home and welcomed the consoling neighbors to weep with her. The neighbors thought Mary was going to the tomb to cry there. Instead, Mary went to Jesus, fell at His feet, and cried. Her tears moved Jesus deeply and Jesus wept as well.

Note how Jesus loved and ministered to both a logical and an emotional person.

The Seventh Sign

Jesus told the people to move the stone blocking the tomb holding Lazarus. Logical Martha argued against this as the smell would be awful.

Jesus prayed aloud so that all would hear him talking to God the Father. Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” (CSB)

Side note, the tomb held several dead bodies. If Jesus had only shouted, “Come out,” would all the dead have come out?

Lazarus stumbled out of the tomb cave. The people had to unwrap him.

The Politics of Killing Jesus

This was an amazing miracle. A man dead four days walked out of a tomb. Once again, the Jews were split. While many of the Jews believed Jesus was the Messiah, the Pharisees still held that Jesus was a blasphemer.

The Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin to consider what to do with Jesus.

Note: The Sanhedrin in the New Testament was the highest court of the Jewish people during the time of Jesus. It was composed of seventy-one members, including chief priests, elders, and scribes. The Sanhedrin had both religious and civil authority, and it was responsible for interpreting Jewish law and for trying and sentencing those accused of violating it. (Google Gemini)

The high priest that year was Caiaphas. He was deeply religious and devoted to God and the Jewish people. Caiaphas created a political solution to the problem of this Jesus from Nazareth. As Jews, they shouldn’t stone or execute Jesus. That would be a major political problem. If they could find a way to have the Romans execute Jesus, that would solve everything.

The Sanhedrin decided to follow the advice of Caiaphas. Jesus, knowing this plot, began to travel quietly. The Passover Festival in Jerusalem would be soon. Would Jesus appear in public in Jerusalem and fall into the hands of those who plotted his death?

Anointing Jesus

Chapter 12

Just a week before the Passover Festival in Jerusalem, Jesus was back at Bethany, two miles from Jerusalem, in the home of Lazarus, Martha, Mary. Mary poured expensive perfume on the feet of Jesus and wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair. Judas Iscariot was angry about the expense. He held the money bag and stole from it.

Lazarus Must Disappear

The chief priests decided to kill Lazarus. Lazarus was living proof of the greatest miracle of Jesus—raising someone from the dead. Many people were repeating the story of Lazarus raised

from the dead. The Pharisees were blaming each other because none of their ideas were working to discredit Jesus.

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

Five days before the Passover, Jesus entered Jerusalem. Jesus rode on a young donkey while the crowds waved palm branches and shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord —the King of Israel!” (CSB)

This fulfilled the words of the prophet Zechariah. The followers did not realize this prophecy at the time, but later they understood.

I’m Talking About Something Else

Some Greeks wanted to meet Jesus. Philip and Andrew went to Jesus and told Him. Jesus’ reply provides three instances of mentioning one thing but talking about something else.

First, Jesus talked about a grain of wheat and how it must die to bring much grain. Jesus was talking about his own death and how that will give birth to the church.

Next, Jesus plainly talked about dying. The Messiah, however, was to live forever. Jesus was talking about a temporary physical dying followed by rising from the physical death and then an eternal spiritual life.

Finally, Jesus was the light. Walk in the light while you can. Believe in Jesus now.

Split Among the Jews

Some believed now as Jesus urged while others didn’t. The people had seen the miracles, but just couldn’t believe. One reason was that the Pharisees would ban people from the Synagogue if they followed Jesus. This was not just peer pressure but basic expulsion from the Jewish community and family. There would be no turning back, and that was what Jesus was asking: commit forever.

The Mission of Jesus

Jesus came from God to light the world so all could see. Jesus came to save the world, not judge the world. Judgement would come from the Word on the last day.

Jesus Washes the Feet of the Followers

Chapter 13

Just a couple of days later, Jesus washed the feet of the followers. Jesus removed His outer garment, tied a towel around Himself, poured water into a basin, and washed the feet of the followers. Jesus used the towel to dry their feet.

Later, Jesus told them,

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

Washing the feet of another was a humble show of love. Jesus showed His love for the followers and encouraged them to love one another. This was a new command as the older command was only to love one another. Jesus added, “as I have loved you.”

I’m Talking About Something Else

When Jesus was about to wash the feet of Peter, Peter protested. Jesus replied, “If I don’t wash you, you have no part with me.” (CSB)

Jesus had cleaned their feet of physical dirt. Jesus was about to clean their souls of spiritual dirt with His death on the cross. Peter, and all mankind, needed to accept the sacrifice of Jesus to attain salvation.

Jesus later extended the discussion of foot washing to serving one another. Part of service is forgiveness. Jesus was forgiving their physical dirtiness as a sign of forgiving their spiritual dirtiness. Likewise, each follower should forgive all other followers of their offenses.

The Betrayal

Jesus told the followers plainly, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” (CSB)

The disciples looked around the room trying to guess which one would betray Jesus. They wanted an answer to the question, “Who?” Note, the disciples didn’t ask the deeper questions about how betrayal was possible. How could any of the disciples be weak enough or tempted enough to betray Jesus? This may be the origin of the saying, “Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.” The disciples were focusing on people.

Simon Peter asked Jesus who the betrayer was. Jesus gave a piece of bread to Judas son of Iscariot as an answer.

In a moment, Jesus also told Peter that he would also betray Jesus.

The New Command

Jesus once again told people that He was going to a place where no one else could go. Jesus then told them of the new command (quoted above). Peter didn’t seem to hear the new command about a higher love. Instead, Peter focused on the statement about going to a place where no one else could go. Peter wanted to be with Jesus physically; that was an admirable aspiration. It was, nevertheless, pointed in the wrong direction.

Jesus told Peter how Peter would deny knowing Jesus three times before the rooster crowed in the morning of the next day.

The Way to the Father

Chapter 14

Following Peter's questions about following Jesus to an unknown place, Jesus instructed the disciples on the way to the Father. The conclusion of these directions was a statement of peace no matter the difficulties of the way:

"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful."—CSB

Jesus told the disciples that there are many rooms in His Father's house—there are plenty of rooms for them, and Jesus would prepare these rooms for them.

But Thomas said, "Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus is the way. Through Jesus, the truth about Jesus, and the life of Jesus, everyone has a way to the Father's house for eternity.

Philip didn't need a room in the Father's house, Philip just wanted to see the Father. Jesus replied that He and the Father are one—Jesus and the Father are inside one another.

The Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit

Jesus promised a great helper was coming. The disciples did not need to fear a future without Jesus in their physical presence. The Father would give believers another Counselor, also called the Spirit of Truth and the Holy Spirit. The Counselor would be in the disciples and all believers.

There was a day coming, said Jesus when, "you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you." (CSB)

Judas (not Iscariot the betrayer) asked for help understanding this teaching.

This teaching was about love and the word of the Father. Those who love Jesus and the Father will heed the word of the Father. What Jesus told the disciples was not from Himself, but from the Father.

Don't worry, Jesus taught, the Counselor would teach all things and remind the listeners of all things.

The True Vine

Chapter 15

Jesus gave a famous figure of speech calling Himself the true Vine and calling the Father the gardener. Jesus spoke in terms of vine branches, fruit, pruning, withering, burning, etc. He also spoke of "in" many times. We are to live inside Jesus who Himself lives inside the Father. Unless we live inside the Father, Jesus, and the words of the Father, we will be outside their will. Jesus concluded with, "My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples." (CSB)

The Command of Jesus

Jesus switched from talk of the vine, branches, and fruit to words about love and joy. The Father had loved Jesus; Jesus had loved the disciples. Remain in the love of the Father and Jesus.

To stay in the love of Jesus, keep the commands of Jesus and follow the example of Jesus. This brings joy.

Jesus clearly stated His command, “Love one another as I have loved you.” (CSB) A primary example of loving one another was to lay down your life for another. That was what Jesus was to do; that was what Jesus encouraged all followers to do.

Persecutions

Jesus warned the disciples about the culture and people of the world. The disciples lived on earth; there was no changing that fact. They, however, did not live according to the culture and norms of the people on the earth. They would be different. Hence, the people, including their own Jewish relatives, would reject how they lived.

The Counselor’s Ministry

To help survive the persecutions, the Counselor would come.

Chapter 16

The persecutions would be harsh as the disciples would be expelled from the Jewish community. Things would be so bad that, in ignorance, people would kill followers of Jesus and be praised as true servants of God.

The disciples would want Jesus to remain with them, but Jesus must depart so that the Counselor could arrive. Three of the tasks the Counselor would perform include (1) showing people their sins, (2) teaching people what righteousness is, and (3) judging people for how their sinful lives are far from the righteousness of God. This is a key concept: the Counselor or Holy Spirit judges. We are not the judges.

The disciples wanted more, but they were not able to hear all the truth at this time. The Counselor or Spirit of Truth would eventually declare all truth to them.

I’m Talking About Something Else

Jesus confused the disciples with statements about the disciples not seeing Him and then seeing Him. Jesus explained that he was speaking of the near and the not-so-near future. It was like the birth of a child: the mother is in pain for a while, but then happy after the child is born. The disciples would not see Jesus, but one day would see Him again.

Peace, Courage, and Conquering

Jesus admitted to speaking in figures of speech. The time would come when Jesus would speak plainly about the Father. The disciples told Jesus that they believed that Jesus came from God.

Jesus spoke in plain language so that (1) the disciples may have peace of mind and (2) courage in the face of suffering. Jesus proclaims that He has conquered the world.

Jesus Prays

Chapter 17

Jesus had a long prayer in which he asked the Father three things.

First, “Glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you,” and then, “glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.” (CSB) Jesus wanted God to use Him to show the divine nature and power of God, i.e., “use me for your greater glory.”

Second, Jesus prayed for the safety of the small group of disciples. The disciples had learned. They were the disciples of God. Jesus asked that God protect them from the world who hated them and wanted to kill them.

Finally, Jesus prayed for the greater group of those people who believed in Jesus through the words of the disciples. Jesus asked for unity in all these people with the words

“May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me.”—CSB

Jesus ended by asking that the believers had the love that “you have loved me.” (CSB)

Jesus Betrayed

Chapter 18

Jesus went to a garden outside of Jerusalem. This was a place that Jesus and the disciples went often, but its location was unknown to the Jewish leaders. Judas, however, knew the place.

“So Judas took a company of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees and came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.”—CSB

Jesus told the group that He was the person they sought. Jesus also asked that the group leave the disciples alone. All was peaceful until Simon Peter drew a sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Jesus quieted Simon Peter. The group was destined to arrest Jesus and take Him into Jerusalem. These events had been determined by God.

Jesus Taken to Annas

“Then the company of soldiers, the commander, and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus and tied him up.” (CSB) This group took Jesus to Annas, a former high priest who was the father-in-law of the current high priest Caiaphas. Annas questioned Jesus about what He had taught. Jesus told Annas to ask those who had heard Him. Jesus always taught in public; He never taught in secret. One of the officials slapped Jesus for His replies.

Peter’s Denials

As Jesus had predicted, Peter denied Jesus three times. First, at the courtyard of Annas a servant girl, who was the doorkeeper, brought Peter into the courtyard. “Then the servant girl

who was the doorkeeper said to Peter, ‘You aren’t one of this man’s disciples too, are you?’” (CSB) Peter replied, “I am not.”

Next, “Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him, ‘You aren’t one of his disciples too, are you?’” (CSB) Peter again replied, “I am not.”

Finally, a servant who was related to Malchus, the person whose ear Peter had cut off, claimed to have seen Peter in the Garden. That was quite a memorable event. Peter denied being there with Jesus. Right after this third denial, a rooster crowed.

Jesus Before Pilate

They took Jesus from Annas to the headquarters of Pilate the Governor. To avoid violating the Passover, Pilate came outside to meet the crowd of Jews with Jesus. The Jews wanted Jesus executed. They could not do that as only the Romans could deliver capital punishment.

Pilate returned inside his headquarters and had Jesus brought in as well. Pilate asked, “What have you done?” and “Are you the King of the Jews?” (CSB)

Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world,” and “My kingdom is not from here.” (CSB)

Pilate was confused and frustrated. Jesus, king of an unworldly kingdom, came to this world “to testify to the truth.” (CSB)

Pilate ended the conversation with, “What is truth?” (CSB)

Exasperated, Pilate tried to release Jesus. Pilate gave the Jews a choice in an annual release of a prisoner at the Passover. The crowd wanted a revolutionary named Barabbas released instead of Jesus.

Pilate, Jesus, and the Crowds

Chapter 19

Pilate gave Jesus the obligatory flogging. Soldiers, mocking Jesus, made a crown of thorns for him and put a purple robe on him—purple being the expensive color of royalty. They called Jesus the King of the Jews and slapped Jesus.

This was followed by an exchange between Pilate and the Jews:

“Pilate went outside again and said to them, ‘Look, I’m bringing him out to you to let you know I find no grounds for charging him.’” —CSB

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

Pilate was uncertain and afraid of the crowds. He talked with Jesus one more time and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” (CSB) Talk to me. Do you know who I am?

Jesus replied that God made Pilate who he was and put him in the position he had.

Pilate kept trying to release Jesus. Pilate feared for his job.

Note, this was the preparation day or the day before the Sabbath—the day of rest. The Jews made special preparations on this day so they would do no “work” on the Sabbath. This is mentioned several times as the Jews were in a hurry for everything to be completed on this day.

Pilate told the crowd, “Here is your king!” (CSB)

The crowds were in a frenzy to kill Jesus. They even blasphemed God by replying, “We have no king but Caesar!” (CSB)

The Crucifixion

Note, crucifixion, i.e., killing someone on a piece of wood shaped as the letter “T” or a “cross” was how the Romans conducted capital punishment or execution.

Jesus carried a cross outside Jerusalem to Golgotha or the Place of the Skull. Jesus was executed along with two other men.

Pilate put a sign over Jesus proclaiming Jesus to be the King of the Jews. The chief priests didn’t like this sign, but Pilate replied, “What I have written, I have written.” (CSB)

The soldiers on duty divided the spoils of Jesus’ clothing. The tunic of Jesus was a valuable piece of cloth that the soldiers didn’t want to cut. Therefore, they gambled over who would get the tunic.

Standing nearby were the mother and aunt of Jesus along with Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and “the disciple He love,” he asked this disciple to care for His mother after His death.

A sponge of sour wine was given to Jesus to quench His thirst.

“When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished.’ Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.”—CSB

The Jews wanted these three persons to be dead and buried as it was the preparation day. Pilate agreed to have soldiers break the legs of the three to hasten their deaths. The legs of the other two men were broken, but the soldiers discovered that Jesus was already dead. They pierced Jesus’ side with a spear for confirmation.

The Burial of Jesus

A man named Joseph from Arimathea was a secret follower of Jesus. He asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Pilate granted the request. Nicodemus, the same man from the famous meeting at night, brought spices for the burial. They wrapped Jesus’ body in linen cloths with the spices. As an act of expediency for the preparation day, they put Jesus’ body in a tomb in a garden near the Place of the Skull.

The Empty Tomb

Chapter 20

Mary Magdalene visited the tomb early on the first day of the week while it was still dark. The stone blocking the entrance to the tomb had been removed. She ran to Simon Peter and to the

disciple Jesus loved and told them, “They’ve taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him!” (CSB)

These two disciples ran out to the tomb with Peter arriving second. The faster disciple looked in the tomb and saw the linen cloths. Simon Peter arrived and entered the tomb seeing the same. The two returned to the place they were staying.

Mary Magdalene stayed outside the tomb and cried. She looked into the tomb and saw two angels sitting where Jesus’ body had been. The angels asked, “Woman, why are you crying?” (CSB)

Mary Magdalene answered, “Because they’ve taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” (CSB)

She turned around and saw a person she thought was a gardener, but it was Jesus. She asked where the gardener took the body. Jesus spoke Mary’s name, and she recognized Him.

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

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples and told them everything.

Sunday Evening

On that Sunday evening, the disciples were gathered in fear of the Jews with the door locked. Jesus appeared in the room and said, “Peace be with you.” (CSB) Jesus showed them His wounds. The disciples rejoiced at this proof of the risen Jesus. Jesus sends the disciples and tells them to “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (CSB)

Later, Thomas, one of the twelve, arrived. Thomas had not been present when Jesus appeared, and Thomas didn’t believe what the others told him.

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

A week later, the group was again gathered in fear with the doors locked. Thomas was with them on this occasion. Jesus appeared a second time and told Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don’t be faithless but believe.” (CSB)

The Purpose of John’s Gospel

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

Jesus’ Third Appearance to the Disciples

Chapter 21

Jesus appeared to some of the disciples a third time after rising from the dead. This time was at the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. There were seven disciples present including Simon Peter.

At Peter's suggestion, the group set out in a boat to go fishing. After fishing in vain all night, a person stood on the shore at daybreak who urged them to try the other side of the boat. They did and the net was so full of fish, they couldn't haul it into the boat.

The disciple, the one Jesus loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" (CSB)

Peter jumped in the water to go to shore. The others brought the boat in to shore as well. Upon arriving at the shore, the person there had a fire and was cooking bread and fish. The disciples now recognized that it was Jesus.

Jesus Restores Peter

While eating at the shore, Jesus asked Peter if Peter loved Him. Jesus asked this three times so that Peter could reply, "you know that I love you," three times.

Jesus told Peter that he would experience an unwanted death, one where others would bind his hands and lead him to a place he didn't want to go. Peter asked about the disciple Jesus loved. Jesus replied,

"If I want him to remain until I come,' Jesus answered, 'what is that to you? As for you, follow me.'" —CSB

Epilogue

John wrote this account of the life of Jesus. There were many other things that Jesus did and said that John did not record. John could not record all those things.

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