

JOHN'S GOSPEL PART 2

The Final Days of Jesus on Earth

**A Bible Teaching Commentary
for personal or group study
by Fred Morris**



**John Part 2
Chapters 12 to 2**



JOHN'S GOSPEL Part 2, Chapters 12 to 21 The Final Days of Jesus on Earth

- **The prayers of Jesus for His followers**
- **The commands to love God and others in unity**
- **The promise of the Holy Spirit for all believers**

- **The trial, death and resurrection of Jesus**
- **How Peter denied Jesus but was forgiven**
- **The ministry call by Jesus to all believers**

THIS SECOND BOOK on John's Gospel tells us even more about the teachings and miracles of Jesus. John also records the prayers of Jesus for Himself and for His followers. John was the closest disciple of Jesus and wrote down the things which are most important today. John was also close to Jesus at His trial and crucifixion. He gives us clear evidence of Jesus rising from death before He went back to Heaven. John believed that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, who has authority and power to forgive sins, so that all who believe He is the Son of God can live with Him forever. Jesus calls us all to love Him, follow Him and live a new life serving God and others.

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WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you trust in God, read the Bible and use these commentaries. As you study the Old and New Testament truth from God, think about what Jesus taught and suffered 2000 years ago for your salvation and what He is calling you to say and do today to prepare the way for His return.

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Think about this: Where you see this, the questions require more time for personal meditation.



Ruled teaching boxes: Where you see these, the information gives extra teaching about life at the time the Bible passage was written and helps to apply the teaching for today.

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John's Gospel Part 2: Chapters 12 to 21

INTRODUCTION

John the Apostle wrote this Gospel. It is one of four books written nearly 2000 years ago by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who were followers of Jesus. It tells us the Good News of Jesus the Christ, the promised Jewish Messiah. Jesus was born in Israel as the Son of the Lord God Almighty to Mary, a virgin. He lived on Earth for about 33 years. He went back to Heaven after His Father raised Him from death. Many did not believe Jesus was the promised Saviour and Son of God. However, John told his readers about the power of the miracles and teachings of Jesus so that all people may know the truth and believe. John also tells us about the trials, death and resurrection of Jesus. He tells us what happened before Jesus returned to Heaven.



Bible reading: John Chapter 12

WHAT HAPPENED AT A MEAL FOR JESUS

It was six days before the Passover feast (Leviticus 23:5). Jesus returned to his friends in Bethany, a village near Jerusalem. At the home of His friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus, they had a meal to honour Jesus. It was also the place where Jesus had raised Lazarus from death (John 11:44; 12:1).

Martha served the food (12:2). Then Mary poured some very expensive perfume on His feet. She used about half a litre. She wiped His feet dry with her long hair. 'The house was filled with the sweet smell of the perfume' (12:3).

Judas Iscariot was angry. He was one of the disciples. Later he betrayed Jesus to the Jewish leaders. He said that she wasted the perfume (12:4). Judas said, "Why was the ointment not sold? Why was the money not given to poor people? It was worth a year's pay." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but



The plan to kill Jesus (John 11:45-57)

Many of the Jews saw Jesus raise Lazarus from death at Bethany, so they put their faith in Him (11:45). But the Jewish leaders were worried and they were jealous. They did not want Jesus to have many followers or to cause trouble with the Romans who ruled over Israel at that time. They met together and talked about their fears. They said that the Romans might destroy their Temple and their nation (11:47-48). Caiaphas, the High Priest, told them, "It is better if one man dies for the people than if the whole nation is destroyed" (11:50). With these words, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation. Caiaphas also prophesied that Jesus would die for God's children everywhere, bringing them together to make them one (11:51-52). This was in line with what the Old Testament prophets said. From that day, the Jewish leaders planned to kill Jesus (11:53). They commanded the people to tell them where Jesus was so that they could arrest Him (11:57).

because he was a thief. Judas was in charge of the money bag and took some of what was in it for himself (12:5-6).

Mary's faith pleased Jesus. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied to Judas. "The perfume was meant for the day I am buried. You will always have the poor among you but you will not always have Me" (12:7-8). As Mary listened to the words of Jesus, she understood more about His future death.

Some will not understand why you love Jesus. People will not understand that you want to learn more about Him. They will not understand how Jesus loves you and died to save you from sin. Many will not see why this plan of God is so important to you. They will not understand why you want to love and worship and follow Jesus. They will criticise you just as Judas criticised Mary, but do not be upset. Our Lord Jesus Christ is with you and understands.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE MEAL

Many people heard that Jesus was at Bethany. They came to see Him and Lazarus whom Jesus raised from death (12:9). When Jesus changes lives of believers, people will come to see them. This is especially true when someone saves and heals and raises people from death in the name of Jesus.

The chief priests, however, made plans to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (12:10). 'Because of Lazarus, many of the Jews were starting to follow Jesus. They were putting their faith in Him' (12:11).

These things happened at the beginning of a week that changed the world. The crowds wanted Jesus as their king. The religious leaders were afraid He would take their power away and so they wanted Jesus to be killed. The purpose of God was to allow His son to die and to take the punishment for sin that we deserve. Then Jesus, the Jewish Messiah or Christ, could become the Saviour of the world for those who believe.

Today, two billion people believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Through His death and resurrection, believers are set free from their old lives of sin. In many countries, it is dangerous to be a believer and follower of Jesus. Many are cut off from family and friends and even killed because of their faith in Him. We should always remember to pray for the believers all over the world and ask God their Father to have mercy on them. Pray also for the Kingdom of our Lord God Almighty to be extended.

THE PROMISED MESSIAH COMES TO JERUSALEM

The next day Jesus left Bethany and went towards Jerusalem. 'The large crowd that had come for the [Passover] Feast heard that Jesus was on His way... So they took branches from palm trees and went out to meet Him' (12:12-13).

The crowds threw their coats on the ground and waved the branches. They were excited. They shouted well-known words from the Old Testament, "Blessed is the One [King of Israel, KJV] who comes in the name of the LORD!" (Psalm 118:26).

The disciples of Jesus found a young donkey and He sat on it (John 12:14). This fulfilled the words in the Old Testament. "See, your King is coming. He is sitting on a [young] donkey" (12:15; Zechariah 9:9). He rode into Jerusalem on it.

At first, the disciples of Jesus did not understand all this. Later, they realised that these things had been written about Him in the Old Testament (12:16).

Many people went out to meet Jesus. They heard that He had raised Lazarus from death (12:17-18). The Jewish leaders were seriously worried and afraid of Jesus. "Look how the whole world is following Him" they said (12:19).

Many people today are afraid to follow Jesus. They are unwilling to repent and give up their old sinful ways and habits. His holiness and truth require them to listen and choose to obey God.

VISITORS TO JERUSALEM ASK ABOUT JESUS

Many visitors from other countries went to Jerusalem during the Feast. Some visitors were not Jews but they, too, came to worship God. They said to Philip the disciple, "We would like to see Jesus" (12:20-21). Jesus knew that it was nearly time for non-Jews as well as Jews to receive the salvation of God. His sacrifice on the cross would bring salvation to all who believe He was the Son of God Almighty. This was the plan of His Father in Heaven from the beginning.

Jesus replied that the time had come for the Son of Man to receive glory (12:23). Jesus meant that it was time for Him to die for all sinners. After three days, God was going to raise Him from death to return to His Father in Heaven. He was ready to die as the Jewish Messiah and as Saviour of the world. God promised this through the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 53:12; Jeremiah 23:5).

Jesus spoke of His body as a seed. He said that if a seed is not planted, it remains a single seed. The seed must be buried in the ground and die to bring a great harvest of many new seeds (12:24). If Jesus did not die on the cross, there would be no harvest of new believers. His Father, the Lord God Almighty, planned that Jesus would lose His life so that many would live forever.

Jesus said, "Anyone who loves their life will lose it. But anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it and have eternal life" (12:25). Jesus meant that we must be ready to repent and give up our old lives. If we follow Jesus, then our new life will be spiritually fruitful. Our new life in Jesus will last forever in Heaven. Our old life leads to eternal death. Every follower of Jesus makes this choice.

Jesus said, "Anyone who serves Me must follow Me. And where I am, My servant will also be. My Father will honour the one who serves Me" (12:26).



Son of Man and Son of God

The favourite title of Jesus for Himself was 'Son of Man' (Matthew 11:19; 12:8; John 12:23). He wanted people to know he was a human being as well as 'Son of God'. 'Son of Man' is also used in Old Testament prophecy (Psalm 80:17; Daniel Chapter 7).

Many visitors to Jerusalem wanted to meet and follow Jesus. This would mean leaving their old ways to follow a new way pleasing to God. Those who follow and honour the Son of God also honour the Father, who sent Him (5:21-23).

A VOICE FROM HEAVEN

Jesus then prayed to His Father in Heaven. "My soul is troubled" (12:27). Jesus was troubled because He was going to die on the cross. He knew that He was going to receive this terrible punishment for the sins of the whole world. Jesus did not sin. "But God made Him become sin for us," Paul wrote, "so we can be made right with God because of what Christ has done for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This was His Father's plan of salvation for all people. Jesus took the punishment we deserve for our sin.

Jesus prayed again to God, "What should I say? Father, save Me from this?" Such a prayer would be against His Father's will. He came into the world to die. Jesus continued, "No. This is the very reason I have come to this hour. Father, bring glory to Your name!" (12:27-28). He was willing to do His Father's will to the end.

If we are willing to be a follower of Jesus then any suffering will bring glory to the name of God. May this be our aim in life. This will certainly happen when we put our lives in the hands of God.

Then a voice spoke from Heaven. "I have brought glory to My name. I will bring glory to it again" (12:28).

In this way, the Father spoke to His Son and gave Him both comfort and understanding. The death and resurrection of Jesus brought the greatest glory to God Almighty. Jesus was the 'seed' that died to bring a great 'harvest' through rising from death. This happened after His ascension through believers working in the power of the promised Holy Spirit. They established His Church.

'The crowd there heard the voice. Some said it was thunder. Others said an angel spoke to Jesus' (12:29). Jesus told all His followers, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine... Now is the time for the world to be judged. Now the prince of this world will be thrown out" (12:30-31).

Satan was and is the prince of this world but God's plan was greater than Satan's plan. God's plan was that the raising from death of Jesus would destroy the power of Satan and his everlasting death. The death of Jesus was punishment for the sins of believers forever for those who believe He is the Son of God. The resurrection of Jesus is the victory of life for believers over everlasting death.

Jesus said, "I am going to be lifted up from the Earth. When I am [lifted up], I will bring all people to Myself" (12:32). Jesus said earlier that He, the Son of Man, "must be ... lifted up. Then everyone who believes in Him can live with God for ever" (3:14-15). 'He said this to show them how He was going to die' (12:33). He was going to die on a cross in great pain. His death and resurrection brought victory over Satan and salvation to all who believe Jesus is the Son of God.

SOME OF THE CROWD DO NOT BELIEVE IN JESUS

Some of the crowd spoke to Jesus. "The Law tells us that the Christ will remain forever. So how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?" (12:34).

Earlier, some tried to stone Jesus, but God stopped them. Many still did not believe in Him. Their spiritual blindness proved that the prophet's words in the Old Testament were true. "They cannot see with their eyes. They cannot understand with their minds. They cannot turn to the Lord. If they could, He would heal them" (Isaiah 6:10).

When men and women reject the truth, a judgment comes on them. Their spiritual eyes become dim and their hearts become hard, and God lets them go their own way (Romans 1:21-28). Jesus warned them to believe the truth while His light was still with them. Jesus wanted them to become 'children of light' (John 12:35-36). After this, Jesus went away and many could not find Him.

'Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in front of them. But they still would not believe in Him' (12:37). John quotes more words from the prophet Isaiah who spoke about Jesus, the future Messiah and Saviour (12:38-41). Isaiah warned that God was going to blind the eyes of those who rejected Him. John believed that 'Isaiah said this because he saw [in advance] the glory of Jesus and spoke about Him' (12:41).

However, even among the leaders, many believed but were afraid to say so. Sadly, 'they loved praise from people more than praise from God' (12:43).

THE CHOICE IS FOR EVERYONE TO BELIEVE IN JESUS

John wrote down more famous words of Jesus. "Anyone who believes in Me does not believe in Me only. He also believes in the One who sent Me. When he looks at Me, He sees the One who sent Me. I have come into the world to be a light. No-one who believes in Me will stay in darkness" (12:44, 46).

Jesus did not come into this world to judge us. He came to save the world from sin (12:47). But His words will judge us on the last day (12:48).

These words of Jesus are the words of the Father who is God Almighty. "I did not speak on My own. The Father who sent Me commanded Me what to say... I know that His command leads to eternal life. So everything I say is what the Father has told Me to say" (12:49-50).

Jesus made what He said very personal for everyone. You must choose to believe the truth for yourself. Christians cannot say they are a Christian just because their parents are Christians. God has done everything to save you personally and He promises you life after death. This promise is for all people who choose to follow Jesus and His teachings for themselves. Believe this promise and do not continue to sin.



Talk about this:

1. How did Mary, the friend of Jesus, show her faith, love and support for Jesus (12:3)?
2. What did Judas think about Mary anointing the feet of Jesus (12:5-6)? Why?
3. Why did the crowds follow Jesus (12:9)? What did many people choose to do (12:11)?
4. What did the religious leaders think about Jesus (12:10-11)? Why?
5. Why did the crowds call Jesus their King (12:12-13)? Why did He ride into Jerusalem on a donkey (12:14-15)?
6. What did Jesus tell those who said, "We would like to see Jesus" (12:20-26)? Why?
7. When you are troubled, how do you find comfort and understanding from your heavenly Father? (12:27-28)?
8. People asked, "Who is this Son of Man?" How did Jesus answer (12:34-35)?
9. What stops believers from speaking about their faith (12:42)?
10. Why are the words that John wrote about Jesus so important (12:44-50)?



Think about this: How do you show your love and support for Jesus?

What do people think of your faith in Jesus? How do you encourage people to seek and find Jesus (12:20-22)?



Bible reading: John Chapter 13

JESUS SETS AN EXAMPLE FOR US ALL

It was time for the final meal before the Passover. Jews still keep this feast every year to remember their escape from Egypt (Exodus 12). It remembers the time when blood from an innocent lamb was painted on the doorway of their homes in Egypt. It warned God's angel of death to pass over them without harming them. This was because they were God's special people. He then led them out of slavery and back to their Promised Land of Canaan, now called Israel.

'Jesus knew the time had come for Him to leave this world. It was time for Him go [back] to the Father' (13:1).

The evening meal was ready for Jesus and His disciples (13:2). Passover was the time to thank God for His love in saving His people. Jesus wanted to tell them about the full love of God to save the world through His own personal sacrifice. He became the innocent Lamb of God to overcome death for all people who believe He is God's Son.

Jesus also wanted to show them how to share the love of God with all people. Jesus told the disciples to remember God's mercy in His sacrifice as they shared the bread and the wine together (Luke 22:19-20).

It was also the time that the devil tempted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus (Mark 14:10-11). Yet Jesus knew that God had put everything under His own control and power (John 13:3). He was God's Son and He had authority. He knew

that He was from God and was going to return to God. He was ready to do what His Father God had planned.

Knowing all this, Jesus taught them by example. He took the place of a servant (13:4). He got up from the meal and wrapped a towel around His waist. He poured water into a bowl and began to wash the feet of His disciples (13:5).

Jesus did this to show them how to serve others (Philippians 2:5-11). Peter pulled his feet away. "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" (13:6).

"Later you will understand", Jesus said, but Peter said "No" (13:7-8).

"Unless I wash you, you cannot share life with Me," Jesus said.

"Lord," Peter replied, "not just my feet. Wash my hands and my head too!" (13:9).

Jesus said, "A person who has had a bath only needs to wash his feet. The rest of his body is clean. You are clean. But not all of you are" (13:10). The unclean one was Judas Iscariot. Jesus knew that Judas was sinful and would soon hand Him over to His enemies (13:11).

Jesus returned to His place. "I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet. So you also should wash one another's feet also. I have given you an example [to follow]. So you also should wash one another's feet... A servant is not more important than his master. A messenger is not more important than the one who sends him" (13:15-16).

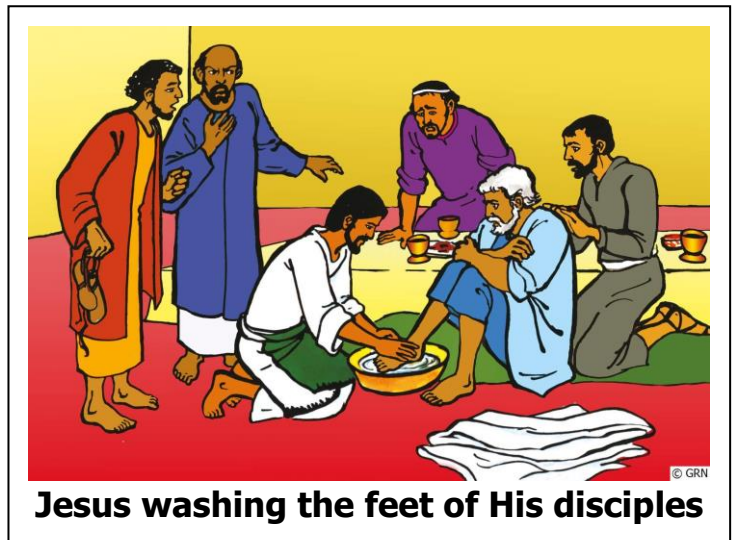
Soon after, the disciples went into the world as messengers and servants of Jesus. In their ministry, they learned to serve and love each other. Then they received the blessing of God.

Jesus said, "Now you know these things. So you will be blessed if you do them" (13:17).

JUDAS WILL BETRAY JESUS

Jesus said these things to all of His disciples. Yet he warned them, "I am not talking about all of you" (13:18). By this He meant that one of the disciples was going to betray Him.

Why did Jesus choose Judas Iscariot to be a disciple? He answered that question for us. "I know those I have chosen. But this will happen so that Scripture will come true" (13:18; Psalm 41:9).



Jesus washing the feet of His disciples

Jesus said, "I am telling you now before it happens" (13:19). He told them so that they would believe He was the One from God. Jesus wanted them to know about the plan of God. He also encouraged them by saying again, "Anyone who accepts Me accepts the One who sent Me" (13:20 and 12:44).

Jesus became troubled and sad. He told them clearly, "One of you is going to hand me over to My enemies" (13:21). His arrest and crucifixion would quickly follow.

The disciples were shocked. Peter said to John, "Ask Jesus which one He means" (13:24). John asked Jesus, "Lord, who is it?" (13:25).

Jesus did not say the name of Judas. Instead, He told John, "It is the one I give this piece of bread to after I have dipped it" (13:26). Then He dipped the bread and gave it to Judas Iscariot. This fulfilled Psalm 41:9.

'As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him' (13:27). His feet followed Jesus, but his heart followed Satan. He was not fully born again.

"Do quickly what you are going to do," Jesus told him. No-one knew what Jesus meant. Judas went outside. The disciples thought perhaps he went out to buy more food. It was night (13:27-30).

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Jesus told the eleven disciples of His coming glory. He said that His death and resurrection will be His glory. He will bring glory to God. And His Father will give glory to His Son (13:31-32).

Jesus was ready to obey God even though this led to His death. The disciples did not know that the Father would glorify the Son by raising Him from death. Jesus warned them, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer... I told the Jewish leaders, so I am telling you now. You cannot come where I am going" (John 13:33).



The Three Great Commandments of Jesus

- **Commandment 1. Love God.** "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love Him with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 6:5).
- **Commandment 2. Love neighbours.** "Love your neighbour as you love yourself" (Matthew 22:39; Leviticus 19:18). This includes showing kindness to family, friends, people you meet at work and in the street, including strangers and foreigners.
- **Commandment 3. Love other believers.** They are your 'brothers and sisters in Christ'. Care for them without judging them. "Love ... as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

It is a true saying that God shows His love to others through us. In this way, we learn how to love others. Jesus said, "If you love one another, everyone will know that you are My disciples" (John 13:35). God helps us to do this through His Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

Then Jesus gave His disciples a very important teaching. "I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know that you are My disciples" (13:34-35). This is often called the third great commandment of Jesus.

PETER WILL DENY JESUS

Peter was worried about what would happen next. He ignored the important commandment to love one another and instead he asked, "Lord, where are You going?"

Jesus repeated, "You cannot come where I am going." He added, "You cannot follow Me now. You will follow Me later" (13:36).

Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow You now? I will give my life for You" (13:37). Peter did not know his own weakness.

Jesus answered, "Before the cock crows, you will say three times that you do not know Me" (13:38). Jesus knew that over the next few hours the faith of Peter would be tested and he would deny His Lord three times.

Peter and the other disciples were sad. They were worried because one of them would betray their Master (13:21). They were now worried because Jesus said He will leave them (13:33). Peter was also worried because Jesus said he will deny his Lord (13:38).

All the disciples were afraid. Their faith would soon be tested.



Talk about this:

1. Why was the Last Supper meal so important to Jesus and the disciples (Exodus 12)? Why is it remembered today (Luke 22:19-20)?
2. How did Jesus show His love to His disciples (13:1, 5)?
3. What did Peter and the disciples learn about the love of Jesus (13:14-17)?
4. Why did Jesus say that not everyone was clean (13:11)? What did the disciples understand about Judas (13:28-29)?
5. How did Jesus prepare His followers to remain faithful in the troubles ahead (13:1, 14, 19, 34-35, 38)?



Think about this: What did Peter say at first about the new commandment to love other followers of Jesus (13:34-36)? What did he say later (1 Peter 2:17)? What do you say about this commandment? What stops His love working through us to others? In what ways can we show the love of God to other believers? Pray for understanding how this love was demonstrated in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.



Bible reading: John Chapter 14

JESUS COMFORTS HIS DISCIPLES WITH A PROMISE OF HEAVEN

Jesus knew that His disciples were confused. He said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Trust [believe, KJV] in Me also" (14:1). Their Jewish faith helped them to trust in God, but they had to trust also in God's Messiah. They had to trust in the sacrifice of His Son to save the world from sin. These words of Jesus are often read aloud at funeral services today to comfort believers. All who believe that Jesus is the Son of God and their Saviour will receive eternal life with Him in Heaven (3:16).

God provides many places for His family of believers in Heaven. There is no shortage of room. Jesus said, "There are many rooms in my Father's house. If this were not true, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. If I go and do that, I will come back. And I will take you to be with Me. Then you will also be where I am" (14:2-3).

Jesus knew that He was going to die and rise again and go to Heaven. He will come again soon to take all His brothers and sisters in Christ to be with Him.

JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

Jesus told them, "You know the way to the place where I am going" (14:4). The disciples were still confused. Thomas asked, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. So how can we know the way?" (14:5).

Jesus answered with words that are now a foundational teaching of the Christian Church. "I am the way and the truth and the life" (14:6).

- Jesus shows us the way to the Kingdom of God; He is the way.
- Jesus teaches us the truth from God; He is the truth.
- Jesus gives us a new and powerful life in God; He is the life.

Jesus said earlier, "The secret [mystery, KJV] of God's Kingdom has been given to you" (Mark 4:11). Jesus came, not to start a new religion, but to show us the way to the Father and His truth, now and in the future.

JESUS IS THE WAY TO GOD ALMIGHTY

Jesus added, "No-one comes to the Father except through Me" (14:6). He is the only way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life. He is the way to be saved. He is the way to know the truth from God. Heaven, salvation, and eternal life are for those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He alone is the way to His Father, God Almighty. By this, Jesus also meant that the truth from the God of Israel had been revealed to all, not just to the Jews.

Jesus then added these words. "If you really knew Me, you would know My Father also." Then Jesus made a promise to the eleven disciples. "From now on, you do know Him. And you have seen Him" (14:7).

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father. That will be enough for us" (14:8)

Jesus answered, "Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father" (14:9). "Do you not believe that I am in the Father? Do you not believe that the Father is in Me? The words I say to you are not just My own. The Father lives in Me and He is the One who is doing His work. Believe Me when I say I am in the Father. Also, believe that the Father is in Me. Or at least believe what the miracles show about Me" (14:10-11).

JESUS IS THE WAY TO ALL TRUTH

Then Jesus said, "What I am going to tell you is true" (14:12). He said "I tell you the truth" 68 times in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. John wrote down three of these important truths of God spoken by Jesus in verses 12 to 14:

1. "Anyone who has faith [believes, KJV] in Me will do what I have been doing."
2. "He will do even greater things."
3. "I will do anything you ask in My name."

Here is our **faith**, our **promise** and our **hope** all put together:

- The faith in Jesus and in the ministry which He calls us to do.
- The promise to expect great miracles to happen when we act in faith.
- The hope of answered prayers as we ask God in the name of Jesus.

This is a fulfilment of God's promise to His prophet Jeremiah 600 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. "Call out to Me. I will answer you. I will tell [show, KJV] you great things you do not know" (Jeremiah 33:3.)

The disciples of Jesus did do the very same miracles they had seen Jesus do! They did even greater works of faith. The Book of Acts tells us the beginning of these greater works. If we are followers of Jesus, we also need faith to believe this today. Jesus promised that He "will do anything we ask in His name" (John 14:14).

JESUS PROMISES A NEW LIFE WITH HOLY SPIRIT POWER

Jesus said next, "If you love Me, you will obey what I command" (14:15). In saying this, Jesus joined love with faith and obedience. Faith without obedience is not true faith. Obedience without love is not true faith. No-one can say, "I have faith", if they do not love and obey the words of Jesus.

Jesus continued to comfort His disciples. He promised them, "I will ask the Father. He will give you another Friend (Guide and Defender) to help you and be with you forever. The Friend is the Spirit of Truth... I will not leave you as children without parents; I will come to you" (14:16-18).

This is the promise of Jesus to send the Holy Spirit to be with His children always. This new and powerful life happened at Pentecost after Jesus returned to His Father (Acts 2).

When the Holy Spirit works in and through believers, people will know that Christ lives in us. He is our hope and glory (Colossians 1:27). This will also bring glory to the Father.

In the remaining verses of this chapter Jesus refers to the importance of our love for Him six times.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

Jesus continued to teach His disciples what would happen next. They would be left alone without their Teacher and Saviour for a short time.

“Before long, the world will not see Me anymore. But you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19). Jesus rose from death and met his disciples on Earth before returning to Heaven. They, too, received eternal life with God. He gives eternal life to every believer (10:28).

“On that day, you will realise that I am in My Father. You will know that you are in Me, and I am in you” (14:20).

“Anyone who has My commands and obeys them loves Me. My Father will love the one who loves Me. I too will love them. And I will show Myself to him” (14:21).

Then Judas Thaddaeus (not Judas Iscariot) spoke. “Lord,” he said, “why do you plan to show yourself only to us? Why not also to the world?” (14:22).

Jesus did not answer this question directly. He repeated, “Anyone who loves Me will obey [keep, KJV] My teaching. My Father will love him. We will come to him and make Our home with him” (14:23). Therefore, all who love Jesus and obey His commands will know the love of the Father and receive the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). Only then will Jesus be revealed to the world. This is the way for successful church ministry today.

Jesus said, “The words you hear Me say are not My own. They belong to the Father who sent Me” (John 14:24).

THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND THE PEACE OF GOD

“I have spoken all these things while I am still with you” (14:25). “My Father will send the Friend (Guide and Defender) ... the Holy Spirit. He will teach you all things. He will remind you of everything I have said to you” (14:26).

Jesus added a further promise to His followers. “I leave My peace with you. I give My peace to you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid” (14:27). The peace of God given in place of fear is a wonderful promise to receive. The disciples would need the peace of God in their lives in the coming days and years as well as the power of the Holy Spirit.

LOVE, OBEDIENCE, PERSECUTION AND VICTORY

“You heard me say, ‘I am going away. And I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad I am going to the Father. The Father is greater than I am.

I have told you now before it happens. Then when it does happen, you will believe" (14:28-29).

Jesus then warned, "The prince of this world is coming. He has no power over Me. But the world must learn that I love the Father. They must also learn that I do exactly what My Father has commanded Me to do" (14:30-31).

- He wanted them to see His love for God.
- He wanted them to see how He was willing to obey God and even die.
- He wanted to warn them about Satan's attack.
- He wanted them to know God's victory in the cross.
- He wanted the world to know of His love and obedience for His Father God.

It was nearly time for Jesus and the disciples to leave the upper room.



Talk about this:

1. What did Jesus say to comfort the disciples (14:2-3)? How does this strengthen our faith and hope?
2. What was Jesus trying to explain to Thomas and Philip (14:5, 8)? What did Jesus say in reply (14:6, 9)?
3. The three things Jesus said about Himself, what did they mean (14:6)?
4. Who was the Helper who was going to come to them when Jesus returned to His Father (14:16, 26)? What was this Helper going to do for the disciples of Jesus?
5. How did Jesus answer Judas Thaddaeus (14:22-23)? What does this tell us about the mission of the church for today?
6. What did Jesus say about the peace of God and obeying God (14:27, 31)? Was this for Himself or for us?



Think about this: Do we love and obey our Father God in the same way as Jesus did (14:31)? What did Jesus do to save us and to help us? Do we ask God to show us how to love Jesus more and more and share His Good News with others?



Bible reading: John Chapter 15

THE TRUE VINE TREE AND ITS BRANCHES

Before they left the upper room, Jesus called Himself the true vine and He called His followers the branches. The branches do all the hard work. They grow leaves and flowers and bear heavy fruit. However, their strength and food comes from the central vine which is rooted in the soil.

Jesus said, "I am the true vine and My Father is the gardener... Remain joined to Me, and I will remain joined to you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain joined to the vine. In the same way, you cannot bear fruit unless you remain joined to Me. I am the vine; you are the branches" (15:1, 4, 5).

We remain joined to Jesus when we study and follow His teachings and obey God's plans in our lives. This happens through the Holy Spirit of Christ working within us.

Jesus warned His disciples that God cuts off unfruitful branches but trims good branches to produce more fruit (15:2, 6). Jesus also said:

- "If you remain joined to Me and My words remain in you, ask for anything you wish. And it will be given to you" (15:7).
- "When you produce a lot of fruit, it brings glory to My Father. It shows that you are My disciples" (15:8).

"REMAIN IN ME... LOVE EACH OTHER"

The fruit God seeks is a life that is holy and useful. He wants His children to love Him and to love one another. He wants children who will take God's love to others. When our lives become fruitful we give glory to God.

This is why Jesus said, "Just as the Father has loved me, I have loved you. Now remain in My love" (15:9). We remain in His love when we obey His commands (15:10).

Jesus added, "I have told you this so that My joy will be in you. I also want your joy to be complete" (15:11).

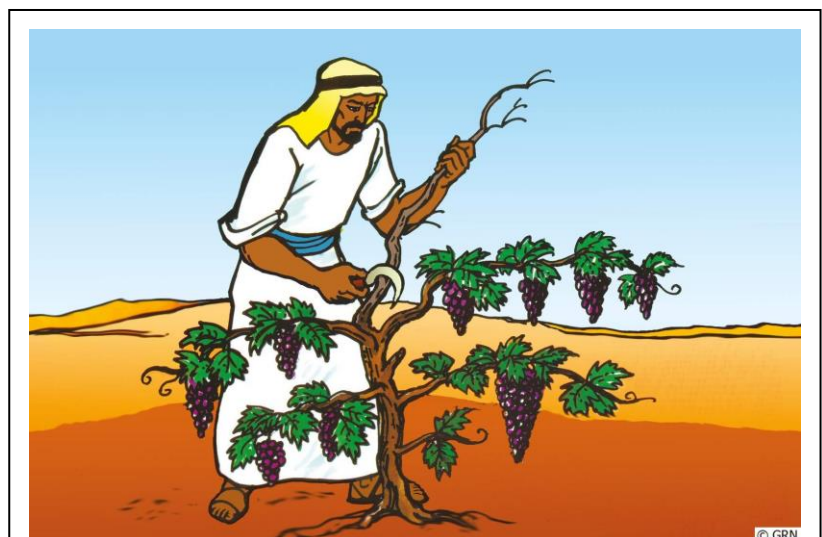
Jesus said to His followers "Remain [Abide, KJV] in Me" up to ten times in this chapter.

Then Jesus repeated His third great commandment. "Here is My command. Love each other, just as I have loved you. No-one has greater love than the One who gives his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command... I have told you everything I learned from My Father" (15:12-15).

"You did not choose me. Instead, I chose you. I appointed you to go and bear fruit that will last. The Father will give you what you ask for in My name" (15:16). God's answers to our prayers are proof of fruitful lives.

Once more He said to His followers, "Here is my command. Love each other" (15:17). God wants us to love our neighbours and friends. This includes our relatives and the people we work with. Here, Jesus reminds us to also love other believers and to pray for them.

Jesus told His eleven disciples, "Without Me you can do nothing" (15:5). Yet He was leaving them! Jesus was sad to leave them.



The parable of the vine and the unfruitful branches

However, He told these men how to bear fruit in God's Kingdom. Then they would tell all nations. He would soon leave them but He would send God's Holy Spirit power to be with them forever (Matthew 28:19-20). In this way, Jesus would be with them at all times.

Manna Publications volunteers around the world give witness to this faithful love and fruitful teaching of Fred and Lorna Morris. Jesus called them to go and bear fruit and it is fruit that will last.

THE WORLD HATES GOD'S CHILDREN

Jesus warned His disciples that the world will hate them. "Remember that it hated Me first" (John 15:18). So we must not try to live like non-believers in order to gain their love. If people persecuted Jesus, they will persecute His true followers also. We must be ready to speak the truth from God our Father at risk of becoming unpopular. But Jesus also promised that the Holy Spirit would be with them to testify about Him (15:26).

People who do not know God persecute the people of God. It was like this from the beginning with the children of Adam and Eve. Wicked Cain killed his righteous brother (Genesis 4:8). God loved Cain and Abel but only Abel chose to love and obey God.

The people who hate God are lost in the darkness of sin. They choose not to know personally the One true and living God and His Son (John 16:3). Satan uses them as his tools. They attack God's servants and even kill them.

Jesus warned, "If you belonged to the world, it would love you like one of its own. But you do not belong to the world. I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you... If people hate [persecute, KJV] Me and tried to hurt Me, they will do the same to you... They will treat you like this because of My name. They do not know the One who sent Me" (15:19-21).

Then Jesus promised His followers, "If they obey My teaching, they will obey yours also" (15:20).

However, those who reject Jesus, reject God Himself (15:23). Jesus said that the Old Testament prophecies had come true (15:25). "They hated Me without any reason" (Psalm 35:19; 69:4).

Then Jesus reminded His disciples again that He will send the Holy Spirit from His Father. "When the Friend comes to help you, He will give witness about Me. You also must give witness. This is because you have been with Me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27).

Some people will not respond to the signs and wonders that God does around us. Jesus said that the Gospel or Good News works only when people:

1. obey the words of Jesus (15:20).
2. receive the Holy Spirit of truth (15:26).
3. witness to friends and neighbours (15:27).

If a branch is joined to a tree, it will normally bear fruit. If we remain in Christ, we will bear His fruits of the Spirit including love, obedience, prayerfulness and

worship. His Spirit will bring new life to the fellowship of believers. If we remain in Christ, His Spirit will be at work within us.



Talk about this:

1. Jesus said, "If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love" (15:10). Explain His commandments.
2. Jesus used the word "remain" ten times in 15:4-10. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Remain [Abide, KJV] in Me"?
3. How is it that Jesus remains with His followers at all times today (15:10; Matthew 28:20)?
4. Why do some people persecute Christians (15:18-19)?



Think about this: Pray for understanding for how to show much fruit to God's glory. Pray also for a wider understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.



Bible reading: John Chapter 16

JESUS WARNS HIS FOLLOWERS TO EXPECT BIG TROUBLES

Jesus said, "I have told you all of this so that you will not go down the wrong path" (16:1). Jesus did not want His followers to lose their faith.

"The time is coming when someone may kill you and think they are doing God a favour" (16:2). He wanted to be sure that His disciples fully understood this.

Satan blinds the minds of people. They sometimes believe his lies when he tells them to attack or kill God's servants. But nothing can destroy God's church (Matthew 16:17-18). In Christ, all believers will live forever with Him (14:1-4).

Jesus repeated these words: "They will do these things because they do not know the Father or Me" (16:3).

"Why have I told you this? So that when the time comes, you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you" (16:4).

The disciples were sad because Jesus was leaving them to go back to His heavenly Father (16:5-6). They thought only of themselves and not about the purposes of God.

WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL DO

Jesus told them, "It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Friend will not come to help you" (16:7). Then Jesus told them again about His Friend, Comforter and Guide, the Holy Spirit, who would come to them.

"When He comes," Jesus said, "He will prove that the people of the world are guilty. He will prove that they are guilty [and wrong] about sin, righteousness and judgment" (16:8). This was the promise given in the Old Testament by the psalmist (Psalm 94:15) and many of the prophets.

Jesus wanted to teach more things to the disciples. He tells them that the Holy Spirit will show them all truth, old and new (16:13). He will also help them remember all He had said (16:13). This was important as little was written down at that time. It is important for us to know and understand the teachings of Jesus and not rely on our own ideas of what is right. If we remember this, we will not follow our own selfish desires in life.

Later, some of the followers of Jesus wrote down the great truths that Jesus taught. Praise God for these faithful records in the New Testament part of the Bible! The Holy Spirit guided their thoughts and their writings. Paul believed that these writings were inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). We need to be right according to both Old and New Testament scriptures and righteous in all we say, think and do; also, loving and truthful (Ephesians 4:15).

Jesus also said, "He will bring Me glory" (16:14). The Holy Spirit always agrees with the Father and the Son. And Jesus with the Spirit point us to the Father. The Holy Spirit draws us to Jesus and through Jesus alone do we have access to Father God (14:6). "Everything that belongs to the Father is Mine. The Holy Spirit will receive something from Me, He show it to you" (16:15).

THE DISCIPLES' SADNESS WILL TURN TO JOY AND PEACE

Jesus continued, "In a little while you will no longer see Me. Then after a little while you will see Me" (16:16). The disciples still did not understand about the death of Jesus on a cross, His rising to life and His return to Heaven. They said to each other, "We do not understand what He is saying" (16:17-18).

Jesus knew that they wanted to ask Him about these things. "What I am about to tell you is true... You will be sad, but your sadness will turn to joy" (16:19-20).

He explained it this way: "A woman giving birth to a baby has pain... But when her baby is born, she forgets the pain. She forgets because she is so happy that a baby is born into the world" (16:20-21).

Jesus said, "Now it is your time to be sad. But I will see you again. Then you will be full of joy. And no-one will take your joy away" (16:22). The disciples cried at His death, but rejoiced when they saw Him again after He rose from death. Our joy at knowing Jesus remains when we continue to follow and serve Him and others He has called us to serve.

Next, Jesus said, "When that day comes... My father will give you anything you ask for in My name... Ask, and you will receive what you ask for. Then your joy will be complete" (16:23-24). This is very different to the joy of serving God through seeking day-to-day guidance from a High Priest (Numbers 4:27). When we speak to God and ask Him in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit inspires and guides us.

This promise is for all who believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus wants our joy to be complete (15:11). We can come to the Father in prayer in the name of Jesus. We are told to pray 'in His name'.

Note that three times Jesus promises joy for his followers (16:20, 22, 24) and again later in 17:13. "The Father loves you because you have loved Me. He also loves you because you believe I came from God" (16:27).

"I came from the Father and entered the world" (16:28). Jesus was at the beginning of the world with His Father when They said, "Let Us make human beings ... like Us [in Our image, KJV]" (Genesis 1:26). He left His Father and entered the world as a human being. He was born to the virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit before she married Joseph (Matthew 1:18-21).

Jesus confirmed once more that He was leaving them and going back to His Father in Heaven (John 16:28). Finally, the disciples began to understand. "Now you speak plainly," they said (16:29).

"At last you believe!" Jesus said (16:31). Yet He knew they would desert Him when His trouble came. Jesus spoke words of comfort for Himself and for them. He said, "But I am not really alone. My Father is with Me" (16:32). Jesus proved that these words were true. We, too, are not alone. We have the Holy Spirit living in us.

"I have told you these things, so that you can have peace because of Me. In this world, you will have trouble, but have courage [be cheerful, KJV]. I have won the battle over the world" (16:33).

Jesus knew how important it is to have the peace of God in our lives at all times. He overcame the world for us, so that we can overcome the sin in our lives and all that is wrong in this world. Christians must separate themselves from the sins of the world to serve God. "Then I will receive you. I will be your Father and you will be my sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).



Talk about this:

1. How do the warnings of Jesus help believers when trouble comes to them (16:2-4)?
2. How did Jesus say the promised Holy Spirit would help us (16:7-8)?
3. What else did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do for Him and His disciples (16:13)?
4. Why does Jesus promise three times that His followers will have joy (16:20-24)?
5. What victory and peace has Jesus won for us all (16:33)?



Think about this: What sorrows or fears stop you from seeing God's purpose for you today and in the future? Have you asked Jesus today for His promised power to help you avoid fear, doubt and even denial?



Bible reading: John Chapter 17

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF

After Jesus said these things, He looked towards Heaven and prayed. The disciples all heard Him ask the Lord God Almighty to bless Him. "Father, the time has come.

Bring glory to Your Son. Then Your Son can bring glory to You" (17:1). He asked His heavenly Father to bless Him so that He would glorify God and also enable Him to bless others who then would glorify His Father.

It was less than a day before Jesus died on the cross. Jesus knew He had to do the Father's will, whatever the cost. His death completed His Father's salvation plan through His own punishment on the cross for our sins. His coming back to life after death gave glory to God and was a victory over Satan. This is why Jesus prayed for Himself to bring glory to God.

Jesus continued to talk to God, His Father, so that all could hear. He declared that the Son of God had authority over all people (17:2). He gives eternal life to those God has given Him. He said that they will have eternal life when they know the only true God and Jesus, whom He sent (17:2-3).

Let us remember also to pray for God's glory as we pray for ourselves and others. Remember this when we pray for our health, our safety, our provision, our friends and family and about our troubles. May the answers to our prayers always bring glory to God, with eternal life and divine understanding to those whom we serve in our calling.

"I have brought You glory on Earth. I have finished the work You gave Me to do. So now, Father, give glory to Me in Heaven where Your throne is. Give Me the glory I had with You before the world began" (17:4-5). He laid aside this glory and came down to Earth. Now He has that same glory again with His Father forever.

His followers witnessed the glory of His death and resurrection (Matthew 27:54). The Father glorified the Son, who returned to Heaven and took His throne again at the right-hand side of God Almighty (Hebrews 1:3). God answered this prayer when He raised Jesus from death and then welcomed Him into Heaven forty days later (Acts 1:9).

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

Next, Jesus prayed for His disciples. He told His Father, "Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You... They know for certain that I come from You. They believed that You sent Me" (John 17:7-8). These are important truths we too should know about God and His Son, our Saviour.

Jesus added, "I pray for those You have given me, because they are Yours... I am coming to You, Holy Father... Keep them safe so that they can be one, just as You and I are one" (17:9, 11). The future unity of believers was very important to Jesus. His prayer was for all who read His words today. He wants us to love each another in unity just as Jesus and His Father love each other in unity. We must keep meeting together in fellowship, ready to listen without judging.

Jesus continued talking to His Father. He told God that He wanted His followers to be joyful (17:13). They believed the truth from God that Jesus taught them. But many people in the world now hated them (17:14). Jesus prayed, "I do not pray that You will take them out of the world. I pray that You will keep them

safe from the evil one" (17:15). Satan is at work in the world we live in, so Jesus prayed that believers should have both joy and safety.

Jesus then prayed again to God, "Use the truth to make them holy. Your word is truth... They, too, can be made holy" (17:17, 19). His disciples became holy as they believed and obeyed the teachings of Jesus from God.

Earlier, Jesus told the Jewish believers, "If you obey My teaching you are really My disciples... You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (8:31-32).

JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS

Jesus told His Father that His prayers were not just for the twelve disciples but for all believers in Him, including those who are not Jews. His prayers were not just for then but for now. "I do not pray only for them. I pray also for those who will believe in Me because of their message" (17:20.) In this way, Jesus showed us that it is important to teach His words and preach the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. Also, to pray for those who we speak to and for those who share in the teaching and preaching. Also, to pray for those who read and believe the Good News about Jesus, our Saviour, or listen to recordings.

Jesus prayed again for Christian unity. This is only possible when believers are united in God Almighty and with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. "Then the world will believe" (17:21). People will see our unity and love for each other. They will see our love for God, for Jesus and for the Holy Spirit. They will see and then believe the Good News that Jesus is the Son of God, sent by Him to save the world from sin, both Jews and Gentiles. They will see the same glory of God that Jesus received and gives to all His followers (17:22). They will see the unity and love between believers and their Lord.

It is this unity that Satan often tries to destroy. Church unity is through love for God and other believers and also keeping Christ central in our worship and teaching. This then gives freedom for His Spirit to work among us.



Jesus prayed for the future Christian Church

He prayed for the meetings of believers:

- to unite with each other and His Father (17:11).
- to be full of His joy (17:13).
- to be safe from the evil one (17:15).
- to be holy and kept from sin (17:19).
- to share the Good News with others in a loving way (17:20).
- to make new followers of Jesus through showing true Christian unity with each other, with God and with our Lord and Saviour (17:21).

When we read how Jesus prayed for us, it encourages us to work for the Kingdom of God. He continues to pray for us today, interceding for us with His heavenly Father (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus wanted them to be together perfectly united as one. "This will let the world know that You sent Me" (17:23). Our unity with others comes from our unity with God Almighty and with our Lord Jesus Christ. We must not let Satan destroy this witness of love and unity with others nor with our Saviour and our God.

Finally, Jesus said He wanted His followers to see Him in all His glory. His disciples would see Him briefly on Earth after His resurrection. But all followers of Jesus will be with Him in glory. This glory was given to Jesus because God loved Him "before the world was created" (17:24).

THE FINAL PROMISE OF JESUS

Before He was arrested, Jesus made a promise to His Father. He explained, "Those You have given Me know that You have sent Me. I have shown You to them." Then He promised "I will continue to show You to them. The love You have for Me will be in them" (17:25-26).

This is the final promise Jesus made to God before His trial and death. He continues to keep this promise for us through the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way, Jesus enables us to know God. We know God's love and we know the compassion of Jesus. Jesus confirmed, "I myself will be in them" (17:26). He does this through the resurrection power of His Holy Spirit.

This is the promise of Jesus that continues true today. He also continues to talk with His Father about us and prays [pleads] for us in Heaven (Hebrews 7:25).



Talk about this:

1. Why did Jesus pray for Himself (17:1)? How would this bless God and bless others (17:2-3)?
2. Why did Jesus pray for His disciples (17:20)? What is the difference between teaching and preaching?
3. Why did Jesus promise to pray for all His followers now (17:21; Hebrews 7:25)?
4. What happens when we are united in our love for our Lord and for others (17:23)?
5. What does Jesus want all His followers to see, that is given to Him (17:24)? Why?
6. What did Jesus promise for all who believe in Him (17:26)? Is this still true today?



Think about this: Why is unity among believers so important? How does this glorify God and bless His people? Will you be able to say to God these words of Jesus: "I have brought You glory on earth. I have finished the work You gave me to do" (17:4)? How does Jesus communicate with us today?



Bible reading: John Chapter 18

JUDAS BETRAYS JESUS

Jesus finished praying and left the city of Jerusalem with His eleven disciples. They went out through the East Gate over the River Kidron to a farm of olive trees at Gethsemane. Judas knew where to find Him. Jesus went there often to pray. Jesus was now very troubled and prayed there with Peter, James and John nearby (Mark 14:33).

Soon Judas arrived. Roman soldiers and Jewish court officials came with him. 'The chief priests and the Pharisees had sent them. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus knew everything that was going to happen to Him' (John 18:3-4). Divine understanding leads to peace in conflict or oppression. Pray for God to show you His purpose and plan to prepare you for troubles ahead. Then you will know the will and peace of God and will also know what to say and do.

"Who is it that you want?" Jesus asked.

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. This was the name that He was known by.

"I am He," Jesus said.

The soldiers moved back and fell to the ground. They were suddenly afraid, so He asked them a second time (18:7). He also said, "If you are looking for Me, then let these men go" (18:8). Jesus wanted to protect His disciples from harm.

Peter pulled out his sword and struck a man called Malchus. He cut off his right ear. The man was a servant of the High Priest (18:10). Jesus told Peter to put his sword away (18:11). He did not want Peter to fight against the plan of God. Jesus knew that He had to suffer and die to save sinners. He called His sacrifice 'the cup of suffering'. Jesus touched the man and healed his ear (Luke 22:51).

John the Baptist said that Jesus came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Jesus died on the cross 'to take the sins of many people' (Hebrews 9:28). On the cross Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world. God, His Father, allowed His Son to die on the cross for us all. Jesus knew the Old Testament prophecies were true about His suffering and death (Psalm 22:1; Isaiah 53:4-12). His willing sacrifice resulted in his punishment that we sinners deserve. Jesus had the power to save Himself, yet 'He obeyed God completely, even though it led to His death. In fact, He died on a cross' (Philippians 2:8).

'Then the group of soldiers... and Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They tied Him up' (John 18:12). The disciples left Him.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS BY ANNAS

The Roman soldiers thought they were in control but God was in control all the time. There were three trials of Jesus, but we usually think of them as one. There was also an unofficial trial by Herod (Luke 23:7-16).

Jesus was taken first to Annas, the former High Priest. Peter and John followed the soldiers and officials at a distance. It was the middle of the night.

This first trial was not legal. Caiaphas was the High Priest at that time. Annas was his father-in-law (John 18:13) and a former high priest. Caiaphas ruled over the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court. He strongly believed that 'it would be good if one man died for the people' (11:50; 18:14). He feared that followers of Jesus would cause a riot. He feared that the Roman soldiers might destroy Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. He believed that Jesus should die to save the people of Israel. His belief came true in a way that he did not expect!

PETER DENIES JESUS

John knew Annas. He was allowed to go with Jesus into the courtyard. Peter waited outside. John asked the woman at the door to let Peter in (18:15-16).

During the trial, Peter stood in the courtyard. He warmed himself at the fire. Then the woman asked him if he was a disciple of Jesus. "I am not" Peter replied (18:17).

Later in the night, Peter said two more times that he was not a disciple of Jesus (18:25-27). The third time, Peter heard a cockerel crowing. He remembered Jesus saying that this would happen. "Before the cock crows you will say three times that you do not know Me" (Matthew 26:34). Peter went outside and wept (Matt. 26:75). He needed the power of the Holy Spirit to speak about his Lord. Peter was weak; Jesus was strong.

Meanwhile, Annas questioned Jesus. He asked Jesus about His disciples and His teaching (18:19).

"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught [openly] in synagogues or at the Temple, where all the Jews come together. I did not say anything in secret. Why question Me? Ask the people who heard Me. They certainly know what I said" (18:20-21).

When Jesus said this, one of the officials hit Him in the face. "Is this the way to answer?" he asked (18:22).

"Have I said something wrong?" Jesus replied. "If I spoke the truth, why did you hit Me?" (18:23.) No-one answered. The religious leaders wanted to judge Jesus quickly before the crowds caused a riot.

While Jesus was still tied up, Annas sent him to Caiaphas, the new High Priest (18:24).

THE TRIAL OF JESUS BY CAIAPHAS

The trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin court continued. It was still night so it was illegal under Jewish law. Up to seventy Jewish religious leaders took part. What happened is written in Mark 14:55-65.

The court tried to find witnesses to say bad things about Jesus. No-one could agree what Jesus had said (Mark 14:59). At first, Jesus kept silent. Then Caiaphas

asked Jesus, "Are You the Christ? Are you the Son of the Blessed One?" (Mark 14:61).

Jesus replied, "I am." Then Jesus spoke the words about Himself from the Old Testament. The prophet Daniel saw the Messiah in a vision. He was like a Son of Man. He went into Heaven on the clouds, to be with the Lord God Almighty (Daniel 7:13). Jesus told the court that He would go to Heaven on a cloud and sit at the right-hand side of God (Mark 14:62).

No-one believed Jesus. Caiaphas said to the court, "You have heard Him say a very evil thing against God. What do you think?" (Mark 14:64). They all found Him guilty. They said that He had to die. The Jewish leaders and the Romans wanted to remove Jesus. He was a threat to the peace and to their authority.

Caiaphas agreed to send Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Some from the court began to spit at Him. Some hit Him and laughed at Him. They tied Jesus with ropes and sent Him to Pilate. The Roman soldiers took Him and beat Him (Mark 14:65).

Jesus did not lie but told the truth. Many wanted to hear His teaching and to see His miracles. "He came to bring Good News to the poor and to set prisoners free" (Isaiah 61:1).

Jesus suffered much through religious persecution but He trusted in God, His Father.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS BY PONTIUS PILATE

It was now early morning. The Jews did not want to be made unclean before the Sabbath by mixing with Pilate, who was not a Jew. They also wanted to prepare themselves for the annual Passover celebration. So they did not enter the governor's palace (John 18:28). Pilate came out to them. He asked them, "What charges do you bring against this man?" (18:29).

The religious leaders said, "He has committed crimes... but we do not have the right to put anyone to death" (18:30-31).

Pilate ordered Jesus to be brought to him. He asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (18:33).

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not part of this world. If it were, those who serve me would fight [for Me]... My kingdom is from another place" (18:36).

"So you are a king, then!" said Pilate (18:37).

Jesus answered, "You are right to say I am a king, In fact that is the reason I was born. I came into the world to be a witness to the truth. Everyone who is on the side of truth listens to Me" (18:37). According to the prophesy of Isaiah, Jesus is both a suffering servant and victorious king (Isaiah 53).

"What is truth?" Pilate responded (18:38). Many people ask this same question and so should we. We believe that Jesus Himself is the Truth of God (1:14; 14:6). Pilate did not know or understand this. Instead, he asked Herod for his opinion.

Herod was the governor for the region where Jesus used to live (Luke 23:7-9). Neither Pilate nor Herod believed He deserved death (23:14-15).

Pilate stopped talking to Jesus and went outside again to the Jews. Now a large crowd had gathered. They quickly turned against Jesus. Pilate said, "I find no basis [reason] for any charge against Him. But it is your practice for me to set one prisoner free for you at Passover time. Do you want me to set 'the King of the Jews' free?" (John 18:38-39).

They shouted back, "No! Not Him! Give us Barabbas!" Barabbas was a prisoner who had taken part in a rebellion against the Roman rulers of Israel (18:40).

The crowds rejected Jesus the man and Jesus the Messiah, Son of God.



Talk about this:

1. How did Jesus know what to say and do at His arrest (18:4)?
2. How did Peter hinder the purpose of God by attacking the soldiers (18:11)? What did Jesus say and do?
3. What was the meaning of the 'cup of suffering' that Jesus spoke about (18:11)?
4. Who was in control of the trial of Jesus?

The reason Jesus was born

John heard Jesus tell Pilate, "I was born and came into the world to be a witness of the truth" (18:37). Pilate did not understand the truth from God but John understood and believed the truth that Jesus taught His disciples. John wrote these words in his book about the Good News of Jesus which are a witness to the truth:

"God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son. Anyone who believes in Him will not die but will have eternal life" (3:16).

"God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through Him" (3:17).

"Anyone who lives by the truth comes into the light ... with God's help" (3:21).

Later, John wrote these words to the new fellowships of believers (1 John 1:1-3):

"This is what we announce to everyone about the Word of Life [Jesus]. He was already here from the beginning. We have heard Him. We have seen Him with our eyes. We have looked at Him. Our hands have touched Him... We give witness about Him. And we announce to you that same eternal life. He was already with the Father. He has appeared to us. We announce to you what we have seen and heard. We do it so you can share life together with us. And we share life [fellowship, KJV] with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this to make your joy complete."

5. Why did Peter weep (18:27; Mark 14:30)? How did he deny His Lord (18:17, 27)? What was the simple way that Peter remembered the words of Jesus?
6. What is your answer to Pilate's question, "What is truth?" (18:38).
7. How did God use Annas, Caiaphas and Pilate in His plan to save the world from sin? How did the mood of the crowd change to fulfil God's plan?



Think about this: Think about Peter and ask God to use simple ways to remind you when you fail your Lord. Are you ready for God to show you in simple ways when you go wrong, so that you can remain in His will for the big troubles ahead? Are you ready to accept a 'cup of suffering' and witness to your faith in Jesus and in God? Are you ready to follow Jesus all the way?



Bible reading: John Chapter 19

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS SHOUT "CRUCIFY HIM!"

Pilate ordered Jesus to be whipped. 'The soldiers twisted thorns together to make a crown. They put it on the head of Jesus. Then they put a purple robe on Him. They went up to Him again and again. They kept saying, "We honour you, king of the Jews!" And they hit Him in the face' (19:1-3).

Once more Pilate went outside and said to the people, "I find no reason for a charge against Him" (19:4). Jesus followed him outside. He stood before them dripping in blood wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe (19:5).

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw Him, they shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

But Pilate answered, "You take Him and crucify Him." He said a third time, "I find no reason for a charge against Him" (19:6).

The religious leaders answered Pilate, "We have a law. That law says He must die. He claimed to be the Son of God" (19:7).

'When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid' (19:8). He wanted to know more, but Jesus did not answer. He said to Jesus, "Do you not understand? I have the power to set You free or to nail You to a cross" (19:10).

Jesus said that only God gave Pilate the power. Jesus knew His Father was in control. "You were given power from Heaven. If not, you would have no power over Me. So the one who handed Me over to you is guilty of a greater sin" (19:11). In this way, Jesus explained to Pilate that he was powerless to change the plan of God.

'From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are not a friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king is against Caesar"' (19:12). Caesar was the Roman Emperor at that time.

Pilate sat down on the judge's seat. It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your king!" (19:13-14).

The Jewish leaders shouted to Pilate, "Kill Him! Kill Him! Crucify Him!" They wanted to destroy the witness of Jesus and His claim to be their Messiah.

"Should I crucify your king?" Pilate asked them.

"We have no king but Caesar", the chief priests answered (19:15). They wanted Pilate to release Barabbas instead of Jesus (Matthew 27:20).

"Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?" Pilate asked "Crucify Him!" the crowd shouted (Matt. 27:22).

Pilate took some water and washed his hands in front of the crowds. He said, "I am not guilty of this man's death" (Matt. 27:24).

They shouted, "Let His blood be on us and our children" (Matt. 27:25).

Pilate released Barabbas. Finally, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified (John 19:16). The soldiers led Jesus away. He carried His own cross towards the hill called Golgotha.

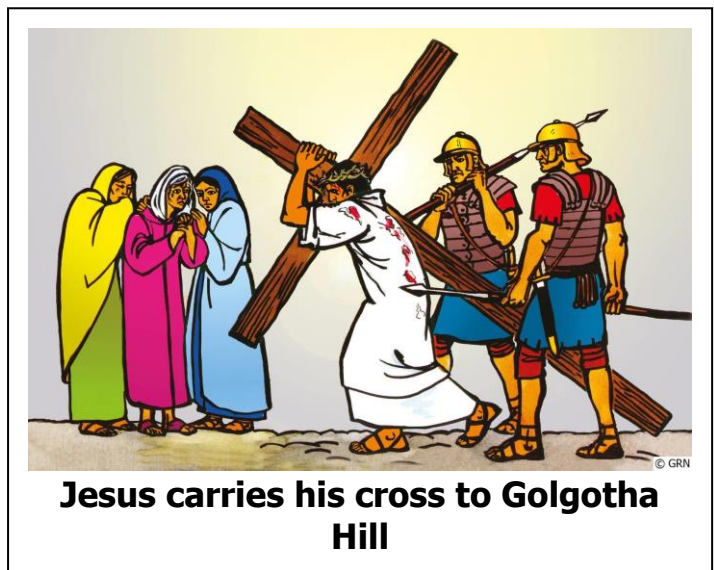
Luke the disciple wrote about the crowd that followed Him up Golgotha Hill. Simon, an African, was told to carry the cross for Jesus when it became too heavy (Luke 23:26). Women also followed, mourning for Him (Luke 23:27). Jesus said to the women, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me. Cry for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28). He knew before it happened that in AD 70 the Roman army would destroy Jerusalem and its Temple.

In rejecting Jesus as their Messiah, the Jews opened God's way for the death and resurrection of the Saviour of the world yet lost control of their own Promised Land for nearly 1900 years!

JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

The soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross just outside the city. Jesus cried out, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). In His death, Jesus forgave even those who killed Him.

Pilate ordered a sign to be made. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The Roman soldiers nailed the sign to the cross above the head of Jesus.



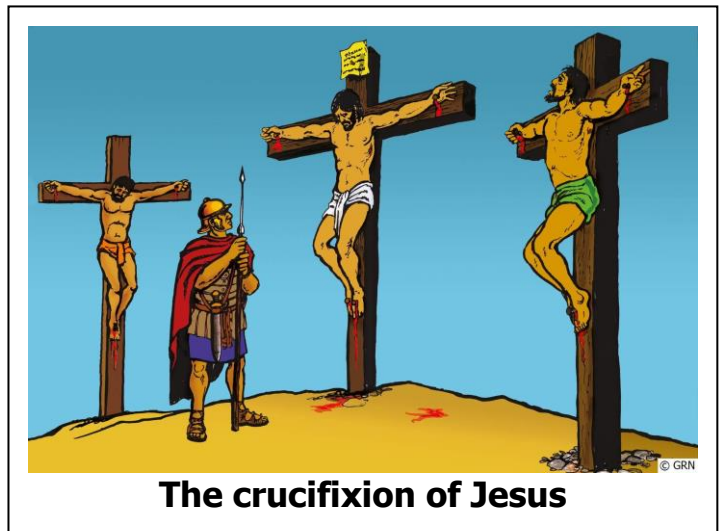
The sign was written in three languages, Aramaic, Latin and Greek (John 19:19-20). This message was for everyone to read and believe!

The chief priests argued with Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews'. Write that this man claimed to be king of the Jews" (19:21).

Pilate answered, "I have written what I have written" (19:22). He refused to change what he had written about Jesus.

Four Roman soldiers shared His clothes among them. His long robe was made from one large piece of cloth (19:23). It was a valuable robe. "Let us not tear it," they said. "Let us cast lots to see who will get it" (19:24).

This confirmed what the Old Testament said. "They divided up My clothes among them. They cast lots for what I was wearing" (Psalm 22:18).



TWO CRIMINALS ARE CRUCIFIED WITH JESUS

Two criminals hung on crosses near Jesus. One mocked Jesus who said, "Are You the Christ? Save Yourself! Save us!" (Luke 23:39).

The other criminal said, "Do you not have any respect for God? We are punished fairly. We receive what we deserve, but this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:40-41).

He turned to Jesus and said, "Remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

Jesus answered, "What I am about to tell you is true. Today you will be with Me in Paradise." Paradise means Heaven (Luke 23:43; Revelation 2:7). This criminal believed and repented whilst there was still time. This man was saved through faith in Jesus at the end of his life on earth. Jesus used His authority whilst on the cross to forgive his sins. The forgiven criminal went to Paradise to be with Jesus after His ascension.

JOHN AND THE THREE MARY'S WATCH JESUS DIE

Mary, the mother of Jesus, stood with her sister near the cross. Also, Mary the wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene (John 19:25). Jesus saw these faithful women and His disciple John. He said to His mother, "Dear woman, here is your son" (19:26).

He said to John, "Here is your mother" (19:27). So John comforted Mary and took her into his own home.

Jesus then said, "I am thirsty" (19:28). Psalm 69:21 said that He was given vinegar for His thirst. This was a prophecy about Jesus which came true (19:29).

Jesus did not use His power to step down from the cross. He held Himself there in great pain to complete the punishment for our sins. Soon, Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" (19:30). He knew that the Old Testament writings about Him had come true and were now fully fulfilled (Isaiah 53:4-12). Nothing more was required to fulfil God's plan to save us from sin.

Luke tells us that He also said, "Father, into your hands I commit My life [spirit, KJV]" (Luke 23:46).

It was about noon on the preparation day for the Passover. It was the day before a special Sabbath. A great darkness came over the land and upon Jesus for three hours. (It was not an eclipse of the sun since there was a full moon for the Passover Feast.) The earth shook and graves were opened. Some of the bodies came to life again. The altar curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The soldiers were afraid and one said, "He was surely the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:51-53; Mark 15:39).

At this time, Jesus took on the punishment for our sin. He became unholy to God. He became sin for us and God left His own Son, His own 'flesh and blood', to die in our place. God cannot look on sin so Jesus was left totally alone. He was cut off from His Father in Heaven. Before He died, Jesus called out, "My God, My God, why have you deserted me?" (Mark 15:34).

Then Jesus bowed his head and died (John 19:30).

THE BODY OF JESUS IS PLACED IN A SEALED TOMB

The Jews did not want to leave the bodies on the crosses overnight which was the beginning of the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 21:23). The Jews asked Pilate to tell the soldiers to break the legs of those who hung on the crosses, and to take down their bodies (John 19:31). The legs of crucified men were often broken to speed their death. A soldier found that Jesus was already dead so he did not break the bones of Jesus. Instead, he pierced His side with a spear. Blood and water poured out (19:33-34). These things all happened as it is written in the Old Testament (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20; Zechariah 12:10).

John watched it all. He wrote of himself that he was a witness 'so that you also may believe... These things happened in order that Scripture would come true' (John 19:35-37).

Joseph of Arimathea came secretly to Pilate. He was a good and righteous man. He was a secret follower of Jesus. He asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Nicodemus helped him. Both men were members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court. They followed Jesus secretly because they were afraid of the other Jews (19:38-39). They took His body and wrapped it with spices in long strips of burial cloth (19:40).

These faithful servants saw God Almighty allow Satan to destroy their Lord and Master. Yet, through them, we have the true record of the death, burial and

resurrection of Jesus, our Saviour. They did not understand that they were helping to fulfil and witness God's salvation plan through the sacrifice of Jesus for all who believe He is the Son of God!

Joseph's tomb was in a garden nearby. It was for his own burial one day. They laid the body of Jesus there. They rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb (Matthew 27:60; Luke 23:53). They did not have much time before the Sabbath began at sunset (John 19:41-42).

Pilate gave orders to seal and guard the tomb (Matthew 27:65-66).



Talk about this:

1. Was Pilate innocent of the crime against Jesus (Matthew 27:24)? What was the purpose of God for Pilate and for Judas?
2. Why did Jesus say to the women, "Weep for yourselves" (Luke 23:28)?
3. What can we learn from the words of Jesus to the two criminals (Luke 23:39-43)? Is it ever too late to be saved from sin? What must we do to be saved?
4. Why did Jesus say, "It is finished" (John 19:30)?
5. What Old Testament writings were fulfilled in the trial and death of Jesus (Psalm 22:16-18; 69:21; Zechariah 12:10)?
6. Why was the body of Jesus placed in a sealed tomb (Matthew 27:62-66)?



Think about this: When people reject Jesus today, what do you think, say and do? What does God's plan of salvation mean to you and to them? Are you a secret follower of Jesus? Ask Him for the strength to resist temptation of denial. Ask Him to help you to fulfil the purpose of His death and resurrection by receiving the full salvation and power of His promised Spirit in faith.



Bible reading: John Chapter 20

MARY MAGDALENE FINDS THE TOMB IS EMPTY

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb very early on the Sunday morning. She found the tomb open. The stone was rolled back and an angel sat on it (John 20:1; Matthew 28:2).

"Do not be afraid," the angel said. "He is not here! He has risen, just as He said He would. Come and see the place where He lay. Go quickly and tell His disciples" (Matthew 28:5-7).

Mary ran to Peter and John and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb" (John 20:2). She could not believe He was risen from death.

John and Peter ran to the tomb. John arrived first, but he did not go in. He looked in at the strips of linen lying there (20:3-4).

Peter went in and saw the strips of linen and also the cloth that was round the head of Jesus. John followed him into the tomb. He saw and believed Mary and

Peter (20:6-8). "They still did not understand from the Old Testament that Jesus had risen from death" (20:9).

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY

Peter and John went to the other disciples, still doubting, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. She looked inside and she saw two angels who asked, "Why are you crying?" (20:10-13)

Mary cried, "They have taken my Lord away. I do not know where they have put Him" (20:14).

She turned and saw a man. It was the risen Jesus. He asked her, "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" Mary thought He was the gardener, so she said, "Sir, did you carry Him away? Tell me where you put Him, and I will go and get Him" (20:15).

Jesus spoke her name, "Mary!" (20:16).

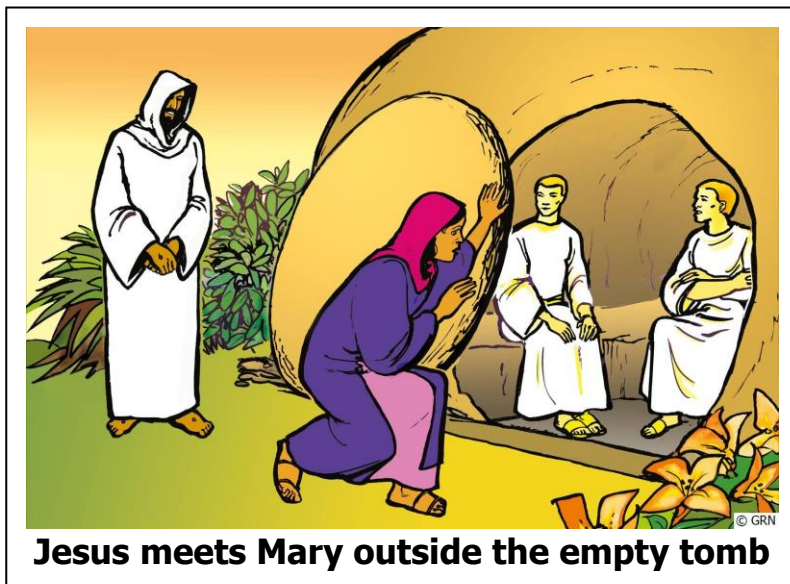
Mary suddenly knew it was the Lord. That same voice had freed her from many demons (Luke 8:2). She answered at once, "Rabboni!" which in the Aramaic language means 'My master' or 'My teacher' (John 20:16).

Jesus told her, "Do not hold on to Me. I have not yet returned to the Father.

Instead, go to those who believe in Me. Tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God" (20:17).

Mary Magdalene was the first follower of Jesus to visit the tomb. She was the first follower to meet her risen Lord. She believed Jesus was alive. No-one had stolen His body. She was no longer afraid.

Boldly, Mary took this news to the disciples. She had the most important words in her life to tell to others. "I have seen the Lord!" She told them what He said to her (20:18).



JESUS VISITS HIS DISCIPLES

That same Sunday evening, ten disciples were together in an upper room. The doors were locked because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus appeared to them and said, "May peace be with you!" (20:19).

They thought He was a ghost but He held out His hands and opened His cloak and they saw the wounds on His body. The disciples were very happy to see their risen Lord (20:20).

"May peace be with you," He said again. They knew that He forgave them for running away and denying their Lord. "The Father sent Me, so now I am sending you" (20:21). They were now called to do the work of Jesus.

When He said that, He breathed on them all and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (20:22-23). All believers who preach the Good News of Jesus have the same authority to forgive sins in the name of Jesus.

Now they were guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Later, on the Day of Pentecost, God poured out His Holy Spirit on all the believers (Acts 2:2-13). The Holy Spirit gives the Christian Church the wisdom and power to witness to the world. Paul believed that if you do not have the Spirit of Christ, you do not belong to Christ (Romans 8:9).

Jesus did what he promised to do (John 14:16). His gift of the Holy Spirit was the most important event in the lives of His disciples. The Holy Spirit is the Friend who helps us and lives in us. The words of Jesus give all Christians everywhere a privilege and responsibility. When we preach the Good News, we have His power and wisdom. Some receive the Good News and God forgives their sins. Others reject the Good News and will not be saved.

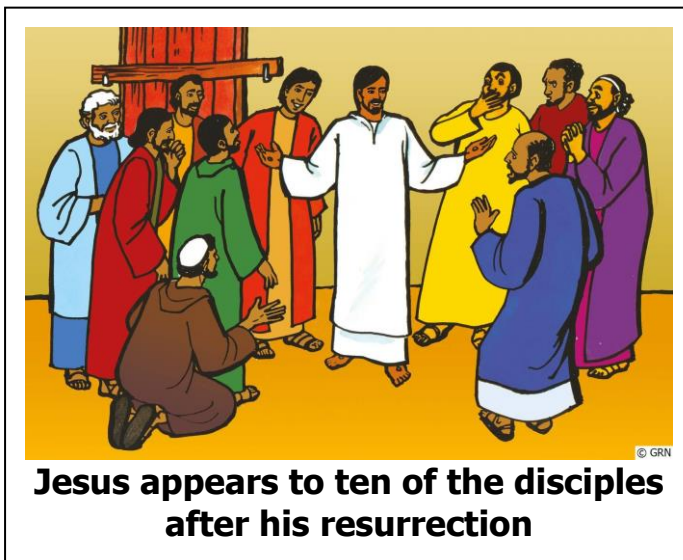
JESUS RETURNS TO VISIT THOMAS

Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus came into the upper room. They told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord!" He replied, "First I must see the nail marks in His hands. I must put my finger where the nails were. I must put my hand into his side. Only then will I believe what you say" (20:25). He truly wanted to believe but he had doubts. A full week later Thomas was with them in the same house. The doors were locked, but Jesus came to them as before.

"May peace be with you!" He said (20:26). He then spoke to Thomas, "Put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (20:27).

Thomas believed and answered, "My Lord and My God!"

Jesus received the worship of Thomas and said, "Blessed are those who have not seen but still believe" (20:28-29). We must apply these words of Jesus to ourselves!



THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN

The writings of John include some of the many miracles that Jesus did. There were many more miracles (20:30). He wrote this book so that we could believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He said, "If you believe this, you will have life because you belong to Him" (20:31).

To some people, the life and death of Jesus is nothing more than a strange old story. To millions of others, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the greatest event in human history. It was God's plan for His Son to change history, forever, and He can change your life, too.

To all people everywhere, Jesus died so that we could live (2 Corinthians 5:15). There was no other way for us to be saved from eternal punishment. All who do not receive Jesus by faith, will die in their sins (John 3:36). And all those who repent and follow Jesus become like Him. We will be in glory forever with Him (14:2-3; Colossians 3:4).



Talk about this:

1. What evidence does John give that Jesus rose from death (20:5-8, 20)?
2. What changed Mary's fear to joy (20:16)? What important words did she share with the other believers (20:17)?
3. Who saw Jesus after His resurrection? Who doubted at first?
4. How did the disciples know they were forgiven and called to do a special work for Jesus (20:21-22)?
5. What did Jesus promise when He breathed on the disciples (20:22-23)?
6. What did Jesus say to Thomas (20:27, 29)? What simple words of faith did Thomas say?



Think about this: Do you remember and give thanks for the times when your fear turned to joy? Do you encourage other believers with the Good News about Jesus (20:17-18)? What encouragement did Jesus give to all who believe in Him (20:29)? What promise did John give to his readers (20:31)? What are the most important words for you?



Bible reading: John Chapter 21

THE DISCIPLES GO FISHING

Some days after this, Jesus appeared to his disciples again, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (21:1). He told His disciples to meet Him there (Matthew 28:7, 10). While waiting, Peter said, "I am going fishing." He took six other disciples with him. They went out in a boat but caught nothing all night (21:2-3). Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Him. They thought He was a stranger. He called out to them, "Friends, do you have any fish?"

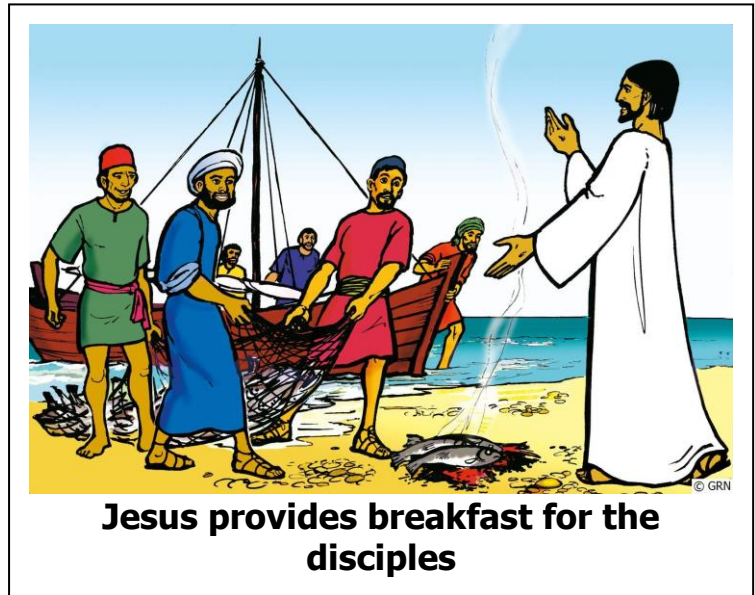
"No," they answered (21:4-5).

The stranger on the shore said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat. There you will find some fish." When they did this, they could not pull the net into the boat. There were too many fish in it (21:6).

John said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Peter put on his coat and jumped into the water. The other disciples pulled the net full of fish behind the boat. The shore was about 100 metres away (21:7-8).

When they arrived, they saw a fire burning. There were fish on it. There was also some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." There were 153 fish but the net was not torn (21:9-11).

Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast."



'Jesus took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same thing with the fish. This was the third time that Jesus appeared to his disciples after He rose from death' (21:13-14).

JESUS TESTS PETER AND TELLS HIM WHAT TO DO

Later that day, Jesus tested Peter to see how much he loved his Master. Jesus spoke to Peter using his old name. "Simon, do you love Me more than these others do?" (21:15).

Peter did not know how to answer His Lord, for he had denied Him three times at His trial. "Yes, Lord. You know that I love You."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." He wanted Peter to teach new believers.

Then Jesus asked again, "Simon, do you really love Me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep". He wanted Peter to strengthen and care for new believers.

Three times Peter had denied Jesus at His trial, and now Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love Me?"

When Peter replied "Lord You know all things. You know that I love You", Jesus told him, "Feed My sheep" (21:17). He wanted Peter to teach all believers the deeper truths from God. Just before Jesus was arrested, He told Peter, "I prayed for you Simon, for your faith not to fail. Strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32). Jesus trusted His followers, His lambs and His sheep, into Peter's care.

If you want to be a true shepherd of the sheep, you must love Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Peter was fully forgiven. He was still the leader chosen by Jesus. His

recent denial led to one question, "Do you love Me more than these, Peter?" Jesus calls us all to love Him more than other people or other things.

Jesus told Peter that when he was young he was free to do what he wanted or to go where he wanted. But "when you are old, you will stretch out your hands. Someone ... will lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus prophesied that Peter would die as a prisoner. By his death he would bring glory to God (John 21:18). Peter died as a martyr in Rome.

Finally, Jesus told Peter, "Follow Me!" Peter obeyed the call of Jesus. Peter had denied Jesus. He was forgiven. His friendship with Jesus was restored. He no longer felt guilty. His love for Jesus was fully restored. His love was no longer hindered by sin or shame or guilt. Once he was weak; now he was strong. Jesus called him to preach the Good News of Christ the Saviour, care for new believers and teach them the truth from God.

Peter already knew that he was called to encourage the new believers and to be a 'rock' to them on which to build up the church. But he must also learn that he must put a stop to the thoughts, words and deeds of a young believer. He must be ready for the discipline and sacrifice of an older, more mature, believer and obey the Lord's commands.

A few days after Jesus went back to Heaven, Peter preached his first sermon. 'Three thousand people joined the believers that day' (Acts 2:41). They met together daily and shared and cared for each other and God blessed them (Acts 2:42-47).

Peter was a follower of Jesus to the end of his life. He lived for Jesus and he died for Jesus.

THE DIVINE COMMISSION OF JESUS

Peter asked Jesus what was going to happen to John (21:21). Jesus said, "What does that matter to you? You must follow Me" (John 21:22). Peter was learning to keep his eyes fixed on Jesus, not on someone else. Each follower has a different task to do in the Kingdom of God. This will depend on who we are, where we are and what we are.

The main focus here is Jesus and Peter, but at least six of the other disciples also followed the instructions of Jesus. Without the work and obedience of these disciples, the wider ministry of Jesus could not have taken place. All followers of Jesus are called to share this Good News with others. It is called the Divine Commission (Acts 1:8). May we never neglect to meet with other followers of Jesus to share in His ministry to others by going out and instruct many in God's truth.

John finished his book with these words. "Jesus also did many other things. If every one of them were written down I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (21:25).



Talk about this:

1. Are we tempted to do things without waiting for Jesus (21:3)?
2. What did Peter do when Jesus found him fishing (21:7)?
3. What questions did Jesus ask Simon Peter (21:15-17)? How did Peter feel about his denial of Jesus?
4. How did Jesus encourage Peter to look forward, not backward (21:15-17)?
5. What was going to happen to Peter when he followed Jesus in future (21:18-19)? What glory did it bring?
6. Why did Jesus repeat the words "Follow Me" to Peter after talking about John (21:22)?



Think about this: Have you asked God to forgive all your sins? Do you believe God has forgiven you? What is your answer to the question of Jesus, "Do you love Me?" What does it mean for you when Jesus says, "Follow Me"? Ask Him to let you know His special purpose for you. Ask Him for His Holy Spirit wisdom, power and compassion in serving Him and others.

CONCLUSION

John tells us about many teachings and miracles of Jesus, God's Son. He also tells us about the many prayers of Jesus before His death and resurrection. John witnessed these things. His words help us to understand the ministry of Jesus on Earth and the mystery of God's purpose in His life, death and resurrection. Through the punishment for our sins, sinners can be saved if they believe Jesus is the Son of God and repent. Instead of frequent sacrifices of innocent animal blood, the sacrifice of the blood of Jesus is sufficient to enjoy eternal life in Heaven with God forever if we accept Jesus Christ into our lives. He alone enables us to have a special relationship with His Father as a child of God and a special purpose in life on Earth.

The next book in the Bible, the Acts of the Apostles, starts by telling how Jesus met His followers once more before returning to Heaven. He instructed them to await the arrival of the promised Holy Spirit power before they went out preaching and healing in the name of Jesus. An angel told them He will return to Earth again soon (Acts 1:4-11).

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