



THE WORD ON THE STREET

A PARAPHRASE BY BOB BOYD

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN THE APOSTLE

Foreword

I share my study notes, which I call the “Word on the Street,” with others in hopes God will use them to awaken in you and other readers, a fascination and love for the Bible and its teachings. It is God’s “Handbook for Living.”

Prior to my spiritual reawakening in 1978, my focus was on material things and self-gratification. When I was 15 I had a spiritual experience, and I had been sincere in my teens, but I became more and more indifferent to spiritual matters. After I graduated high school, my principal values were earning money, building my business, playing music and drinking.

My uncontrolled downward spiral into alcohol addiction produced more and more horrendous results and troubles in my life and consequently in the lives of others. I was steadily and alarmingly doing things that were far removed from what I knew to be the right and godly way of living.

In 1978 God mercifully gave me a moment of clarity and a new vision of myself and what He had originally intended for me. I desperately needed the forgiveness of Christ as illustrated in His Parable of the Prodigal Son. God showed me that Christ offers me a better life, and that He died on the cross to give me the hope of eternal life. He is still my only hope of surviving, spiritually and physically. He gave me the desire to go to any lengths necessary to recommit my life to Him. He gave me the will to ask Him to do for me what I could not do for myself; to free me from my addiction to alcohol and restore me to a right relationship with God, and security to be in His presence forever. He also revealed to me that I can do nothing to “earn” a place in Heaven, that it is God’s free gift to me if I believe and trust Jesus and His sacrifice for me.

God did remove my desire for alcohol and the life style it offered. I was in awe of a God Who could and would (and did) forgive me and heal my body and soul despite the way I had mistreated my “temple” for those past 25 years. I asked God to change me, and I became willing to do whatever He required.

God moved me to recommit my life to Christ, and to make Him first and foremost in my life. My desires now are to continue to seek God’s will for me through the Scriptures, and to be committed to God’s work of witnessing, as described in the Gospel of Christ. I ask God daily to show me His will for me and to help me to keep my priorities straight. I have had spiritual setbacks, but none that have caused me to go back to my addiction and all its accompanying sins.

I am so grateful that God didn’t give up on me. Instead, God has given me a fascination with His word and a dedication to studying His word. He also gave me a new approach to studying His word; to analyze it verse by verse, and with the aid of several good study guides, to write my own paraphrase, my own version or “take” on what He revealed to me. I shared some of these paraphrases and was encouraged to continue to study this way. I began to post a chapter every week on a special “Word on the Street”

Facebook page.

With the help of my friend and brother Jim McMurry, I now move to a new phase of sharing my scripture studies with others. I pray you will read with a renewed interest, the greatest and most important book ever written.

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Bob Boyd at the “Afterthought” 2005

.....Watercolor by Jim McMurry

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Introduction

John, the disciple “whom Jesus loved” didn’t identify himself in his own story of Jesus’s life and message. But all the early church writers confirm it. Irenaeus, who lived 130-200 A.D., was the grand-disciple (through Polycarp, A.D. 70-160,) of John himself. Clement of Alexandria (A.D.150-215) wrote that John wrote his “spiritual gospel” after he became a geezer. It was probably while John was living in Ephesus.

John wanted to set the record straight. He had heard about the other 3 “gospels,” Matthew, Mark and Luke, and may even have read them, and may have even been interviewed by those 3 writers. But the Holy Spirit told him, “There’s more to tell here, John. Write your own account. Tell everybody who Jesus was, and what was His mission.”

Chapter 1

When everything began, the Word was there with God. In fact, the Word WAS God. Before God came to earth to live among men, He was life and light itself, when He first made everything; when He spoke the unlimited Universe into existence. Christ's light shines in the darkness, and isn't overpowered by the darkness. (Note: It's a great mystery, how and why God the Creator of all things in the universe, was born as a human boy child, and grew up as a man, suffering all the unpleasantness of being a human. He did that out of love for His Creation, meaning us. Every verse in the Old Testament predicts and points to His arrival.)

But first, God sent an "advance man" named John as a kind of town crier, to run interference for Jesus and make sure everyone knew He was coming. "Hey, everybody! Look up and listen up! The LIGHT is coming! I'm not the Light. I'm just here to tell you about the Light that's coming! He's going to give light to every man in the world."

Jesus, Who originally made the world Himself, came into this world, and we didn't know Him or receive or welcome Him when He got here. But the folks who did receive Him, he gave them the right to become children of God, born not like a human is born, but by God's will.

Yes, the Word became a human man and lived here with us for a while, and we got to see and hear and touch Him. He was God's one and only Son, and He was full of kindness and true wisdom.

John the herald messenger was called the baptist because he dunked people in the Jordan River if they were really sorry and had done a 180 from their sinful ways. He was a man who lived in the desert, wore animal skins and lived on grasshoppers and wild honey he could dig out of rocks and trees. He was a cousin to Jesus, and he knew that he was supposed to wake people up to the fact Jesus was coming. Nothing had been heard directly from God for 400 years, since Malachi, the last of the "minor prophets." John B. was causing quite a stir, making noises like he was a prophet. So the Jews in the big city of Jerusalem sent a bunch of know-it-all priests and Levites to ask John B. "Who are you?"

John was up front with them. "I'm not the Christ."

"Well, then are you Elijah? (Note: Elijah had lived in the desert centuries earlier, and was always on everybody's case about their sinning.)

"Nope. I'm not Elijah either."

"Well, then are you the Prophet?" (Note: back in chapter 18 of Deuteronomy, God had told the CIs through Moses that way on down the road, He would be sending a man to be His mouthpiece.)

"Nope," John B. said. "Wrong again."

Well, come on now. We've got to go back to Jerusalem with some kind of explanation about who you are, so spill it. Tell us about yourself!"

“Okay,” John B. said. I’m the ‘voice of a guy hollering in the desert.’ I’m telling everybody to ‘clean up your act and straighten out the road. The LORD is on His way here!’ like Isaiah said. (Check out Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1.)

The guys giving John B. the 3rd degree here had been sent by the Pharisees. They pretty much ran the religious community, especially in Jerusalem the big city. “If you’re not the Christ, or Elijah, or the Prophet, why are you baptizing people?”

“Yeah, sure. I’m dunking folks in the water. But there’s a Guy out there standing amongst y’all. You don’t know about Him yet. He’s so much better and more important than I am, I’m not even good enough to take off his sandals!”

The very next day, John B. saw Jesus coming toward him. He hollered, “Looky here, y’all! Here comes the Lamb of God! He’s gonna carry all your sins away! This is the Guy I’ve been tellin’ y’all about. He was actually before me. I didn’t know Him but I knew He was coming and that Israel would eventually get to know Him. In the meantime, I’ve been dunking folks in the Jordan River to get them ready for Him by baptizing them.”

John went on to say, “I saw the Spirit coming down like a dove from heaven. It lit on Him and stayed there! He (the LORD) Who sent me to baptize, said, ‘Watch for the Guy Who’s coming. You’ll know who He is when you see My Spirit coming down and lighting on Him. That’s the Man Who’s gonna be baptizing y’all with the Holy Spirit. So now I’ve seen it happen, and I’m telling y’all, HE is the Son of God!’”

Next day, John B. was standing with 2 of his followers. John B. saw Jesus walking along, and he said, “Looky there! That’s Him! He’s the Son of God!”

One of the 2 followers who heard John B. say that, followed Jesus. Jesus turned around and said, “What do you guys want?”

“Rabbi,” they asked (Note: “rabbi” means “teacher,”) where are You staying?”

Jesus answered, “Come on and I’ll show you.” So they followed Jesus to where He was staying. It was about 4 in the afternoon, and they stayed and talked with Him the rest of the day. One of the 2 was Andrew. He had a bro named Simon. He went and found Simon and told him, “We’ve found the Messiah!” and brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus took one look at Simon and said, “You’re Simon, Jonah’s boy. But from now on your name is Cephas.” (In Greek, that means “a rock.”)

Next day, Jesus wanted to go to Galilee. He found a guy named Philip from Bethsaida, and said, “Come on and follow Me.” Philip first Found Nathanael and told him, “We’ve found the guy Moses and the prophets wrote about. His name is Jesus, and He’s from Nazareth. He’s Joseph’s boy.”

“Whoa!” Nate said, “What good has ever come out of Nazareth?” (Note: Nazareth was a really small town with a bad rep.) Philip said, “Okay, Nate. But just come see for yourself!”

When Jesus saw Nate coming, He told the folks around Him, “Looky there! There comes a CI who is totally honest with everybody!”

That blew Nate away. He asked Jesus, “How come You already know me?”

“I saw you under that fig tree, before Phil came to get you.”

Well, that REALLY blew Nate away. “Teacher, You really ARE the Son of God! You’re the King of Israel!”

Jesus calmly replied, “You mean you believe in Me, just because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You ain’t seen nothin’ yet, Nate. You’re gonna see much greater

things happening. As a matter of fact, someday you're gonna see the heavens open up, and the angels of God going up and down." (Note: Jesus was saying, "I'm the new Jacob's Ladder you read about in Genesis 28.")

So what are the big deals we get in John's first chapter?

- 1. Who Jesus was and what He said and taught are all wrapped up together.*
- 2. John didn't write a bio, like Dr. Luke. He got down to the meanings of who Christ was and what he said, kind of a thematic picture of Jesus.*
- 3. The Jews couldn't deal with "The Word was God," and when John wrote "The Word became flesh," it blew the Greeks away.*

Chapter 2

(Note: John continues giving a detailed, blow-by-blow description of this first week of his life with Jesus.) On the 3rd day, there was a big wedding wingding in Cana, a city in Galilee. (Everybody in town was usually invited to a wedding feast, which went on for a full week.) Jesus and His disciples were invited. When they ran out of wine, Jesus' mother came to Him and said, "Jesus, they don't have any more wine." (This was a terrible disaster, a breach of hospitality.)

Jesus answered, "Good woman, how come you're asking me? It's not time for me to show Myself for Who I really am!"

But his mother thought her Son would fix the problem. She told the servants, "Now, y'all do whatever He tells you to do!"

Well, there were 6 20 to 30-gallon stone water pots that the Jews used in their purification rituals. Jesus told the servants, "Hey. Go fill all those water pots up with water." So they did what they were told and filled them all the way up to the brims. Then Jesus ordered, "Draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it to him.

Now, the feast-master didn't know where it had come from. He took a good snort of the water-made-into-wine. "Wow!" he said. "This is great wine!" So he called to the bridegroom; "Hey! Usually, the good wine is set out first, and the cheap stuff is saved until later, when everybody has got a snoot-full already. You've been holding back the good stuff until now!"

This was Jesus' first recorded miracle. He showed the disciples his glory, and now they believed in him. After that, Jesus and His mother, brothers and disciples went on down to Capernaum Town, but they didn't stay there very long. The Jewish Passover was coming up pretty soon, and Jesus headed on up to Jerusalem. (Note: All men of age 20 and above were expected to go to Jerusalem for Passover, and Jesus was a dedicated Jew.) When He got there, He discovered the merchants and money-changers had turned the temple into a market-place. Worse than that, they were cheating the people by charging too much for their wares, and for the service of changing different national currency into Jewish money. So Jesus made Himself a whip out of cords, and took to whacking all the crooks and their sheep and oxen out the temple that day. He poured out the changers' money and turned the tables over on them. He scolded the dove-sellers. "Get these birds and stuff outa here! Don't make my Father's house into a marketplace!"

His disciples thought about the scripture in Psalms, (69:9,) "Zeal for your house has eaten me up!" The Jews wanted to know who He thought He was, wrecking their businesses! "What kind of a deal is this? How do you have the authority to do this? Show us a sign!" (The dumbbells didn't recognize that what Jesus had just done, was already a sign that proved He was the Messiah.)

So Jesus told them, "Destroy this temple, (meaning His own body!) and in 3 days, I'll raise it up!"

The Jews said, "What? It's taken 46 years to build this temple. You gonna rebuild it in 3 days?" Later, when He came back from the dead, His disciples remembered He had said this, about raising the temple, so they believed the Scripture, and what Jesus had said to them.

As a matter of fact, while He was at the Passover in Jerusalem this time, there were many others who saw His signs, and believed in His name. But Jesus didn't fully commit Himself to them, because He knew their hearts and what was in men's hearts.

Chapter 3

(Note: Pharisees means “to separate,”) they were middle-class businessmen rather than priests. They were gung-ho purists, trying to follow God’s Official Rule Book, plus a whole lot of other added man-made rules called the “Mishna” and the “Talmud.” In the process, they lost sight of the meaning of the prophecies in the Old Testament.)

Enter Nicodemus the Pharisee. (His name was Greek and means “victor over the people.”) Nico came to Jesus at night, probably because he didn’t want his Pharisee brothers to know he was having an open conversation with this “upstart” Jesus. He was one of the 71-member Sanhedrin, kind of the Jewish “supreme court.” We hear more about him in John chapter 7. He later risked his life and rep to give Jesus’ body a decent burial, in chapter 19. He told Jesus, “Teacher, we know You’ve come from God, and that God’s with you. Otherwise, you couldn’t pull off all these miracles.”

Bang! Jesus got right down to the nitty-gritty. “Hey, Nico. I’m gonna tell you right now, without a doubt, you can’t see God’s kingdom unless you’re born again, and this from above.” (Nico thought he was already set to be a part of that coming “Messianic kingdom.” After all, he was a descendant of Abraham, and was keeping up with all the rules and regulations set down by God through Moses, and a bunch of other rules men had made up, for good measure. So what’s this young guy telling him? There’s something else he’s gotta do?)

“How’s that, teacher? How can a grown man be born again? You mean, go back into his mother’s womb and come out again?”

Jesus answered. “Nobody gets into the kingdom of God unless he first is born of water and of the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, and the Spirit gives birth to spirit. Don’t let this blow you away, Nico. Look at it like this. The wind blows wherever it wants to blow. We hear the sound of the wind, but you don’t know where it comes from, or where it goes, ‘cause it’s invisible. That’s the way it is with everybody born of the Spirit.”

Nicodemus shook his head. “I don’t get it.”

“Here you are, the teacher of Israel. You enjoy high standing as a teacher of the Law. Why don’t you already know these things I’m telling you? Here are some more absolute facts. We tell what We know, and tell what We’ve seen, and you don’t believe Us. I’ve told you visible things of earth, but you don’t believe me. How you gonna believe me if I tell you of heavenly things? The only One Who has gone up to heaven is the One Who came down from heaven, namely the Son of Man, Who has been there and call tell you about how it is there. Just like Moses raised up the bronze snake on a stick out in the desert, so must the Son of Man be raised up. Then everybody who believes in Him will live forever. God loved the world He created SO MUCH, He gave His only human Son, so that whoever believes in Him will never die, but live forever. God didn’t send His Son down here to damn the world, but so the world might be rescued from sin. The guy that believes into Him is not damned, but the guy who doesn’t believe in the name of God’s only human Son, he’s damned already. Here’s the curse; the light is finally here in the world now, but men love darkness more than light, because they don’t want folks to see their evil deeds. Everybody who keeps on doing evil things, hates the light and doesn’t come to it, because it will show his bad self and his bad deeds. But the guy who is truthful comes to the light, so we can see his deeds clearly, that God is involved.”

After that, Jesus and His 5 main guys went into Judea, (Judah's turf,) and Jesus stayed there and his right-hand men baptized folks there. John B. was also still baptizing there in Aenon near Salim, near Samaria, because there was a lot of water there. John B. hadn't been picked up and thrown into the slammer yet. Some of John's followers took to arguing with the Jews about purification. They came to John B. and said, "Hey, John B.! Looky here! That guy you said was the Lamb of God.is baptizing too, now, and everybody's going over to Him!"

John B. explained, "Listen up and I'll cut it up for you now. A man can't get anything unless it comes to him as a gift from heaven. Don't you remember? I told you I'm not the Christ! I've just been run out here on you before He shows up. This is not a contest between Him and me, guys. He's the bridegroom. I'm just His 'best man.' I'm tickled to death He's here now. He's gonna become more important, and I'll become less important now that He's arrived. I'm fine with that. He's the Man now. I'm just His advance guy. He's from heaven above, so He's above everything and everybody. I'm guy who's from the earth, from the dust. I talk about the earth. 1 He's telling y'all about what He has seen and heard, but folks aren't paying attention. He's telling y'all the truths of God because God sent Him. The Father loves His Son, and has turned everything over to Him. If you believe into Him, you'll see life; but if you don't, you won't see life, and you've got God's anger to deal with."

Chapter 4

So when the Lord realized the Pharisees had heard about Jesus making and baptizing more disciples than John B., (it was Jesus' disciples that did the baptizing, not Jesus) He left Judea and headed for Galilee. (Note: There were several roads He could have taken, but He chose the shortest and went through Samaria, partly to save time but mostly, I think, to talk with the "woman at the well" and reveal to her that He is the Messiah. He was probably also getting away from the hassling from Pharisees and John B.'s jealous followers. Whatever were His motives, He was working on His Father God's time schedule.)

By about 6 that afternoon, He and His disciples had reached a city in Samaria named Sychar. Jesus sent His guys into Sychartown to buy some groceries. (Stickynote: they hadn't brought enough for their whole trip, like so many Jews did in those days, so they wouldn't have to deal with the Samaritans. There was a big, long-running family feud going on between the Jews and the Samaritans. The fact that His guys were willing to buy food from the Samaritans shows they didn't stick to the social rules.) Jesus was tired, hungry and thirsty from walking all day, so He sat down there by Jacob's Well to rest. (We know that being 100% man AND 100% God, Jesus did get tired and thirsty just like we do.)

While He sat there resting, a woman came out of Sychar City. She had a big water jug on her head. (That's how they carried stuff in those days.) She was coming to draw water from Jacob's Well. (Note: we assume she was alone. We soon learn she was a kind of a rough looking, skaggy woman who had been "around the block" a bunch of times with men, and probably came alone to avoid the sneers and badmouthing of the other women and kids.) Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." (Note: this was a shocking thing to do. Jewish men not only did not ask Samaritans for favors, they didn't even speak to them. A Jewish man, especially a rabbi/teacher, didn't even speak to a strange woman. No, this woman was more like the kind a man might ask, "Can I buy YOU a drink?")

Well, this blatant question from this weird Jew guy caused the woman to reply, "Are you talkin' to me? Jews don't talk to us Samaritans."

Jesus came back with, "If you knew about God's gift, and if you knew who this is asking you to 'give Me a drink,' you'd have asked Me, and I would've given you some living water!"

The skaggy woman said, "Sir, You don't have even have a rope or a bucket, and this is a deep well! Where do You get any of that living water you're talkin' about? Are You better than Jacob, our great-granddaddy? He dug this well, and he and his family and critters all drank from it, and gave it to us!"

Jesus patiently waited until she finished this tirade. Then He said calmly, "When you drink this water from the well, after a while, you'll be thirsty again. But if you drink the water I'll give to you, it'll be like a water fountain bubbling in your soul forever."

The woman no doubt thought, "Who is this weird Jew, rattling on about water that's alive?" But what she said to Him then, was "Okay, sir. Gimme some of that funny water you're talkin' about, that'll keep me from ever bein' thirsty again. I'd love it if I didn't ever have to come out here to draw water from this well any more!"

Then, after making this rough gal curious, Jesus sprung the trap. "Go fetch your husband and bring him to me."

But the woman shook her head. “I ain’t got no husband.”

Jesus said, “You got that right. I know you’ve had 5 husbands, and you’re not married to the man you’re shackled up with now, so you’ve told Me the truth.”

Bam! That got her attention. She said, “Man, I think you must be a prophet! Our daddies worshiped here on this mountain, (Gerazim Mountain,) but y’all Jews keep telling us Jerusalem is where we ought to be worshiping.”

Jesus explained. “Woman, what I’m about to tell you, you can take to the bank. The time is almost here, when you won’t be worshiping the Father here on this mountain, nor even in Jerusalem. Y’all are worshiping a god you don’t even know. We Jews know who we’re worshiping, because salvation’s truth comes through us. The time is coming pretty soon that real worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. In fact, Father God wants such folks to worship Him. That’s because God is Spirit. Anybody who wants to worship Him has got to do it in spirit AND in truth.”(Note: Jesus meant with their whole being, not just as a routine.)

To this, the woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming, the one called Christ. When He gets here, He’s supposed to fill us in on everything.”

Then Jesus dropped the REAL bomb on her. He chose this outcast, grungy woman with a really bad rep, to reveal His true identity. “Looky here. You’re looking at and talking with the Messiah, right now. That’s ME.”

About that time the disciples came back from their grocery shopping trip and saw Jesus chatting with this Samaritan gal. Although they mumbled and marveled to each other, they didn’t let on to Jesus. The woman split right then and there and took off back into her city. She left so quickly she forgot her big water jug! She was all excited about the guy at the well. “Hey, y’all! Come on out here and see this Guy I just met! He knew all about me and told me all about myself! Do y’all think maybe He’s the Christ?” Well, that got the attention of a bunch of curious guys who knew her, and they followed her out to the well to see this Guy. (Maybe they wondered, “What else does this guy know?”)

Meanwhile, back at the well, Jesus’ little band of guys were trying to get Him to chow down with them. But Jesus told them, “Naw, fellas. I’ve got food y’all don’t know about.” (Note: I think Jesus liked to mess with them, talking about spiritual things.)

His followers mumbled to each other, “You think somebody else has fetched some food for Him, while we were gone?”

Jesus cleared things up then. “Guys, it nourishes me to do what my Father sent Me to do, and to finish His work. Don’t say, ‘We’ll be bringing in the crops from the fields in about 4 months.’ Take a good look at the fields now, guys. The crops are ready right now. Sowers of grain get paid for their work, and so do the guys who cut the grain and bring it in to the barns, so both are happy. You get to harvest what others have planted.” (Note: Jesus may have been comparing the grain fields with the men in white clothes they saw over the growing grain, coming out from the city with the woman.)

Well, when the guys got there to Jesus and His crew, they believed what He was telling them. They invited Him to stick around for a while, so Jesus stayed with them a couple of days, and a bunch more Samaritan folks believed Him. They said, “Hey, woman. It’s not just because of what you told us. We’ve heard with our own ears now, the things He has said. We know for sure now that this Stranger IS the Christ, the Savior of the world!”

Like it says, after 2 days He left Sychartown and went on up to Galilee. Jesus had said before, “A prophet gets no respect in his own home town.” But when He got to Galilee, the folks there took Him in this time. A lot of them had been at the feast in Jerusalem and saw the things He did there, and they wanted to see Him do more miracles. (Note: It wasn’t because they believed He was the Christ. They were just curious.)

So Jesus went back to Cana City, where He had converted the water in the jars to wine at a wedding feast. There was a guy in town then, a high-ranking guy. (Note: He may have been a Jew, he could have been a Roman centurion, or even a member of King Herod’s household.) Anyway, he was a royal official, probably one of Herod’s men. (He had walked 20 miles to see Jesus, and when he talked to Jesus, he called him “Sir,” even though he had authority over Jesus.) He had probably heard that Jesus could do miracles. He had tried everything and came to Jesus as a last ditch effort to save his beloved “little one.” You see, he had a little boy back home in Capernaum, who was dying. So he took to begging Jesus to heal his little boy. He didn’t know anything about Jesus being the Messiah. He was just grasping at straws to save his kid.

Jesus first said, “You guys don’t believe in Me unless I work some miracle!”

The worried daddy answered, “Sir, we don’t have time to be messing around here. Please come on with me before my little one dies!”

Jesus said, “Okay. Go on home. Your son lives.” That relieved Mr. official guy. He headed home for Capernaum right then. Down the road a piece, he met some of his servants. They had great news for him. “Hey, boss! Your son lives!”

“Wonderful!” Mr. official said. “Hey, by the way, what time did he start getting better?”

“Well, it was yesterday about 7 in the evening.” That was the exact time Jesus had spoken the words, “Your son lives.” So he believed in Jesus and so did everybody in his household!

So what do we get out of Chapter 4?

Jesus did His miracles so that all would believe. Here we are, almost 2,000 years later, and we are still reading about Him and believing Him, even though we have never seen Him!

Chapter 5

The Miracle Performed

After that, there was a big annual religious wingding in Jerusalem, (maybe the Passover Feast, we don't know for sure.) Jesus went on up there. There was this Bethesda Pool by the Sheep Gate. It had 5 porches, with a huge crowd of sick blind, lame, and paralyzed folks, lying there on the porches. One of the guys there had been handicapped for 38 years. We don't know exactly what was his affliction. Jesus picked him out and asked him, "Hey; do you want to get well?"

The crippled guy answered him and explained, "Sir, I don't have anybody to help me get down into the water. Everybody beats me to it every time."

Jesus said, "Get on up from there, man, and pick up your mat and get on out from here." Bang! The man was healed instantly, grabbed up his mat and walked away! Well, that ripped it with the local religious Jewish dignitaries. (They were probably watching Jesus, waiting to catch Him breaking the LORD's Official Book of Rules, or one of their own rules they made up to make it harder on folks in general.) They told the healed man, "Hey, buddy. Today's the Sabbath. It's against the law for you to carry your bed around today. We gotta issue you a citation."

The guy told them, "The guy who made me well told me, "Pick up your bed and walk!"

The Jews asked, "Who is the Guy Who told you that?"

"Search me," the healed man said. "I never saw Him before in my life."

After healing him, Jesus had gotten on out of there Himself. After a while, He came back and found the healed man in the temple. "See, man, you've been made well. Don't go sinning any more. It could be worse next time!"

This time the guy went and told the Jews that it was Jesus Who had made him well. That explains why the Jews were giving Jesus a hard time, and had Him on their hit list; because He had healed on the Sabbath.

Well, Jesus used this chance for Him to explain who He really was. (Note: He made it clear here that He is equal with God in His person, His works, His power and kingship, His judgment and His honor.) "My Father works 24/7, and so I am working with Him right now." The Jews couldn't deal with those words from Jesus. "We gotta get rid of this guy," and they started to figure out how they could do it. Jesus went on laying it all out for them. "Now, here's some more truth for you. The Son can't do anything by Himself. He does what He sees the Father doing, and does it that way. The Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He Himself does. And, 'you ain't seen nothin' yet.' He's gonna put on even bigger miracle shows, so get ready to be floored! The Father brings dead folks back to life, so the Son is going to give life to whomever He wants to. The Father doesn't judge anybody. He's turned that job over to the Son. So you have to give respect to the Son just like you do to the Father. If you don't respect the Son, then you aren't respecting the Father who sent the Son. (So the Jews would catch on, Jesus talked entirely in 3rd person here. It's also kind of like comparing Him and His Father with earthly dads and their sons. They learned as Jesus did, their dad's work by watching and being taught. In those days, almost all sons learned their dad's jobs, and continued in their dad's footsteps.)

“I’m not done yet. Here’s some more big chunks of truth for y’all. Anybody who listens up to My words, and believes in the One Who sent Me, is going to live forever, and won’t have to come up before the Judge at all. He’s left the death place and moved into the life place.

More truth; it’s just about time, in fact, the time is now, when some dead folks will hear the voice of the Son of God, and they’ll live! Just like the Father has life in Himself, so He has put life into the Son. He’s even given the Judge job to the Son, because He is the Son of Man.

Now, y’all, don’t be shocked or amazed by all this. The time’s almost here, where all the dead folks in their graves will hear His voice and come right on out of the grave. There’ll be some who have believed my words, the good guys. They’ll rise up and have a new life. But there’ll also be bad guys, who have not believed in the Son and the Father. They’ll rise up to be damned to hell. I can’t do any of this by Myself. I call ‘em the way I see ‘em, and I’m always right. That’s because I’m not running on my own will power, but I’m carrying out the orders of the Father, Who sent Me here.

But there are all kinds of proof that I’m telling y’all the truth here. Y’all know **John the Baptist**. He spent his life talking about Me, how I was going to come on the scene, and how I and My work will be a much bigger work. He was a bright light who lit up your lives for a while, and y’all were delighted to be in his light. Then, there are the **works the Father gave me to do**. They prove the Father has sent Me to you. Of course, the Father Himself testified about Me. You probably weren’t there to hear His voice. But I know that His word isn’t living inside you, because you don’t believe His Messenger, Me. Also, y’all study **the Scriptures**, because you think that will give you everlasting life. The Scriptures are all talking about Me and how I’m going to come to you from the Father. But still, y’all won’t come to Me so I can give you life.

I get no respect from men, but I know you don’t have the love of God in you. I’ve come in My Father’s name, and you aren’t interested and won’t accept Me. If somebody else comes in his own name, you accept him! How can you believe? You are respected by men, but you don’t care about the respect from God Himself.

Now, I’m not going to accuse y’all to the Father. You already have one accuser. That’s Moses. You trust in him. But if you really believed Moses, they you’d believe Me. **Moses wrote about Me**, you know. If you don’t believe Moses’ writings, how are you going to believe My words?

This chapter is stuffed with truths we can use every day.

Jesus taught that when the opportunity to do good presents itself, we must be ready to do it, no matter what day or time it happens.

The question “What would Jesus do?” may help us make right choices in our lives.

When Jesus talked about the “dead,” He was talking about folks who are dead in spirit. When they come to Christ they are given a new life that lasts forever. But He’s also talking about dead bodies. He actually gave life to several dead folks while He lived among us earthlings.

Jesus was fulfilling all 3 of the “signs,” in the Old Testament, how we would know the Messiah had come. They were: 1. Jesus had all power in heaven and in earth; 2. He healed the lame and sick, and 3. He raised dead folks and gave them new life. Only God can give life; there’s the proof that Jesus IS God!

Whose respect do you want? Other folks, or God's?

Chapter 6

After those things happened, (Note: probably 6 months later, and about a year before they finally crucified Jesus,) Jesus crossed over the Sea of Galilee (also called the Sea of Tiberias.) A huge herd of folks followed Him, because they had seen Him heal folks of all kinds of diseases. So Jesus went up onto the mountain, and sat down with His students. It was almost time for the Passover Feast, so everybody was thinking about food, lamb, unleavened bread, blood and stuff. Jesus looked up and saw this huge herd of folks coming up toward Him. He turned around to Philip, one of His students, and asked, “Where we gonna get enough bread and stuff to feed all these folks?” (Note: Actually Jesus already knew what He was gonna do. He just asked Philip that, to check him out. Philip was kind of the “bean counter” of Jesus’ gang of students, and his home town was nearby Bethsaida, about 9 miles away.)

Philip quickly did the math and explained, “It would take over 8 months’ pay, to buy enough bread just to give each person one little bite!” (Note: It was a “hopeless” situation. They were living on donations from folks and probably didn’t even have that much money. Besides, it was late in the day, and even if they went into Bethsaida to buy, they probably couldn’t have found that much food available for sale.) Meanwhile, Peter’s bro Andrew had been out in the crowd looking for any food he could find. He told Jesus, “Hey, Lord. I found this kid here. He’s got 5 barley loaves (really cheap bread) and 2 little fishes. It’s gonna take a raft more food than that, though, to feed this mob!”

Jesus calmly said, “Tell all these folks to sit down on the grass here.” So all the men sat down there on the huge grassy meadow. There were at least 5,000 guys, (Note: plus all their wives and kids, so we’re talkin’ maybe 6 or 7,000 folks here, at least, maybe as many as 10,000!) Jesus took the bread and fish from the little boy (who was kind enough to give them up,) and said a little prayer of thanks over the kid’s dinner. Then He handed the bread and fishes to His students, who gave everybody sitting on the grass plenty to eat, as much as they wanted. When everybody finished eating, Jesus told His students, “Okay, now. Go pick up all the leftovers here, so we don’t lose any food and will leave this place neat, the way we found it.” When they gathered them all up, they filled 12 baskets of hunks of bread, leftovers from the feast! Some of the guys in the audience saw what had happened, and said, “Hey. No doubt about it. This is sure enough the Prophet (Moses talked about in Deuteronomy 18:15) Who is to come into the world.”

Now, Jesus saw that those guys were about to grab Him and force Him to be their king, (so they’d always have plenty of food and wouldn’t have to work.) So Jesus took off up the mountain to be by Himself for a while.

About sundown, Jesus ordered His students to go down to the sea, get into their rented boat, and row the boat across the sea toward Capernaum Town on the other side. (The west wind picks up about sundown on the Sea of Galilee, which is 650 feet below sea level, 150 feet deep, and surrounded by mountains.) All of a sudden the west wind blew up a big storm on the lake. The waves were huge, and they were rowing into the wind. They rowed and rowed but didn’t make much progress. It was sometime between 3 and 6 a.m. They had rowed the boat only about 3 or 4 miles, when they suddenly saw Jesus walking on the water toward their boat, and it scared the heck out of them. (Note: Jesus

did that “private” miracle to once again show His students He had power even over the pull of gravity.) But Jesus hollered to them and said, “Hey, guys. It’s me, the I AM! Don’t be scared!” Then, as soon as Jesus had climbed into their boat, bang! They were immediately, that very instant, on the shore. (That’s another miracle, proving Jesus’ power over time and distance. They had traveled the rest of the way across the lake, a couple of miles, instantly.) They had suddenly reached their destination!

Next morning, some of the people they had left on the other side had walked around the lake, and others had ridden across in other boats. And hey! Here was Jesus! They knew He hadn’t gotten into the boat with His students. They took to questioning Jesus: Q: “How’d you get here before us?”

A.”You come to Me not because you saw the signs, but because you ate your fill and want Me to provide y’all’s free meals forever. Don’t work for groceries, but for the food that lasts forever. I can give that to you because My Father has set His seal on Me.”

Q. “How can we work the works of God?”

A. “Here’s the work of God: Believe in the One Whom He sent!”

Q. “Give us a sign, or show us Your work, so we can believe You. Scripture says Moses gave our ancestors manna from heaven to eat.”

A. “I got news for y’all. It wasn’t Moses who gave them the manna. But My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. The bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world!”

Q. “Lord, give us this bread forever. (So we don’t have to work and earn it.)

A. “I’m the bread of life. Come to Me and I’ll make sure you don’t ever get hungry. If you believe in Me, you’ll not get thirsty, either. However, y’all have seen Me, but you still don’t believe! Everything the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one of y’all who comes to Me, I won’t run him off. I came down here from heaven to do the will of the Father, Who sent Me down here, not My own will. I won’t lose anything or anyone He has given Me. They’ll all come back to Me on the last day. Here’s the thing, y’all. The Father wants everybody to believe in His Son, so each of you may have life that lasts forever, and on that last day, I’ll resurrect each one who believes in Me!”

Q. The Jews had a problem believing this guy Jesus. They knew Him as Joseph the carpenter’s boy from Nazareth, and “Here He is, telling us He has come down from heaven!”

A. Jesus said, “Don’t be talking behind My back. You’re not going to come to Me unless My Father, the One Who sent Me, draws you to Me. The prophets said, “They’ll all be taught by God.” Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. I don’t mean to imply any of you has seen the Father. The only One Who has seen the Father is the One Who is sent from God. If you believe in Me, you have everlasting life. I’m the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they’re all dead and gone now. This is the bread of life from heaven that if you eat of it, you’re not gonna die. I’m the living bread from heaven. If you eat of this bread, you’ll live forever. The bread I’ll give you is my own flesh, my own self, which I’m gonna give for the life of the world.”

By now the Jews were quarreling amongst themselves. (They couldn’t, or wouldn’t understand the spiritual meaning to Jesus’ words, but were hung up on the physical meaning.)

Q. The Jews He was talking to took to mumbling amongst themselves. “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?”

A. “Here’s more big news for you. Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you don’t have any life in you. Whoever does eat my flesh and drink My blood has eternal life, and I’ll call him up out the grave on that last day. My flesh and My blood are really food and drink! Whoever eats and drinks Me lives in Me, and I live in him! Just like the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, whoever feeds on Me will live because of Me. This (motioning to His own body, perhaps,) is the bread that came down from heaven. It’s not like the manna your ancestors ate and are now dead and gone. Those of you who eat this bread, will live forever!!” (Note: Jesus said all this stuff when He was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum, and it grossed them all out, thinking about eating human flesh and drinking ANY blood, much less human blood! They just didn’t get it, that He was talking about spiritual matters.)

When they heard Jesus say all that, many of His students said, “That’s really heavy stuff. Who can understand these things?”

Jesus knew what his students were thinking and complaining about. So He asked, “Are y’all offended by this? What would y’all think if you saw Me, the Son of Man, rise back up to where I was before I came to earth? The Spirit gives life. The flesh is worthless. The words I tell you are spirit, and are life. I know there are some of y’all who don’t believe.” He knew the ones who didn’t believe, and would betray Him.

“That’s why I’ve told you that nobody can come to Me unless My Father gives him that gift.” From then on, many of His students took off and didn’t walk with Him and follow Him any more.

So Jesus turned around and said to His 12 top students, “Are y’all gonna leave Me, too?”

Simon Peter (“Pete”) answered for the rest. “Lord, who else are we gonna go to? You’ve got all the ‘eternal life’ words. We’re certain now that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”

Jesus replied, “I’m the One Who picked each of y’all out of the crowd; and one of y’all is the devil.” (Of course, He was talking about Judas Iscariot. Although Judas was one of the twelve He picked, He knew Judas was going to double-cross Him.)

This chapter is loaded with lessons for us. Here are a few:

- 1. Jesus proved He is the bread of life, and feeds both soul and body. He also proved He has power over gravity.***
- 2. The people saw the miraculous sign (feeding the 5,000+) but to them, it was just an easy meal.***
- 3. God demands that people see they cannot save themselves by doing good deeds. They must receive His gift of eternal life.***
- 4. We can limit what God does in us by assuming what’s possible and what’s not.***
- 5. Age is no barrier to Christ. We must never think we are too old or too young for God to use us. Look at what a little kid did by giving away his lunch!***
- 6. If I will take the first step in making myself available to God, He will show me how greatly He can use me to work in His kingdom.***
- 7. Pleasing God doesn’t come from the work I do, but from Whom I believe in.***

8. I've got to eat bread and other nourishing food, to keep me alive. But to keep me spiritually alive, I must invite Christ to walk with me every day.

9. Anyone who makes a sincere commitment to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior is secure in God's promise of eternal life. The Devil can't grab them away...unless we let him!

Chapter 7

(Note: It looks like 7 months passed, between chapter 6 and 7. Jesus spent those 7 months in Galilee, teaching and training His students, getting them ready for things Jesus already knew, that were going to happen to them later. John leaves out these events because he is more concerned with how folks are reacting to Jesus.)

After that, Jesus didn't hang out in Judea, because it was unhealthy for Him. The Pharisees and other bad guys had put a contract out on His head. When it came time for the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, Jesus' 4 (half) brothers, James, Joses, Jude and Simon, who didn't believe in Him yet, told Jesus, "Hey, bro. Get on out from here. Go to Judea and show Your students some more of those fancy tricks You do. We want to see Your big show, and see whether the Jerusalem folks are blown away by them." (Note: Not until after Jesus came up from the dead, did His half-brothers believe Him. James wrote his "Book of James" in the New Testament, and Jude wrote his, too.)

Jesus answered them. "Bros, I'm on my Dad's tight schedule here, and He says it's not time yet. You can go on to the feast; it doesn't matter, because you guys are of this evil world system, and the folks don't hate y'all like they do Me."

After His bros had gone to the Feast, Jesus went, too. He slipped in, kind of incognito, in secret. The Pharisees and other bad Jews were looking for Him at the Feast. "Where's He at?" Everybody had an opinion about Him. Some said, "He's really a good guy," but others said, "Naw, naw. He fools people." But nobody talked about Him were the Jewish officials could hear.

When the Feast was about half over, Jesus went up into the temple and taught there. The Jews were blown away. "How does this guy know all this stuff? He's never studied!"

Jesus told them, "What I teach is not My own ideas. They come from the One Who sent Me here. If anybody wants to do God's will, he'll know whether My teachings are from God, or whether I'm just talking from My own authority. Men who speak from themselves, are looking for a big slap on the back. He who's speaking so that His boss gets the credit, He speaks the truth. You won't find any badness in Him. Didn't Moses give y'all the law? But y'all don't obey the Law of Moses. So why have you got a contract out on My head?"

"Why, you must be crazy. Who's tryin' to kill you?"

"I did one work, (Note: He was talking about healing the paralyzed guy,) and it blew y'all away. Moses' Law, God's Official Rule Book, says to cut off your baby boys' foreskins on their 8th day, so you do it, even if it falls on the Sabbath day. Now you're mad at me here, because I've saved a whole man! Don't just judge by what things look like. Judge by what is the right thing to do!"

Some of the Jerusalem guys who were mixed up, said, "Isn't this the guy they're trying to kill? Looky here! He's telling everybody like it is, and nobody's laying a finger on Him! Do the head honchos know this guy is really the Christ? But we know where He's from, but when Christ comes, nobody will know where He came from."

Jesus hollered these next lines: "Y'all DO know Me, and you also know where I came from. But, I didn't come just on My own. I'm here because of the One Who sent Me. Of course, y'all don't know Him, my Boss. I know Him because I'm from Him. He sent Me here, but y'all just don't get it."

The bad Jews were all itching to grab Him right then and there; but God kept them from taking Him yet, because His time wasn't up yet. Besides, a lot of folks believed in Jesus. They said, "When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than what this Man has done?"

The Pharisees heard all this gossip and chatter amongst the people, and sent police officers to nab and arrest Him. But Jesus told them, "I'm gonna hang out here with y'all a little while longer, and then I'm headed back to Him Who sent Me here. You'll come looking for Me then, but you won't find Me, and where I am then, y'all can't come after Me."

The Jews mumbled amongst themselves. "Where could He be going where we can't find Him? Is He going to teach the Jews who live amongst the Greeks? What's this jive He said, about "You'll hunt for Me but you won't find Me, 'cause where I go you can't come."?"

So the last day, that big day of the Feast of Tabernacles rolled around. Jesus stood up and hollered, "If anybody is thirsty, he can come to Me and drink! If he believes in Me, just like it says in the Scripture; 'Rivers of living water are gonna gush out of his heart!'" Jesus was telling them about the Holy Spirit He was going to send back from His Father's place, for the folks who believed in Him. (Note: That would happen on the Day of Pentecost. Read about it in Acts Chapter 2.)

Lots of folks there who heard Him say that, said, "Sure enough! This is the Prophet Moses was talking about." Other folks said, "This IS the Christ!!" But some were scoffers; they said, "What? The Christ, coming out of Galilee? No way! The Scripture says the Christ is gonna be born in Bethlehem, King David's home town!" So there was a big split-decision happening here, because of Jesus. Some of them wanted to glom onto Him, but no one laid a finger on Him.

The police officers went back to the chief priest and his Pharisee henchmen. They were hacked. They asked, "So why didn't y'all fetch this Jesus guy to us, like we ordered?"

The officers replied, "Nobody ever talked like that guy talks!"

Pharisees: "Well, well. Has He pulled the wool over y'all's eyes, too? Have any of us believed in this Jesus guy? Not us! Those dumbbells who don't know the Law, and believe Him, are damned!"

Here was old Nicodemus. (Remember? He was the Pharisee guy who snuck in at night to talk with Jesus, back in Chapter 3.) He had been sitting there quietly, listening to their arguing. He spoke up finally and said, "Hey! Does our Law judge a guy before we even hear what He's got to say for Himself, and before we figure out what He's really doing?"

The other members of the Sanhedrin, (The Jew's Supreme Court,) said, "Nick! Are you crazy? Did you come out of Galilee too? Go get your history book and check it out! Not a one of our prophets has ever come out of Galilee!" (Note: These "wise fool geezers," who were supposed to know the ancient Scriptures forwards and backwards, forgot there were 2 prophets from Galilee: Nahum and Jonah!)

Look at all the good stuff we can learn from chapter 7!

1. Some of us are afraid to tell people about Jesus and what He has done for us. We talk about Christ in church, when we have to make a public statement of our faith, it embarrasses us. Jesus said if we would recognize Him and talk about Him to others,

He would recognize us before God. Let's be brave and not shy away from speaking Jesus' name and telling others about Him.

2. The folks were mixed up about what they thought about Jesus. Some called Him a "good man," some said He was pulling the wool over others' eyes, some said He talked like a crazy man and was "possessed by a demon." But others believed He was "The Prophet" Moses was talking about in Deuteronomy 18:15, and others knew He was the real McCoy, and believed Jesus was the Christ. Each of us has to figure out for ourselves Who Jesus is, and that is the most important life-or-death issue we have to deal with. What we decide, we'll live with the result of our decision forever!

Chapter 8

Early the next morning, Jesus came into the temple, and sat down, and everybody gathered around Him to hear Him teach. (Note: this was common, for a rabbi to sit and expound to his “students.” But He was (deliberately?) in earshot of His Pharisee antagonist bad guys.)

In walks the scribes and Pharisees, and they’re bringing a gal with them. They said, “Teacher, this gal was caught having sex with a guy who wasn’t her husband. In the Law, (God’s Official Rule Book, or GORB,) Moses ordered us to throw rocks at her until she’s dead. But what do you think?” (Note: They thought they had come up with a scam this time that the Master wouldn’t know how to handle. Actually, the Law ordered them to “Put to death” both the woman and the man, but didn’t say “throw rocks at them.”) Well, Jesus bent down and took to writing on the ground with His finger. (Note: Maybe He was writing their sins where they could read them? Or maybe He was grossed out by what a bunch of bad dudes they were. Or maybe He was just biding His time.) They kept on badgering Him, so, when He finally stood up, He said, “Okay. Whichever one of y’all has never screwed up, He gets to fling the first rock at her.”

Then He stooped down and took to writing on the ground again. You could have heard a pin drop. Pretty soon, one of the older guys dropped his rock and walked away; then another, and another walked away, until they were all gone. It wasn’t until then that Jesus stood up. He was there in the square, alone with the sinner gal. “Hey, girl. Where’d everybody go? Hasn’t any of them condemned you?” “No, Sir,” she replied. “Then, I don’t condemn you, either. So get on outa here. But go turn over a new leaf. Get away from that sinful way of living. Don’t sin any more!”

When Jesus talked to the people again, He said, “I’m the Light of the world. If you’ll follow Me, you won’t ever be walking in the dark. You’ll have the light of life, if you still close to Me!” (Note: When He said that, the priests were lighting a 4 huge ceremonial fires that lit up the temple brightly. There was music played by the Levites, and dancing all night. It was really a dramatic wingding, at the end of the “Feast of Tabernacles.”)

Well, when He said that, it caused the Pharisees to start in on Him again. They hated Him, because He was teaching stuff that was really messing up their control over folks. They said, “You’re just hyping and promoting Your own self, so what You’re saying is a lie.”

“Well, if I do speak for Myself,” Jesus answered, “I’m telling the truth; because I know where I came from, and where I’m going, and y’all don’t know. Y’all judge by the way things look. I don’t judge anybody. If I did judge, it would be a true judgment, because I’d have the benefit of My Father, Who sent Me here.

“Okay, where’s Your Father at?” they taunted.

“You don’t know Me or My Father. If you knew Me, you’d also know my Father.” (Jesus was “telling it like it is,” right there where all could hear Him, but nobody messed with Him, because it wasn’t time for Him to be arrested yet.) “I’m gonna leave pretty soon,” He said, “and you’ll be hunting for Me, but you’ll die in your sin (because they rejected Him,) and you won’t be able to go where I’m going.”

The Jews said to each other, “What’s He saying? Is He gonna kill Himself? What’d He mean, ‘I’m goin’ where y’all can’t come?’”

He said, "You're from down here; I'm from up above. You're of this world but I'm not. So if you don't believe I AM (The Messiah,) you're gonna die in your own sins."

"Then, Who the heck are You?"

"That's just what I've been telling y'all. I've got lots of things to tell y'all and judge about y'all. But He Who sent Me is true. I'm telling y'all what He has told to Me." But they just didn't get it that He was talking about His Father. So Jesus went on. "When y'all lift up the Son of Man, then you're gonna know I AM. I don't do anything by Myself. I the things My Father taught Me, that's what I'm telling y'all. The One Who sent Me is with Me now. The Father has not left Me alone, because I always say and do what He wants Me to."

Well, when He said that, a lot of the Jews around there, began to believe in Him, that He was God's messenger, the Messiah. So Jesus started talking just to the believer Jews; "If y'all hang in there with My words, you're sure enough My students. You'll know the Truth, and the Truth is gonna set y'all free!"

"What do You mean, 'Free'? We're Abe's descendants. We've never been slaves to anybody." (Note: We all know the Jews had been slaves to the Egyptians, Syrians, Babylonians, Assyria, Greece and Rome. They must have been talking about the inward sense of peace and freedom.)

Well, y'all listen up, 'cause I got news for you. Anybody who keeps on sinning, is a slave of sin. And y'all know, a slave doesn't live in a home forever. But, a son does. And, y'all know, if the Son sets you free, you are absolutely, sure enough free!"

Sure. I know y'all are Abe's kids. But here you are, planning to kill Me, because you can't deal with and live by My words. I'm talking what I've seen with My Father; y'all are doing what you've seen with your father."

They came back with, "Abraham is our father!"

Then Jesus laid it on them. "No way. If you were Abe's kids, you'd do what Abe did. But I'm out here telling you the truth I heard from God, and you're trying to kill Me. Abe wouldn't do that. You're just like your father."

The argument became hotter. "We're not bastards. (They may have been insulting Jesus. The rumor was He was born out of wedlock, but we know the truth.) "We've got one Father; God!"

Jesus came right back at them. "If God were your Father, you'd love Me, because I came from God. I'm not here for Myself, but for the One Who sent Me. Why can't you 'get it'? Because can't hear listen to My word. You're like the devil. He's your real father, and you want to do what the devil does. He was a stone-cold killer from the start. He doesn't stand in the truth, because there's no truth in him. When he speaks, he's always lying, because he's talking only from his own ideas. He's not only a liar, but the daddy of liars. You don't believe Me, because I'm telling you the truth. Which one of you guys can say I've ever sinned? So, if I tell the truth, why don't y'all believe Me? The guy who is God's man, hears what God has to say. And so, you don't hear, because you're not of God."

Then they took to insulting Him. "Aren't we right, when we say You're a Samaritan and that you have a demon?"

Jesus said, "I don't have a demon. I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. I'm not looking for glory for Myself. There is One, Who seeks and judges. Here's another big truth for you. Whoever keeps my work, he'll never see death!"

“Aha! Now we KNOW You have a demon. Abe and the prophets are dead; now you say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he won’t ever see death. Are You saying You’re more important than our old dead daddy, Abe? And the prophets are all dead, too! Who do You think You are, anyway?’” (next: v.54)

“If I brag on Myself, that’s worthless. It’s My Father, the One y’all say is your God, Who’s giving out the honors, not Me. Y’all don’t know Him, but I know Him, and I follow His orders. If I told y’all I didn’t know Him, I’d be a liar, just like y’all are. Your father, Abe, jumped joyfully when he saw Me coming to here. He saw it and was really tickled about it!”

The Jews still didn’t get it. “You’re not even 50 years old, and yet You claim that You saw Abraham?”

“Okay, y’all. Here comes the bomb. Before Abe was ever born, I AM!”

Well, that line ripped it. The Jews grabbed up rocks to throw at Jesus. But Jesus hid Himself so they couldn’t see Him, so He miraculously slipped through the middle of them and out of the temple!

So what all can we learn from this long chapter so full of truth for us?

- 1. It’s easy for us to think we have all the truth, and that people who disagree are still in the dark.*
- 2. When others are caught sinning, are we quick to judge them? That’s acting like we don’t screw up, too. We’ve got to forgive and be compassionate.*
- 3. When Jesus, who is God, wrote on the ground with His finger, was He writing the 10 Commandments again? Was He saying, “Here are the rules, you guys.”**
- 4. The Jews couldn’t understand Jesus’ words without God’s Spirit to show them how.**
- 5. “Abide in My word” means to move in, lock, stock and barrel, and take up residence in His word. “Then y’all are really my students!”**

Chapter 9

Well, Jesus, in passing, saw a beggar guy who had been blind all his life. Right away, his students asked Him, “Hey, Teacher! How come this guy is blind? Is it because he screwed up, or his dad or mom screwed up?”

Jesus answered, “No, neither one screwed up. He’s blind because God has set him up so we’ll all see how He works! I’ve got to get it on here and show y’all how My Father works now. I’ve got to make hay while the sun shines, ‘cause it’s not gonna always be shining. As long as I’m here with y’all, I’m your sunshine!”

With that, Jesus spat on the ground and stirred His spit up with the dust there and made a little puddle of clay. Then He picked up some of the clay on His fingers, and daubed it onto the guy’s blind eyes. (Note: I believe that Jesus, who was God in the flesh, was creating from the dust of the earth. That’s the same material He made Adam from, and that we are all made out of.)

“Okay, now,” He told the guy, “Get on down to the Siloam Pool and wash your face in it.” So the guy hustled on down and washed in the pool and bingo! When he came back, he could see for the first time in his life!

Well, of course, the folks who knew this guy who used to be blind, said, “Is that the same blind beggar guy?” Some of them said, “Yep, that’s the same guy!” But, other folks said “Naw, it looks like him, but it ain’t.”

But the healed guy said, “Hey, y’all! It’s really me! I used to be blind.”

So they asked, “Then how come you can see now?”

“A guy named Jesus made some clay and smeared it in my eyes. Then He told me to go wash in Siloam Pool, and when I did, bang! Now I can see!”

“Where’s that guy at?” they asked.

“Beats me. I don’t have any idea where He is now.”

So they took this guy to the Pharisees. (Note: The Pharisees believed that only the long-awaited Messiah could heal a person who was born blind.) Well, it so happened that it was a Sabbath day, when Jesus healed the guy. So the Pharisees asked the guy, “How come you can see now?” Same question, and he told them. Some of the ‘sees said, “Well, this Jesus guy is not from God, ‘cause He doesn’t keep the Sabbath.” Other ‘sees said, “If He’s a bad guy, how come He can do such miracles?” So they had a split decision. So they asked the healed guy again, “What do you say about the healer guy?”

“I say He’s a prophet!” replied the healed guy.

Well, the Jews still didn’t buy his story, that he had been blind all his life. So they called in his dad and his mom for questioning.

“Is this guy your son? You say he was born blind. How come he can see now?”

“He’s our boy, all right, and sure, he was blind when he was born. But we’ve got no idea how come he can see now. Hey! He’s a grown man. Ask him yourself!” (Note: they were scared to say too much, because they would probably get kicked out of the synagogue, if they said they believed Jesus was the Christ.)

So they called the ex-blind man in for questioning again. They said, “Okay, we know that Jesus is a bad guy. You need to admit it was God who healed your eyes.”

“The guy told them, “I don’t know if He’s a bad guy or not. But one thing’s for sure; I was blind, and now I can see!”

“What’d He do to you?” they asked, yet again. “How did He open your eyes?”

By now, the ex-blind man was getting hacked with their repeated questioning. “I already told y’all, but you didn’t listen! Why do you want to hear it again? Do y’all want to be His students?” He was getting sarcastic with them.

That ripped it for them, too. Their inquiry became a hollering match. “You’re His student, but we’re Moses’ students. We know God talked with Moses, but we don’t know where that Jesus guy is from!”

“Well, whatta ya know?” he replied. “I am really amazed! Y’all don’t know where this Jesus is from, but He has opened my eyes! We all know that God doesn’t hear the prayers of sinners. But if a guy worships God and does His will, God hears him. Ever since the world began, nobody has ever opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this guy Jesus was not from God, He couldn’t do that, or anything else!”

That really ripped it. These smug Pharisee officials couldn’t handle being upstaged by an uneducated beggar. They said, “You were born in sin, and here you are, trying to teach us?” So they cursed him and kicked him out of the synagogue. (Note: That was about the worst thing that could happen to a guy socially. He was no longer allowed to worship in the synagogue (Jewish church) with his parents, family and friends. This uneducated, ex-blind beggar had more spiritual insight than these “officially” religious leaders, who chose to remain blind to the evidence that Jesus was really the Messiah.)

Well, Jesus heard they had kicked him out, so He went and found him and asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

“Who is He, Lord, that I can believe in Him?” (Note: remember, he hadn’t seen Jesus’ face because he was still blind until he washed in the pool, so he didn’t recognize Jesus.)

So Jesus said, “You’re looking right at Him and talking with Him right now!” That’s all the grateful, simple but spiritually wise man needed to hear. “LORD, yes! I believe!” So he worshiped Jesus right there. (He didn’t need the synagogue worship place anymore!)

Then Jesus gave him (and us) these words of wisdom and insight into who He was. “I’m here to help blind folks to see. But a lot of them who think they can see are really still in the dark.”

Some Pharisees overheard Him say that. (Jesus must have found the ex-blind man in a public place.) They said, “Are You saying we’re blind, too?”

“If you were really blind, you wouldn’t be sinners. You say you can see, but you’re really stubborn and stupid and living in the dark by choice, so you’re really bad guys!”

What are the useful life’s lessons we pick up from this chapter?

1. We see 4 different reactions to Jesus;

a. the neighbors are surprised but skeptical.

b. The Pharisees showed disbelief and prejudice. They were jealous of His popularity and influence over the people.

c. The parents believed, but kept quiet for fear of getting kicked out the synagogue.

d. The healed man showed consistent growing faith.

2. We live in a fallen world, where good behavior is not always rewarded, and bad behavior is not always punished.

3 Jesus actually created eyes for the man out of “original material.” The Pharisees taught that only the Messiah, when He comes, can perform that miracle. There were 2 other miracles they believed only the Messiah could perform.

4. The ex-blind man grew steadily in his faith. The more he learned about Jesus, the more he believed in Him. We don't need to know all the answers in order to share Christ with others. It is important to tell them how He has changed our lives, then to trust that God will use our words to help others believe in Him too.

5. We are all "born blind" and only God can open our eyes to see spiritually. A common belief in Jewish culture was that calamity or suffering was the result of some great sin. But Christ used the suffering of the man born blind, to teach about faith and to glorify God.

6. A major dose of truth: We live in a fallen world, where good behavior is not always rewarded, and bad behavior is not always punished. Therefore, innocent people sometimes suffer. If God took suffering away whenever we asked, we would follow Him for comfort and convenience, not out of love and devotion. Regardless of the reasons for our suffering, Jesus has the power to help us deal with it. When we suffer from a disease, tragedy or disability, we must try not to ask, "Why did this happen to me?" or "What did I do wrong?" Instead, we ask God to give us strength for the trial, and a clearer perspective on what is happening.

Chapter 10

(Jesus kept on talking to the same folks, (Pharisees) He was talking to at the end of chapter 9.)

“Now, I’m telling you, and there’s no doubt about it; If some guy tries to climb up and sneak into the sheep pen any way except through the gate, he’s a crook. The guy who goes into the sheep pen through the gate, he’s the real, bonafide, legit shepherd. The door man will open the gate for him, then he hollers out the sheeps’ names. They know his voice and come on out and follow their master. Now, there’s no way the sheep are gonna follow some strange guy they don’t know. They’ll just run off, ‘cause they’re afraid of strangers. (Jesus was giving them a lesson example, but they didn’t get it. So Jesus put it another way.)

“Okay, here’s another big truth! I am the gate to the sheep pen. Everybody else who’s come down the pike before Me, (except the prophets who were legit,) were crooks and rip-off artists, so the sheep didn’t hear them. I’m the door! Anybody who comes through Me is gonna be safe and will go in and out to find good grazing. The crook comes only to steal, kill and destroy. I’ve come so they can have life, and lots and lots of it!”

(Note: Then Jesus put it yet another way.) I AM the good shepherd, because I’ll die for My sheep. The guy who’s hired to be the door man, he doesn’t care about the sheep. He’s just a hired hand. They’re not his sheep. So when he sees a wolf coming, he’s outa there, and bang! The wolf scatters the sheep all over the place and gloms onto a sheep and is gone with it!

“Like I said, I’m the good shepherd. I know My sheep, and they know Me. The Father and I know each other, and I give up my life for my sheep. In fact, I’ve got some other sheep that aren’t here. They’ll know My voice too, and will be one big, happy flock with one shepherd; Me.” (Note: He was talking about non-Jews all over the world, who would become His in the years and centuries to come!) “My Father loves Me, ‘cause I give up My life so I can take it up again. Nobody can take it from Me. I’ve got orders from Him about that.”

When the Jews heard all He had told them, some of them still said, “He’s crazy, and He’s got a demon! Why are y’all even listening to Him?” But others said, “Hey! He doesn’t have a demon! No way! Can a demon open blind eyes?”

About 2 months later the Jews were throwing their annual Feast of Dedication wingding. Jesus was walking along the Solomon’s Porch area of the temple, and teaching everybody who came along. That’s when the Jews surrounded Him to finally have it out with Him.

“Hey! Quit beatin’ around the bush and keepin’ us in the dark,” the Jews demanded. “Come right out with it and tell us if you’re the Christ or not!”

“What good would that do? I already told you, but y’all still don’t believe! If you’ll look at all the works I do in My Father’s name, and if you were honest with yourselves and everybody else, y’all would believe. It’s a no-brainer. But NO. You don’t believe, ‘cause you’re not my ‘sheep.’ Like I told you, My sheep know Me and My voice, and they walk the same road I do. I give them life forever, so they’ll never die. And nobody, I mean, Nobody, can rip them off out of My Father’s hand. He and I are like that, in total agreement about all that. You’ve seen all the works I’ve done in the name of My

Father. There's My proof for you. But you still don't get it, because y'all are not My sheep! My Father is greater than anybody and is in control of all things. He and I are One." (Note: Jesus meant they were identical in purpose and plans and person!)

Well, that really ripped it. The Jews took to grabbing up rocks to throw at Him. But it didn't scare Jesus. He said, "I've done an awful lot of good things from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?"

"It ain't for any good work. We're mad at You 'cause You say You are God! We're hacked because You're just a Man, but You're pretending to be God!"

"Didn't God say to some judges in the Scriptures, (in Psalm 82:6,) 'You are gods'? If He called some folks gods, and everybody knows the Scripture is always right, why does it tear you up for Me to say I'm the son of God? So here I am, sent by the Father into the world; and y'all accuse Me of blaspheming because I said, 'I AM the Son of God? If I'm not doing My Father's miracle works, hang it up! But If I do, even if y'all don't believe Me, at least believe the miracles. Then you can believe the Father is in Me, and vice versa!"

That just made them madder still, and they tried to grab Him, but He got away again, for the 3rd time. This time He went to where John the Baptist had been baptizing folks, on the other side of the Jordan River. A lot of folks came to see Him there. They said, "John B. didn't do miracles; but everything he told us about this Guy was true!!" and they believed in Him then.

So where are we going with all this?

1. Jesus knew they weren't going to listen to Him. They were afraid He was going to cost them their job and their way of life. They were jealous of Him and His popularity, and the way the folks believed in Him and followed Him.

2. The Jewish head honchos of their generation committed the "unpardonable sin." They knew all the Scriptures, so they knew Jesus was really the Messiah, the special one sent from God, but they had other ideas about what they expected Him to be like. They wanted Him to whip up on the Romans and run them out of the country.

3. So after they turned Him down in this chapter 11, Jesus took an entirely different approach to His work. He started talking in stories and tales, and only explained the riddles to His students, because everybody else had refused to listen. That fulfilled what Isaiah said in Isaiah chapter 6. "Hearing, they won't hear, and seeing, they won't see." Go read it.

4. Jesus was not afraid of them because He knew exactly when the time was coming that He would be grabbed and put in the slammer and hauled up before the judges and beaten and tortured and executed. He was in total control of His future because He and God were as tight as they could be with each other.

Chapter 11

While He was over on the other side of the Jordan River, Jesus got a letter from Mary and Martha, her sis, that their bro, Lazarus, was bad sick. “Looky here, Lord. We know You love our bro, Laz. Well, he’s bad sick, so you need to come see us right away.”

Jesus answered their letter, “Don’t let it tear y’all up. It’s not what you think. A really big deal is about to come down here. God is about to do His biggest miracle yet!” Well, Jesus did love all 3 of them, the 2 M’s and their sick bro, Laz. Lots of times, they had taken Him into their home from off the road (Note: He didn’t have a home of His own, you know) and let Him bunk at their house, and fed Him and washed His feet and let Him get some r and r. By the way, He once said, to all of us, “If you ever give anybody even a drink of cold water for My sake, it’s the same as giving it to Me.”)

But Jesus hung out where He was at for 2 whole days. Then He told His students, “Okay, let’s go now to Bethany and see Laz and the 2 M.’s.” Well, that shocked and scared them! They thought the reason He was staying away from the Jerusalem area was because the Jews had tried to kill Him 3 times already. (Note: Bethany was only a couple miles walk from the Big City, a handy “bedroom community” for folks with biz in Jerusalem.)

“Hey, Teacher! Has it slipped Your mind how the Jews around there grabbed up rocks to chunk at You, and tried to glom onto You? And You’re going back there now?”

“Look Guys. We walk around all day during the daylight, ‘cause we can see and not stump our toes and fall down. If we get out trying to walk around at night, we may trip and fall, ‘cause it’s dark! There’s no light! (Note: They maybe didn’t get it then, but He meant there was work for them to get done while He was down here, before He had to leave to go back to His Father.)

“Laz, our buddy, is just asleep. I’m going to wake him up!”

(Note: Well, they still didn’t get it.) “Lord, if he’s just asleep, he’ll get well!”

So Jesus had to tell them, “Hey. Laz is really dead now. I’m glad I wasn’t there, ‘cause now, what’s about to happen will help y’all (and a lot of other folks) learn to believe. So, come on, let’s go see Laz.”

Thomas, the “twin,” (who was always a “ray of sunshine,”) said to the other 11 students, “Okay. Fine. Let’s all go on over there with Him, so we can die when He dies.”

(Note: It was a day’s travel for them, from where they were to Bethany. Laz was probably already dead when Jesus got M and M’s letter. He waited 2 more days, to make sure Laz was really good and dead, by Jewish standards. They believed the dead person’s spirit hung around the body for 3 days. 1 plus 2 plus 1 day equals 4 days.)

When Jesus and crew were not far from their friends’ home in Bethany, He learned that Laz had been in the tomb for 4 days. Martha heard they were coming. So she came running out to meet them. (Mary stayed home.) Martha said, “Oh, Lord! My bro wouldn’t be dead now, if you’d been here! But, I know You and God are tight, so I know your prayers are gonna improve things here. God’ll give You whatever You want!”

Jesus told her, “Your bro’s gonna come out the grave!”

“Yes, sir,” she said, “I know he’ll come out in the last day resurrection!” (Note: The Jews already believed that.)

Jesus informed her, “I Am the resurrection and the life. Anybody who believes in Me, when he dies, he’s gonna live again. Whoever lives and believes in Me, he’s not ever gonna die. Are you with me on this, Martha?”

Martha got serious. “Yes, Lord. I believe that You are the Christ. You’re the Son of God. You’re the One we’ve been expecting to come into the world for a long time.”

So with that, Martha took off back home and on the sly, she clued Mary, her sis. “The teacher’s here, and He’s asking for you.” So Mary jumped up and took off and came to see Jesus.

There was a bunch of Jews in the house with Mary, comforting her. When they saw her jump up and run out, they thought, “There she goes, back to cry some more at Laz’s grave.” (So the Jerusalem Jew mourners got up, too, and followed her. If Jesus wanted to talk with Mary in private, that didn’t work.)

When Mary got to Jesus, she fell down at His feet, she was so glad to see Him. She said the same thing her sis had said to Jesus; “Lord! My bro wouldn’t be dead now, if you’d been here!” Mary was crying and so were the Jews who came with her. At that, Jesus got mad at Satan, His opponent, that old devil who causes all the pain and death. Jesus cried silently. The people who saw Him crying, believed He was crying because He loved them; but some of them said, “This is the Guy who made new eyes for that blind man! Why couldn’t He keep Laz from checking out?”

(Note: There was more to it than that. He didn’t like death, and He still doesn’t. Sin makes people stupid and hurts them. Sin and the deaths it causes, makes Jesus angry. Whenever He came upon a funeral procession He always stopped. He overcame death for us. He was the only Man ever to die and come back to life on His own.)

So Jesus, still stirred, agitated and deeply moved, said, “Where have y’all put Laz?”

They said, “Lord, come on. We’ll take You to where we laid Laz.”

Jesus was still groaning in Himself when they got to the tomb. Laz was in this cave, and the door of the cave was covered and blocked with a huge rock. Jesus said, “Take that big rock away from the door to the cave.”

Martha, the in-charge gal, said, “Lord, Laz’s body has been in there for 4 days! By this time it’ll be stinking to high heaven!”

“Martha!” Jesus said. “Haven’t you been listening? Didn’t I tell you if you’d believe, you’d see God’s glory happen here?” (Note: That’s still true for us today.)

Well, Martha told the strong arm guys to get that big rock away from the tomb door. Jesus looked up at the sky and said, “Father, thank You for hearing Me. I know You always hear Me. I said that so all these folks standing around here will get the message. I want them to believe You sent Me!” Then He hollered out, “Lazarus! Come outa there!!” Wow!! The dead guy, Laz, came out! He was tied up and wrapped up with all kinds of grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a linen napkin. (Note: The Jews usually wrapped dead bodies in about 100 lbs. of good-smelling spices and stuff. Laz could have been staggering under 100 pounds of weight. But you see it didn’t stop the power of God from giving Laz the strength to come walking out of that hole in the ground!)

Jesus ordered the guys, “Cut him loose from all that stuff and let him boogie around!”

Well, a lot of the Jews that saw all that, believed Jesus was from God. (Note: DUH!) But some went running to the Pharisees to tattle on Jesus. Well, they called an emergency council session. They said, “Hey! What are we gonna do now? This Guy is

GOOD with all these miracles! If we let Him keep running like He is now, everybody's gonna believe in Him! And where's that gonna leave us? He keeps stirring everybody up and causing a ruckus. We're afraid the Romans'll come and take away our gigs and our whole country!" (Note: Which they really did, in 70 a.d., about 37 years later.)

Then Caiaphas, the head priest, spoke up and put them all down. "Y'all don't know beans about this deal. It'd be better for us, for this one Guy to die for everybody, and save the whole country!" So God used this high priest guy to predict Jesus would die for their country, and round up all the children of God who were scattered all over creation!

That was the day they began to figure out how they could kill Jesus. So Jesus and his students got outa town. They walked the 12 miles over to Ephron Town and stayed there while things cooled off in Jerusalem. It was almost time for the big annual Passover wingding in Jerusalem, when everybody trooped in from all over Israel to purify themselves like their Laws said. Lots of them were looking for Jesus. They were standing around in the temple, asking, "You think Jesus won't come to the Feast?" The head priests and Pharisee guys put a price of 30 pieces of silver on Jesus' head. "Anybody know where He's at? We'll pay for the info!"

There's a lot to take home and take to heart in this chapter!

Jesus Loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus, but no more than He loves us: we can draw a good parallel with us –

- 1. Jesus doesn't need to be where the sick guy is, to heal him.***
- 2. Jesus' intentions are to please His Father, not people. What's my intention?***
- 3. Handling sickness and trouble God's way brings us closer to God.***
- 4. Sickness is not about you and me. It's a platform for God to stand on and work in our lives. Prayer: "God, thank You for using my child's (or other loved one's) illness (or trouble) to glorify God, and to increase my faith in God."***
- 5. Jesus announced, "We're going to see Lazarus" even though He knew Lazarus was already in the tomb.***
- 6. When I know what God's will is, and walk there, I'm walking in the light of God.***
- 7. Trust during trials brings God glory and faith to me.***
- 8. When trouble comes, I run to meet Jesus, like Martha did. I turn to things representing Christ in my life; His word, my godly friends. Jesus always has a better way.***
- 9. Jesus gives us an indestructible life.***
- 10. Read 11:25-26 – Jesus felt the pain of those there at M, M and L's house. He also feels all our pain because He's been here. Jesus knows all the pain caused by abortion, addiction and adversity of all kinds.***
- 11. I hurt in my heart when I allow myself to envision my child lying in bed awake crying, listening to her mom and dad arguing and fighting, and blaming herself.***
- 12. Jesus is angered by sin.***
- 13. Jesus tells me today, "Didn't I tell you? If you believe, you will see the glory of God!"***
- 15. Wrappings of death are sins. What if Lazarus had said, "Wait! I want to keep that one and that one!"***
- 16. The Pharisees said, "That ripped it. We've tried everything and it hasn't worked. Now He's brought a man who is very very dead, back to life.***

17. Jesus is glorified through our resurrection from our sins.

Chapter 12

But Jesus came back to Bethany 6 days before the feast, and went to the home of Simon the Leper for a supper in His honor. The gals cooked supper for Him and Martha served it. There was her bro Laz at the supper table, big as life. Mary was so happy that Jesus had brought Laz back to life, she took a really pricey 12 ounce alabaster bottle of perfumed oil called “nard” and broke it and poured it on Jesus’ feet. (Note: They were all lying down at the low table, with all their feet sticking out, like they all do in that part of the world.) Then Mary let her hair down, (that was a shameful no-no!) and dried His feet with her long hair. The perfume fragrance wafted all through their home, and made it all smell wonderful. (John must have been there to make this remark in his account..)

Well, that tore up Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus students. (He’s the one who was going to rat on Jesus, and turn Him in to the authorities.) Judas said, “Hey! What a waste! We could have sold that bottle of smell-‘em-good for 300 denari and given the money to the poor! (Note: That amount was about a year’s pay at minimum wage, or about \$13,000 in today’s money. Like Judas really cared anything about the poor. He was trusted, but he was a con man, a crook and a thief. And he was in charge of the money box, and was stealing from it! Since John wrote his Gospel last, we have the advantage of John’s hindsight about Judas here. They had put the fox in charge of the chickens.)

Even some of the other students picked up on Judas’ coming down on Mary for the waste. But Jesus spoke up. “Hey! Get away from Mary! She had that stuff put back for my burial. (Perhaps her entire life’s savings!) You guys will always have the poor folks to deal with, but I won’t be around here much longer.”

Lots of Jews showed up there, not to see Jesus, but to see Laz, the ex-dead man now walking around. In fact, the bad guy priests were cooking up a plan to bump off Laz, too, because Laz was a kind of thorn in their side, and was causing a lot of Jews to quit coming to them for advice.

Next day, thousands of folks crowded into Jerusalem for the Passover Feast wingding, and when they heard Jesus was coming, they tore branches off the palm trees and went out to meet him. They were all hollering, “Hosanna!” (That means “Save us now!”) “The Guy Who’s coming in the Lord’s name is very blessed! He’s the King of Israel!”

Jesus sent some of his students to fetch a young donkey for Him to ride, and He climbed aboard it. That was because Isaiah and Zachariah had predicted long ago, that the King would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. (Note: Check out Isaiah 40:9 and Zechariah 9:9. It’s right there in the Book, in black and white!)

His students didn’t get it then, but later on down the road, after all that happened to Jesus that weekend, they remembered all this stuff, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and wrote it all down for us to be reading now, almost 2000 years later. You see, those Jews who were hanging out with Mary had gone and told everybody the news; this Jesus Guy had brought Laz back from the dead. That’s why everybody was flocking after Him that day. It was a Sunday. The Pharisees were grumbling, “We’re getting nowhere! Looky here, the whole world has gone after Him!”

About that time, a bunch of Greeks had showed up for the feast. They came to Philip, one of Jesus’ students, (maybe because his name was Greek) and said, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.” Philip told Andrew, then they both went to Jesus and told Him. (Note: So many folks wanted to talk with Jesus, this may have been a screening process. Although

the Jews doubted Jesus was the Son of God, the gentiles, or non-Jews, were ready to believe in Him!)

But Jesus said, “Now is the hour. The Son of Man is going to be glorified. (Note: that means made more important and magnificent to everybody.) Here’s another big chunk of truth! What good is a grain of wheat, unless it goes into the ground and dies? If it dies, up comes a huge crop of more wheat stalks, and every grain is just like the one that died! If you love your life, you’re like that lone grain that never goes into the ground. You’re pretty useless. But if you die in the ground, you’ll have eternal life. You’ll live on forever, through the lives of others! If you serve Me, follow Me. My servants go with Me wherever I go, and My Father will honor them. (He was talking about “death to self-centeredness.” Most of the students did follow Him and died as martyrs for their beliefs.)

“But now, I feel really bad, because of what I gotta do. But how can I say, ‘Father, rescue me from this time!’ because that’s why I’ve come here in the first place! So, Father, make Your name important here, through Me!”

Just then, all of a sudden God spoke from heaven! He said, “I already did that, and I’m gonna do it again!”

Folks hanging around Jesus heard God’s booming voice, and said, “Was that thunder?” Others said, “That was an angel, talking to Jesus!” But Jesus said, “We heard that voice, not for me, but for y’all. It’s time for this world to be judged, and for its ruler to be kicked out! (That would be Satan, the devil.) If I get raised up from the ground, I’ll draw all kinds of folks to Me!” (He was talking about how He was going to die pretty soon.)

The folks He was talking to, said “We heard from the law (G.O.R.B.) that the Christ remains forever. What are You talking about, ‘The Son of Man must be raised up from the ground?’ Who is this Son of Man?”

Jesus said, “Y’all are gonna have the light (Me) for a little while longer. Walk in the light while you have it. It’s gonna get dark, and then you won’t know where you’re going. While you have light, believe in the light, so you can be sons of light.” Then Jesus suddenly left, and they couldn’t see Him anymore.

But even though they had seen Jesus feed over 5,000 folks with a little boy’s lunch, and had seen Him make new eyes for a blind man, and even had seen Him bring Laz back from the dead after 4 days, they still didn’t believe in Him. That was because of what Isaiah had predicted in 53:11; “Lord, who believes us?” and 6:9, “He blinded their eyes and made their hearts hard, so they couldn’t see or understand, and can’t turn around and let Me heal them.” (Isaiah said that when he saw God’s glory in Isaiah 6. Go read it.)

Some of the head men believed in Him, but they wouldn’t admit it to the Pharisees. They were afraid they’d get kicked out of the synagogue church. They wanted men to like them more than they cared about what God thought about them. (v-44)

To sum it all up, Jesus hollered out, “The guy who believes in Me, believes in the One Who sent Me. We’re all the same person. When you see Me, you see Him. I’ve come as a light to the world. The guy who believes in Me doesn’t have to live in the dark. If anybody hears what I say and doesn’t believe Me, I’m not gonna be his judge. I didn’t come here to be a judge, but to save folks, to rescue them. But the words I speak will be that guy’s judge at the end. That’s because My words aren’t just My words. The Father, Who sent Me, ordered Me to say and do what I have said and done here. And I know that

if you follow His orders, His commands, that will lead you to eternal life. Therefore, whatever the Father has told Me to tell y'all, that's exactly what I have told y'all.

What's the take-home and take-to-heart from this chapter?

- 1. We have to break loose from our own selfishness and self-centeredness.*
- 2. We have to spread the great news about Jesus' way of life to everybody we meet, no matter whether we think they will be interested or not.*
- 3. We are not discouraged if people we talk to about Jesus don't jump at the chance. Our job is to suit up and show up and speak up. They are responsible for their own choices and decisions.*
- 4. It doesn't really matter what folks think about you and me. What does matter is what God thinks about you and me.*

(Note: During the next 5 chapters, John tells us what Jesus said to His students on the night before He was to die. He was getting them ready to deal with His death and rising the 3rd day. That would change their lives forever.)

Chapter 13

Jesus knew He was not long for this world. Soon, it would be “curtains” for Him and He would be going home to His Father in heaven. But He loved all His students, right up to the last minute. He even loved that rat fink, Judas Iscariot, who was about to double-cross Him. (Note: And, He still does love us!)

Supper was over, and Judas had already made his mind up that Jesus wasn't the kind of guy Judas wanted Him to be. (He wanted a “real” king, so he could ride in on His coattails and be a BMK; Big Man In Kingdom.) Jesus knew His Father had turned everything in the world over to Him. He was a mission from God and would be going back to report to The Boss soon.

So after supper, Jesus got up from the table and took off His outer clothes, and wound a big towel around His waist. Then He poured some water into a wash pan, and started washing His students' feet. (Note: Let me tell you about the custom of foot washing back then in the Middle East. Everybody walked everywhere they went in those days, on the dirty roads and streets, so their feet got all nasty, and may have had crusted garbage and even animal poop on them. So the servant who was at the very bottom of the “pecking order” got the foot washing job. It was about like cleaning messy toilets today.)

So when Jesus stooped down to do that messy job, his students were shocked and embarrassed, especially Peter, who never was shy about speaking up, unlike some of the other students. (Children might wash their parents' feet, and wives might wash their husband's feet. Most folks in those days had to wash their own feet, just like us. Although they might have been willing to wash His feet, they would never have stooped to wash each other's feet. They were squabbling amongst themselves to see which would be more important in His coming kingdom.)

When Jesus came around to Peter, he said, “Hey! What are you up to?”

Jesus explained, “You don't understand now, but later you'll get it.”

But Peter indignantly refused. “Hey! YOU are never gonna wash MY feet, Lord!” (Note: Peter meant, “I'm not gonna let you, my Master, my God and my Teacher, stoop and lower Yourself to such a nasty, ridiculous position. It just ain't right!” Simon's name in Hebrew means “soft and squishy” or “shapeable” and Peter means “hard and unbending.” When you're reading this passage, and any other mention of Simon Peter, keep in mind his names' real meaning. Sometimes he's identified “Simon,” sometimes “Peter” and sometimes “Simon Peter.”)

Jesus gently explained, “If you won't let me wash your feet, you're outa here. You can't be a part of My life anymore.”

“Well,” Peter said, “Since You 'splain it to me like that, You can wash my head and my hands too!”

Jesus, always The Patient Explainer, said ““If you've had a bath, you only have to wash your feet to be clean. Y'all are clean, but not ALL y'all!” When He finished washing all their feet, He re-dressed and sat down to talk with them. “Do y'all know what I just did for you? Sure, I'm your teacher and Lord. If I wash y'all's feet, then y'all ought to wash one another's feet! What I did was set an example for y'all to copy to be the humble servant of all. If I will humble Myself and be a lowly servant, then each of y'all should, too. A servant's not more important than His master. The message carrier

is not more important than the one who sends the message. Now, you are all very blessed if you know and do these things!”

“What I’m saying doesn’t cover every one of y’all. When I picked you 12 guys, I knew I was fulfilling Dave’s prediction, ‘*He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.*’ (God caused David to write those words in Psalm 41 verse 9.) I’m telling y’all this right now, so when it happens, it’ll make y’all believe in Me even more. Now, here’s another huge bite of truth. When I send you out, anybody who accepts one of y’all, accepts Me, and by extension, that guy accepts the One Who sent Me, too.”

No sooner had Jesus told them, than He took to feeling really troubled. “Listen up, guys. I got big news for y’all. One of y’all is going to sell me up the river.”

The students glanced all around at one another. Who was He talking about? Peter motioned down the table for one of the students nearest to Jesus, to ask Him, “Lord, who is it?” (Note: Everybody believes when John wrote about “The one Jesus loved,” he was talking about himself.)

Jesus said, “Watch me. I’m gonna dip a piece of bread and give it to the guy.” So Jesus dipped a piece of bread in a bowl of liquid food stuff, and handed it to Judas Iscariot. (Note: Judas was probably lying nearby, within easy reach. Some say he was next to Jesus, in the “place of honor.” What Jesus did was a gesture of kindness and forgiveness. Even though He knew Judas was going to turn Him in to the authorities for money, He still loved Judas and was giving him a final chance to straighten up, clean up his act and fly right. But it had the opposite effect on Judas. Satan, the old devil guy, the same guy who talked Eve into eating the no-no-don’t touch-it fruit, went into Judas right then. He had already been “dancing with the devil” and playing with the idea of forcing Jesus’ hand. This move pushed him over the edge. So like Jesus said, it caused David’s prediction to happen.) Jesus told Judas, “Go on and do it now. Don’t mess around.” None of the students (except John, maybe) knew what was going on. Judas was their treasurer and carried the money box. The students thought Jesus was telling Judas to go buy stuff for the Feast, or to go give money to the poor folks. No big deal.

Judas took off right then and there, out into the dark street to go do his foul deed. (A dark deed on a dark night. Now Judas was walking in darkness instead of in the Light of Jesus.)

So after Judas left, Jesus announced He would be leaving. “The time of glorification is about here. God the Father will glorify (make greater) The Son of Man (that’s Me) and that will glorify God, Who will glorify Him (Me) to Himself, and He’ll do it quickly.” (So it’ll be a yes-yes deal all around, the best kind of a deal there is, where everybody benefits.)

“Kids, I’m gonna be here just a little while longer. Like I told the Jews, y’all will come looking for Me but won’t find Me. So I’m about to lay a new commandment on y’all now. I order y’all to love one another, just like I have loved each one of you. That’s how other folks are gonna know y’all are my students; they’ll see that y’all love one another.”

Simon Peter spoke up. “Lord, where You goin’?”

Jesus answered, “Where I’m going, you can’t follow Me now. But down the road, in the future, you’ll follow Me.”

Peter was disappointed. “Lord, why can’t I go with You now? For Your sake, I would give up my life!”

Jesus may have been amused. He answered, “Will you? I’m gonna lay a really hard truth on you right now, Peter. Before a rooster crows tomorrow morning, you’ll have already denied Me 3 times!”

What do we take home from this chapter?

- 1. There is a special blessing for us, when we not only agree that we are to be humble servants to others, but actually follow through and do it Christ’s way.*
- 2. Neither Satan nor Judas knew that Christ’s death was the main part of God’s plan all along.*
- 3. Peter had no way of knowing what was in his future, but Christ knew. With the help of the Holy Spirit Jesus sent to them later, all of Christ’s students carried out His plan wonderfully.*
- 4. We must make other folks’ needs more important to us than our own.*
- 5. It must have been a hard thing for Jesus to have one of His own turn Him in for money. But He knew it was all part of God’s plan that one of them would do it. Otherwise we would not now have Jesus’ plan of rescue for us.*

Chapter 14

(Jesus continues briefing his students before He leaves them.)

“Don’t sweat it when I take my exit, fellas. I know y’all trust God. Just trust Me, too. Up there in My Father’s house there are lots and lots of apartments and plenty of room for y’all. You know I’d never lie to you. I’m going up there to make arrangements for y’all. Then I’ll come back and get y’all, so each of you can be where I’m at. So now, you know where I’m going, and you also know the way.”

That puzzled Thomas, so he asked Jesus, “Lord, we don’t have a clue where you’re goin,’ so how in the world would we ever know the way?”

Jesus again answered mysteriously. “Why, Tom, I AM the way, the truth, and the life. Nobody gets to come to the Father, without going through Me! If you knew Me, you’d automatically know My Father too; so from now on, you know Him, and you’ve seen Him; Me!”

(This was heavy stuff Jesus was laying on His students. They were getting all the pieces of the puzzle, but they wouldn’t be able to put it all together until He died, came back out the grave and went back up to His Father. They were still grabbing for answers.) Philip piped up, “Lord, show us the Father. That’s all we need.”

Jesus shook His head. “Philip, Philip, Philip. You’ve been hanging with Me for a long time, but you still don’t know Me? If you’ve seen Me, you’ve automatically seen the Father! So how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe the Father is in Me, and I’m in the Father? When I talk to y’all, it’s not just Me talking. It’s the Father living in Me. He’s saying and doing all these things. Just believe it. I’m in the Father, and He’s in Me. If you can’t do that, just believe in the miracles you’ve seen Me do.”

“Now, here comes one of those big chunks of truth, guys. If you’ll just trust Me, you’ll be able to do miracles like I do, and even more amazing works. That’s because I’m going home to My Father. Whatever y’all ask, if you ask it in My name, I’ll do it. (Note: If what we ask is God’s will for us and we are trying to do His will. He won’t do stuff for us just to satisfy our selfishness.) That’s so that, through Me, the Father will be made more important and dramatic.” (Note: Jesus meant their works would be wider spread, and effect more people than He ever did in His lifetime. Peter had 3,000 new Christians from just one sermon! That’s because the Holy Spirit would fill them up and give them the courage to tell everybody and show everybody who Jesus was, and the power to pull it all off. And Jesus couldn’t send that Holy Spirit Guy back unless He went through all He had to go through in the next few days, and then go back up to His Father, God, and ask Him to send the Holy Spirit down to all His students, who would be waiting in Jerusalem for that to happen! Read on.)

“Guys, if you love Me, you’ll follow My orders. I’ll pray to the Father, and He’ll give you another, different Helper. That Helper will stay with you forever and always, and won’t leave you like I’ve got to. He’s the Spirit of the truth. He’ll comfort you. He’ll teach you not to be afraid of death or of the future. He’ll help you remember all these things I’ve been telling y’all that you don’t understand yet. This world can’t understand because it doesn’t see or know Him. (Note: Radio waves go unseen and have no effect on us, unless we have a radio!) But you know Him. He’s living with you, and will be inside you. I won’t leave y’all to be orphans. I’ll come back to y’all.” (Note: Jesus was

probably talking about coming back to them after He came out the grave, and again when He comes as the Holy Spirit.)

“Pretty soon, the world won’t see Me any more. It won’t be long now. But y’all will still see Me. Y’all will live, because I’ll still be living. Then, you’ll know I’m in My Father, and y’all will be in Me, and I’ll be in y’all. If you know My orders, and obey My orders, that proves you love Me. So My Father will love you, and I’ll love you and show Myself to you.”

The questions kept coming. The other one of his students named Judas, (not the rat fink traitor,) asked, “Lord, how are You gonna show Yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered with pretty much the same explanation; “Them that love Me will keep My word. My Father will love him and We will come and live with him. Them that don’t love Me don’t keep My word. This statement comes to y’all not from Me, but from God the Father who sent Me.”

“I’ve told y’all all these things while I’m still here with you,” Jesus went on. “But that Helper I told y’all about, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send to you in My name? He’ll teach y’all everything you need to know, and make you remember all this stuff after I’m outa here.”

“I’m leaving y’all in peace. I’m giving you My peace. It’s not like what the world can give y’all, the peace I give you. Don’t be stirred up or scared. I’ve just told y’all that I’m going away, then coming back to you. If y’all loved Me, you’d jump for joy and celebrate, because I told y’all I’m going to the Father, because He’s much greater than I am.”

“I’ve told y’all all this stuff that’s about to go down, so that when it does, you’ll know I was right and trust me. I won’t talk to you much more, ‘cause the ruler of this world (Satan, the devil) is on his way, but he’s got nothing on Me. What I’m about to do, is to show the world that I love the Father, by following His orders for Me. Now y’all get up and let’s get outa here.”

So what’s the drift of all this? What orders has Jesus given to us?

- 1. Read His words.***
- 2. Take them into our hearts and carry them out in our lives.***
- 3. Allow the Holy Spirit to direct us every day. He’ll help us digest the Word of God and put it to use every day in our lives, if we’ll let Him.***
- 4. Keep a running conversation with God every day through Jesus, Who is up there sitting in the place of honor, on God’s right side. He’s our mouthpiece to God. In fact, the only way we have of communicating with our Creator, is through Jesus, because He is both God and man!***
- 5. Satan, who is a real creature/person, had the guts to try to break up God’s master plan, which was to come to earth as a man and die for us to show us how much He loves us. It didn’t work, so we should thank God every day for His love.***

Chapter 15

(Jesus continues filling His students in on what to expect in the next few days and for the rest of their lives. He began with the 7th of 7 “I AM” statements of His being God.)

“I AM the REAL Grapevine, and My Father is the farmer. Y’all are My branches. If any of y’all doesn’t bud and bloom and sprout and grow some fruits (of the Spirit,) My Father’s goin’ to lop you off. If you grow some, He’ll chop off the dead parts, (Note: everything in a believer’s life that might keep him from growing more fruit,) so it’ll grow even more fruits. My words have cleaned y’all up for now. Branches can’t bear fruit if they fall off the vine, so y’all need to stick with Me so you won’t get lopped off. If you hang with Me and stay connected to Me, you’ll grow lots and lots of fruits. If you don’t, you can’t grow any fruits at all! You’ll just die and wither away and somebody will gather you up and throw y’all into a fire and burn you up! If you stick with Me, and keep My words inside of you, then whatever you ask for, it’ll be done for you. When you grow lots of fruit, that will show everybody how great God is, and will show that y’all really are my students.

“I’ve loved y’all just like the Father has loved Me. Hang in there in My love. If you obey My orders, you’ll stay in My love, the same way I have obeyed My Father’s orders and stay in His love!

“I’m telling y’all all of this, so you’ll always have My joy, and you’ll be full of it.

“Here’s my main order to y’all. Love one another, just like I’ve loved you. When a guy lays down his life for his friends, that’s the greatest love he can show. Now, if y’all follow and obey My orders, y’all are My friends.

“I don’t call y’all my servants any more. A servant doesn’t have a clue what his master’s business is. I call y’all my friends now, because I’ve told y’all all My business, which is the Plan My Father has told Me. You didn’t pick Me. I picked each one of y’all, and given you an assignment; get out there and grow lots of spiritual fruit that will last, and whatever you ask the Father to give you, in My name, He’ll give you. These are My orders; love one another!

“If the world hates you, don’t be surprised. Remember, it hated Me first. If y’all were of this evil, fallen world, the world would love you because you’re a part of it. But you’re not of the world. I picked you up out of the world; so the world hates you. Remember when I told you, ‘A servant isn’t greater than his master’? If they gave Me a hard time and pushed Me around, they’re gonna treat y’all the same way. (But if they kept My word, they’ll keep yours, too.) They’ll do all these things to y’all because of Me, because they don’t know the One Who sent Me. If I hadn’t come and laid all My words on them, they wouldn’t be sinners. But now, they know what’s right and don’t have an excuse to be sinners. The guy who hates Me, hates My Father, too. If I had not come and done all those miracles that nobody else did, they wouldn’t be sinners. But now, they’ve seen, and hate Me and My Father, too. All this happened to fulfill the Scripture that says, ‘They hated Me without a reason.’ (Note: Jesus was talking about the Jewish leaders here. They knew He was the Messiah but refused to accept Him.)

“But, when the Helper comes, the ‘Spirit of the truth’ guy I’m going to send from the Father, He’ll testify about Me, and so will y’all, because you’ve been with Me from the start of My work.”

*So, what useful ideas and orders do we take away from this chapter?
Jesus says if we believe in Him, we're like branches growing on Him, and will bear
fruit in the form of love for our brothers, and good words and deeds to others.
He also says we're gonna get some grief from other folks who aren't believers in Jesus.*

Chapter 16

(Jesus is still teaching His students what's going on and how it'll affect them. They're disappointed and bewildered and He's trying to put them at ease.)

"I'm telling y'all these things, so you won't stumble. They're gonna throw you out the synagogues (Jewish churches.) There'll be a time when they'll kill you and think they're doing God a favor! That's because they haven't known the Father nor Me. So don't forget. Someday you'll remember I warned y'all.

"I didn't tell y'all when we started out, because I was still gonna be with you a while. But now I'm about to go back to the One Who sent Me, and I don't hear y'all asking Me, 'Where You goin'?' Y'all are down in the mouth because I'm about to leave. But that's a good thing, that I'm leaving y'all! If I stay here, I can't send y'all the Comforter. When He comes, He'll confront the world and convict them of their sin, because they don't believe in Me, He'll take up where I left off about doing the right things, because I'm outa here, and He'll dole out judgment because the ruler of this world (that old devil, Satan, the Big Bad Guy,) is gonna be judged.

"I've still got a lot of things to say to y'all, but you can't handle them yet. When the Spirit of truth comes, He'll steer you into all the truth. He won't be talking just on His own authority but will bring y'all messages from God. He'll tell you what's coming down the pike for y'all, what to expect. He'll make Me more important to y'all, because He'll tie all the Scriptures about Me, in with what's happening now. Everything the Father has, are mine, and the Comforter/Counselor will tell y'all all about them.

"Pretty soon y'all won't see Me. Then a little while later, you'll see Me again, because I'm going to the Father. (Note: He was talking about His rising up to heaven, about 40 days after He came back to life and came out the grave, and then coming back to them as the Holy Spirit, to be with them forever.)

Well, this got a rise out of His students. They bounced those words around amongst themselves, and couldn't get a handle on them. "What's this, 'a little while and y'all won't see Me' and 'I'm going to the Father' bit?"

Jesus knew they wanted to ask Him about it. He said, "So you don't get it, what I just said about 'a little while, then another little while'? Here's the heavy truth, guys. You're gonna be moaning and groaning and crying, while the world is jumping for joy. Then, YOUR sorrow will be turned to joy. When a woman's giving birth to a baby, she's sorry because the time has come for her to have a lot of pain. But as soon as the baby's born, she forgets all that, she's so happy a new human has come into the world! So, y'all have a lot of grief right now, but I'll see y'all again, and your hearts will jump for joy. And that'll be the kind of joy nobody can every take away from y'all! When that happens, you won't have Me around to ask things any more. Here's another big chunk of truth; you'll ask the Father in My name, and He'll give it to you. Up until now, y'all have never asked for anything in My name. So ask and get! That's so you'll be full of My joy!"

"I've told y'all all this in 'figurative' language, like in code. But the time's coming when I'll be talking plainly about the Father. Then, you'll ask the Father for things in My name and get them. You won't need Me to pray to the Father for y'all. That's because the Father Himself loves y'all, because you have loved Me. You have believed that I've

come from God. Yes, I came into the world from the Father, and now I'm gonna leave the world and go back to the Father."

Well, that got a rise from His students. "Aha! Now you're talkin'! We get that! Now we're sure You know everything, and nobody needs to ask You anything. That's how come we believe You came from God!"

Jesus came back with, "Oh, now you believe, huh? Well, I got news for y'all. In about an hour, y'all are gonna scatter like a covey of quail and leave Me alone. But I won't be alone, 'cause I got the Father with Me!

"I've laid all these words on y'all so you'll have peace in Me. From now on, y'all are gonna have a lot of grief in the world. But cheer up, guys! Because I have OVERCOME the world!!"

What's the main drift of the above chapter?

Jesus knew what was in store for these 11 ordinary guys He had picked right off the street. For about 3 years, He'd been training them and getting them ready to deal with their futures. By now, they believed He knew everything. They were used to having Him around to ask questions and comfort them. Now, He's telling them "I'm outa here." He'd be outa sight (for 3 days,) and they'd run like scared rabbits, but then they'd see Him again and their fear and grief would turn to joy. All they'll have to do is ask the Father. He told them all the truth about what was about to happen to them. Things were gonna really get rough for them. As we learned with the ex-blind man, just getting kicked out of the synagogue (Jew church) was almost like a death sentence. He warned them folks were going to hate them and try to kill them, just like they did Jesus, because the world was (and still is) all out of synch with Jesus. But He also comforted them, because they, and everybody in the future who believed in Him, would always be "in synch" with Jesus, so no matter what bad things happened to them, they would still have His joy. Finally, they all "got it," so He knew they were ready. Then He took to praying to His Father for Himself, his students and all believers down through the ages.

Chapter 17

(Note: With those words, Jesus finished His briefing of His students. He turned His eyes to the skies and began to pray to His Father in heaven. First He prayed for Himself, like this:)

“Father, My time is up. This time it’s for real. Now, I ask You to make a big deal out of Me, Your Son, and it will also make a big deal of You. You have put Me in charge of all human beings, so now I can give unending life to every one You send to Me. That life that lasts forever is so that they may know You, the only real God, and Me, Jesus Christ, Your messenger and agent down here. I’ve made a big deal of You amongst folks down here. I’m done with all the work You assigned to Me. Now, Father, make Me and You both a big deal, like We both had before the world was created by Us.

“Now, about my 11 students, Father, that were Yours but You gave them to Me. They have kept Your word. Now, they know that all things You have given Me, are from You; because I gave them the words you gave to Me, and they took them. Now they’re absolutely sure that You sent Me down here. I’m praying for them, Father. I’m not praying for the world; I’m praying for My students You have given Me. They’re still Yours, Father. All that are mine are still Yours, and all Yours are mine, and that makes Me a big deal.

“Now, I’m not in the world any more. I’m outa here. I’m coming back to You, but they’re still down here, Holy Father. Keep these You have given Me through Your name, so they’ll be like one person, like You and I are. While I’ve been here in the world with them, I kept the ones You gave to me, in Your name. I’ve not lost a one of them except Judas. He let the Big Bad Guy get him, just like the Scriptures said. Now, I’m coming to ask You to give my students the same joy You have given to Me. I have given them the words You gave to Me, and the world hates them because they’re not a part of the world, just like I’m not part of the world. Father, I’m not asking You to take them out of the world. I’m just asking You to keep them safe from the Big Bad Guy. Just set them apart with Your word, the word of truth. You sent Me into this world, and now I’m about to send them into the world. For their sakes I separate Myself, so they can be safely set apart too.

(Note: Jesus then prays for everybody who would ever believe in Him, like this:) “I’m not just praying for my students, but also for anybody who ever will believe in Me, through Your word. Father, that’s so they’ll be tight with each other and with You and Me, all on the same page, just like You and I are. That’s so everybody in the world may believe that You sent Me here. You made Me a big deal, Father, and now they’re a part of Me. The idea is; You, Father, and Me, Your Son Jesus, and these 11, and everybody else who will someday know what the real truth is, we’ll all be on the exact same page, so the world will know You sent Me, and that You love them, just like You love Me!

“Father, one more thing. I want them to be with Me in heaven, so they can see what a big deal we all are, because You loved Me even before You laid the foundation of the world.

“Oh, my good Father! The world You made doesn’t even know You. But I have known You, and my students know You sent me here. I’ve told them all about You and will keep on telling them, so the love You have for Me will be in them, and I will be in them, too!”

So now let's break Jesus' prayer down and see how He put it all together.

1. Jesus could pray directly to God because they had what we would call a "Daddy and His Boy" relationship.

2. Jesus prayed to God for 4 things for Himself; A. To help Him get through His pain and suffering time, B. To accept His human life as the final Big Sacrifice, C. To bring Him back from the dead, and D. to restore Him to His original heavenly position and condition.

3. The word "know" here has the most intimate meaning possible; a "joining together" so completely they become as one person.

4. The Father gave His Son 5 things: A. Work to do, B. Believers, (the 11 students and others,) C. Glory, making Him a big deal on earth, D. All the right words to say to everybody, and E. The greatest name (reputation and honor) of anybody who ever lived before or since.

5. He prayed for His students 5 times. A. When He picked them to follow Him, B. All during their travels and work together, C. At the end of their work, D. Here in Chapter 17, and E. Later, in heaven. (You'll find that in Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25.)

6. His 11 guys weren't perfect, but they had made the right commitment. He asked His Father to watch their backs, help them to love one another, and keep them all on the same page. They were valuable, but they were in danger.

7. When He prayed for believers, (that's us,) He asked God to protect and preserve us, to set us apart as His special folks, to help us to all love each other and stay together on the same page, like a family, and to be a part of Jesus' "big-deal-ship."

Chapter 18

Note: When Jesus finished praying for His students, all of us, and Himself, He and His students went out Jerusalem's Eastern Gate, down the steep slope and across Kidron Creek, which was dry most of the year, and up "Olive Mountain." There were a lot of gardens on top, and they went inside their favorite hang-out, a walled garden named "Gethsemane," (which means "olive press.")

Jesus left 8 of His students outside the garden and took Peter, James and John, His three best buds inside with Him (to do some intense praying, but they were bushed and probably were sleepy from the wine at dinner, so they couldn't keep their eyes open. We know all this from the other 3 Gospel stories, Matthew, Mark and Luke.)

Judas, (note: he was an ordinary guy who got caught up by the devil in his own greed,) figured that's where they were, because he had hung out with them there, too. Pretty soon here came Judas with a troop of about 600 men, (give or take,) Roman soldiers, (who were probably there to make sure there wasn't a big fight and riot,) chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying lanterns, torches and weapons. Jesus saw them coming and went to meet them.

"Hey, y'all!" Jesus asked them. "Who're y'all looking for?" (As if He didn't know.)

"A guy named Jesus, from Nazareth," they replied. Judas was standing there with them.

Much to their amazement, Jesus said, "I AM YOUR MAN!" Well, that really blew them away. When He said "I AM HE!" They were so shocked, they all jumped back and fell on the ground!" (Note: the up-front guys may have bowled over the ones behind them.)

So Jesus asked them again. "Who did you say you're looking for?"

After they recovered they said, "Jesus, from Nazareth."

"Well, I told you guys I'm Jesus. If I'm the Guy you want, turn all my students loose."

(That was so He could say, "Father, I didn't lose a one of the guys You gave Me.")

But Simon Peter, Jesus' hot-headed right hand man, pulled his sword out and whacked at Malchus, the high priest's servant, and took off his right ear. (Note: Peter was a better fisherman than a swordsman, and may have been left-handed.) Jesus said, "Hey, Pete! Hold on there! Put that sword back in its sheath! You think I'm not going to drink this cup My Father is giving Me to drink?"

That's when the army of men, armed to the teeth, nabbed Jesus and tied Him up and led Him away to Annas the high priest's daddy-in-law's house. Annas' son in law Caiaphas was the guy who said it would be a good idea to whack one man in place of all the people getting hurt.

Pete followed Jesus, along with another student. (Note: almost everybody believes the "other student" was John, the guy who wrote this account called "The Gospel of John.") Annas's servants already knew the "other student" and let him in through a door or gate in the wall, into the high priest's courtyard. Pete was left standing outside the door, but then that other student went back and talked the girl doorkeeper into letting Pete in too. The servant girl door keeper asked Pete, "You're one of this guy's students, aren't you?"

Pete said, "Naw, lady. Not me." (Denial #1.)

The night was cold, and some guys had built a fire there, and were standing around warming themselves. Pete stood there and warmed himself, too. Annas was asking Jesus, "How about Your students and Your teachings?"

Jesus said, "I've always been up front with everybody. I always taught in the Jewish church places, where the Jews meet. I've never said a word in secret. Why are you asking Me? Go ask the folks who heard My teaching. See what I said to them. They know what I said." (Note: Jesus knew it was not legit for them to ask Him questions in a secret trial, at night no less. They were breaking several Mishna laws. In fact, during His arrest, trials, sentencing and murder, they broke over 20 Mishna laws, their own man-made laws. Jesus knew He was being questioned illegally.)

Then BLAP! One of the bystander officers whacked Jesus up side His head and asked Him, "Is that any way to answer a high priest?"

Jesus quietly answered, "If what I said was wrong, tell Me. If what I said was right, how come you whacked Me?"

So Annas sent Jesus, still tied up, to his son-in-law Caiaphas, whose home was in the same compound. Pete's still there with the servants, warming himself at the fire. The servants asked Pete, "Hey! You're not one of His disciples are you?"

Pete said, "Naw, I'm not." (That's twice!)

But one of the high priest's servants, Malchus's cousin, said, "Didn't I see you in the garden with Him?"

Pete said, "Naw, not me!" That made 3 times, and at that very instant the rooster crowed. (Some of the other Gospel writers say Pete cursed them.)

From Caiaphas, they took Jesus to the Praetorium in the early morning. (That was Pilate, the Roman governor's place.) The Jews wouldn't go inside because that would make them dirty, to go into a Gentile's digs, and they wanted to stay clean for the Passover coming up. So Pilate had to come out to see what they wanted.

"How come y'all brought this Guy here? What'd He do?"

The Jews didn't like Pilate. They smarted off, "If He wasn't a crook, we wouldn't be bringing Him to you!"

"Then, y'all take Him on and judge Him by your laws!" Pilate replied. (He knew what was going on here. These Jews were jealous of Jesus' popularity and wanted Him dead.)

"We can't do that. It's against the law now for us to execute anybody!" (That was so it would work out that Jesus would be nailed to a cross, lifted up like the snake in the desert was, like He predicted. If the Jews had killed Him, it would have been by stoning, and that would have broken His bones. The prophecies all said His bones would not be broken. God, behind the scenes, was engineering this whole event.)

So Pilate turned around and went back into the Praetorium and called Jesus over and said, "Hey. Are You really the King of the Jews?"

Jesus asked, "Is that your question, or did somebody else tell you that?"

"Do I look like a Jew here?" Pilate asked. "Your own folks and chief priests brought You to me for some reason. What did You do to them to make them so mad at You?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not part of this world. If it was, my folks would fight, so I wouldn't get arrested by the Jews."

"Then, are You really a king?" Pilate asked.

“You are correct. I am a king. That’s why I was born, and that’s why I’ve come here, into this world; so I can tell everybody the real truth. Everybody who is of the truth, listens up and hears what I have to say.”

Pilate chewed on those words for a while. Then he said, cynically: “What really is the truth?” Then he turned and walked back outside to talk with the Jews again, and told them, “There’s not a thing wrong with this Guy y’all brought me.” (So ended Pilate Trial #1.)

“But, hey.” Pilate continued. “Y’all have a custom. Every Passover wingding, I’ve gotta turn one prisoner, of your choice, loose. So, do y’all want me to turn your ‘king of the Jews’ loose?”

They all hollered, “Naw! Not this Guy! Turn Barabbas loose!” Barabbas (whose name, strangely, means “son of the father” in Hebrew,) was a crook and a troublemaker.

How about the lessons we get from this chapter to take into our hearts?

- 1. Pete tried to take the law into his own hands and fight off these 600 troops single handedly. Brave but dumb. Sometimes we get in a hurry. We think God needs us to work out His plan. That’s brave but dumb.***
- 2. According to the other Gospels, Judas, the bad guy, rolled over on Jesus and identified Him by giving Him a greeting kiss, a common custom, right in front of all the other students.***
- 3. Pilate sneeringly asked Jesus, “What is truth?” but he didn’t wait to hear His answer. If Pilate had really wanted to know, Jesus would have told him, and the story would be entirely different. But Pilate quickly turned on his heel and went back outside and didn’t wait to hear Jesus’ answer. Are you and I interested in knowing the Truth according to Jesus?***

Chapter 19

So Pilate got another idea. He thought, “If they want blood, I’ll give them blood!” That was in hopes they would go away satisfied Jesus had been viciously punished. What he did was he ordered his crew to give Jesus a terrible whipping with a leather thong that had sharp pieces of bone and metal in it. The soldiers had a high old time slashing His bare back with the whip until his flesh was hanging in strips and his bones exposed. (This punishment killed some who received it; some of them went insane.) Then they made a crown out of long, sharp thorns and jammed it down over His head. They dressed Him in a purple robe (probably the one Herod had put on Him and sent Him back to Pilate.) Then they insulted Him and said, “Hail! King of the Jews!” and they whacked Him with their hands.

Pilate came back out of his courtroom and told the Jews, “Looky here! I’m about to bring Him out here for y’all to see. That’s so you’ll know I don’t find a thing the matter with Him.”

So Jesus came out where they could see Him, wearing the purple robe and the crown of thorns. Pilate hollered, “Look here at the Man!”

When they saw Him, the chief priests and officers said, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

Pilate was disgusted with them. He said, “Y’all take Him and crucify Him. I find Him to be innocent of any crime!”

The Jews hollered back, “We Jews have a law that says He’s got to die, because He made Himself the son of God.”

Well, that scared Pilate even more. (Note: Like most pagans, Pilate was very superstitious. If there was any chance he was about to execute any god, he would be in huge, deep trouble!) So Pilate went back into the Praetorium or courtroom with Jesus, and asked Him, “Where did You come from?” But Jesus clammed up and wouldn’t say a word.

That made Pilate mad. He asked Jesus, “You mean you’re not going to talk to me? Don’t you know I could have You crucified, or in could turn you loose?”

Then Jesus answered him. “You don’t have any power unless it was given to you from above. The one who turned Me over to you, that one is the biggest sinner!”

Now, Pilate was even more determined to turn Jesus loose. But the Jews blackmailed Pilate. They said, “If you turn this guy loose, Caesar’s not gonna like it. He doesn’t want anybody calling Himself a king in his empire!”

(Note: Pilate was already on shaky ground with Caesar, his boss man, so that threat by the Jews hit him right between the eyes.) When Pilate heard that, he brought Jesus out onto the pavement and sat himself down on his public “judgment seat” or throne. He said, “Just looky here at your King!” He was hoping the Jews would be satisfied with the beating.

But they hollered even louder: “Get Him outa here! Get Him outa here! Nail the Guy to the cross and kill Him!”

Pilate couldn’t believe it. “You want me to crucify your King?” he asked. But the Jews had dug in their heels and wouldn’t back down, so Pilate turned Jesus over to be crucified, and his officers led Jesus away. (Note: Keep in mind, all this happened about the 6th hour, or about 6 in the morning, Roman time. That’s the time all the Passover lambs were being slaughtered.)

So Jesus picked up His cross (heavy wooden crossbar) and carried it or dragged it out side to the “Skull Place” the Jews called “Golgotha,” near the city. (Note: Isaac had carried the wood for his own sacrifice, and sacrificing wood was always to be carried “outside the camp.”) That’s where the Roman soldiers stripped off all His clothes and nailed Him to His cross, shamefully naked. 2 other guys were being executed there, too, one on His right side and the other on His left, with Jesus in the center. Pilate had made a sign that said (in 3 languages) “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” When the Jews read that, the chief Jewish priests told Pilate, “Hey! Don’t say “King of the Jews.” Write, “I am King of the Jews.” By now, Pilate was pretty hacked with this bunch of religious blackmailers. He told them, “There it is in black and white. Read it and weep. I’m not gonna change it.”

The 4 soldiers who crucified Jesus took his 5 garments and divided 4 of them amongst themselves. (Roman law allowed them to keep their victims’ clothes.) But His tunic (underwear) was made in one solid piece without a seam. They said, “Let’s not tear it up. Let’s play a game of odd-man or shoot dice for it or something!” If they had torn it into 4 pieces it would be worthless, so they squatted down and shot a game of craps for it. That was so the Scripture that said, “They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots” would come true. (You’ll find that in the 22nd Psalm, verse 18. Go check it out.) That’s whey the soldiers did what they did, although they didn’t have a clue they were carrying out God’s plan.

There were some of Jesus’ family and folks standing watching all this happen. Jesus’s mother Mary was there, and her sister Salome, John and James’s mom, sons of Zebedee (Zeb,) and Mary the wife of Clopas. (She was the mother of James and Joses.) And, of course, Mary Magdalene, the gal Jesus had exorcised and run 7 devils out of. Well, in spite of all His pain and suffering, when Jesus saw His mom and the “disciple He loved,” (John here hides his identity again,) He told his mom, “Mom, looky there at your son!” Then He said to John, “Looky! That’s YOUR mom now.” (Note: He wasn’t sure He could trust Mary’s other kids, His half-brothers and sisters, to take care of her. And besides, they lived a ways out of town. But He knew He could trust John. So John adopted Jesus’ mom and took her to live with him for the rest of her life. (Jesus had already asked His Father to forgive His ignorant executioners. They were just doing their job.)

Jesus knew that His work was almost done. That’s when He said, “I’m thirsty!” (Saying #5.) The soldiers stuck a sponge into a bowl of the cheap, sour wine they drank, put it on a hyssop reed and stuck it to His mouth. (Strange that a hyssop reed was used. Or is it? That was used in God’s Official Rule Book for cleansing purposes.) This time He took it (He had refused it earlier, so He’d have a clear head to say what He needed to say.) Then Jesus hollered, “It’s all done, paid in full!” (Saying #6.) Then He bowed His head and turned loose of His spirit and turned it over to His Father in heaven. (Note: John doesn’t give us all of Jesus’ words He said from the cross. Luke tells us Jesus then said, “Father, I’m passing My spirit to You for safekeeping now.” (Final saying, #7.)

By now, the Jews were getting antsy about having dead bodies hanging on crosses, lapping over into the Sabbath, which started at 6 p.m. So they put at Pilate to have these 3 guys’ legs busted with an iron sledgehammer. So the soldiers came and whacked the 2 thieves’ legs and broke them. But these professional executioners knew a dead guy when they saw Him, so they didn’t break His legs. But just to be on the safe side, one of them

stuck a spear up into Jesus' side, and blood and water gushed out. (That was strange, to have blood and water come out of a dead body.) John wanted to be sure we all know that he was there and saw all this stuff with his own eyes, so we would believe in Jesus, too. More Scripture came true here. Like all lambs sacrificed, G.O.R.B. said "Don't you break any of the lambs' bones!" Check out Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12 and Psalm 34:20. The other was "They shall look at the Guy they pierced." You'll find that in Psalm 22:16-17, Zechariah 12:10, 13:6, and even in Revelation 1:7!)

So what happened to Jesus' body? Well, there was a Pharisee guy who was a "secret student" of Jesus. His name was Joseph and he was from the town of Arimathea. That's about 20 miles northeast of Jerusalem. He was a member of their Supreme Court, called the "Sanhedrin." He had disagreed with the Court about Jesus' execution. (Note: Joe was a good man, and a brave man. He risked his life and took a chance on being kicked out of the Jewish church and out of his place on the Court, just to do the right thing for this poor Guy Who had done nothing to deserve the worst possible treatment and punishment. Joe went to Pilate and asked if he could go take Jesus' body away, and Pilate actually told Joe he could do that. So he went to the Skull Place and took Jesus' body down off the cross. Then another Pharisee guy, (you might remember Nicodemus, or "Nic," from chapter 3? He was the guy who came sneaking around at night, to talk with Jesus on the sly.) He showed up at the cross, too, with a huge load of really pricy spices called myrrh and aloes. It was around 75 to 100 pounds of the stuff and would have cost a bunch. (Nico believed Jesus was the special Guy God had sent, called the Christ. He risked everything, and may have lost everything, to do this for Jesus.)

So they took Jesus' body and washed it clean of all the blood and spit and blood and trash and grunge. Then they wrapped it up in strips of linen cloth, with some spices stuck inside. (That's how the Jews buried folks.) There was a garden with a new tomb in it, close to the Skull Place. (Matthew said it was Joe's own personal tomb, carved out of solid rock.) That's where they laid Jesus' body, to get it into a safe place.

Wow, what a chapter! What else can we take home from all this?

- 1. Jesus' arrest and "kangaroo court" trial had a pre-determined outcome. When enough influential people get together, often justice is not in the cards for the accused.***
- 2. When He was arrested, the huge mob of soldiers and church officials didn't expect Jesus to admit who He was so bold, His words bowled them all over!***
- 3. The Jews blackmailed and scared Pilate into condemning Jesus. Pilate also was afraid he might be killing a "god," and Pilate's wife had a dream and told Pilate to stay clear of Jesus and have nothing to do with Him. He was afraid of Caesar, his boss, the Jewish leaders, and his own wife. We are taught not to fear what men can do to us, but fear what God can do to us. He can destroy our body AND soul!***
- 4. Jesus carried out His Father's wishes exactly as God ordered Him. He didn't miss a lick.***
- 5. Jesus had secret student admirers even in high places, like on the Sanhedrin, the Jewish "supreme court. Joe and Nic were there to take down His body, clean it up and give Him a decent burial. Let's always do the right thing no matter what!***

Chapter 20

Monday morning: here comes Mary Magdalene with Jesus' mom Mary, James' mom, and some other women. They got up while it was still dark, to walk over to the tomb where Joe and Nic had put Jesus' body and the Romans had sealed it up. (They had rolled a big round rock in a trough, to block the door, and the Jews had asked Pilate to put a Roman seal on it and post a guard there, just in case some of His students tried to get Him outa there, then claim He had come back to life.) When the women got there, they saw the stone was not blocking the door anymore! Mary Magdalene took off running to tell Simon Peter and another disciple (was it John? Most people think so.) When she got to them, she said, "They took the Lord out the tomb and we don't know where they laid Him!"

While she was gone, the other women peeked into the empty tomb. Suddenly 2 young "men" (angels) in dazzling white clothes appeared. They knew they were in the presence of God's angels, so they bowed down to the ground. One of the angels (the one on the right,) said, "Y'all are here looking for Jesus of Nazareth? How come you're looking among dead folks, for a live guy? He's up and at 'em again, just like He told y'all! Go tell His Students, especially Pete, to meet Him in Galilee, like He ordered them!"

The womenfolk were so shocked and overjoyed and excited they all took off running back to Jerusalem to carry the message. But on the way, BAM! Here stood Jesus Himself! He met them on the street! Wow! He told them not to be scared, then repeated the angels' orders and said, "Tell my brothers to meet me in Galilee!"

Meanwhile, Peter and the other guy took off running, but the other guy (John?) outran Peter and got to the tomb first. He stooped down and peeked in and saw the grave clothes lying there; but he didn't go in. (Note: If he had gone in, he knew he would be ritually nasty by G.O.R.B.) When Pete caught up, he went right on into the tomb and saw the grave clothes and the little napkin that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. It was not with the other clothes. It was folded neatly and placed by itself. When the other student went on in, he saw the way the cloths were lying. It looked like Jesus' body had just passed through the clothes and left them exactly as they were! So he knew Jesus had risen from the dead. At that time, they didn't know about the Scripture that said He must rise from the dead. (Note: Psalm 16:10 says that God wouldn't leave His "Anointed One in the grave to rot.) Then both the Students went home,

But Mary M. had come back, and was still there at the tomb, crying. Then she bent down and peeked into the tomb again, and WOW! There were the 2 angels! They were wearing white clothes, and they were sitting at each end of where Jesus's body had been. They saw Mary and said, "Hey, girl. What are you crying about?"

Mary answered, "'Cause they took my Lord away, and I don't know where!" Then she turned around and saw a man standing there behind her, but she didn't recognize Jesus. He asked her,

"Hey girl. Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

She thought maybe He was the gardener. She said, "Sir, if you've moved Him somewhere else, tell me where you put Him, so I can take Him away."

Then Jesus said, "Mary!"

She knew His voice! She turned and said to Him, "Hey! You're my Teacher!"

She may have thrown her arms around Him, because He told her, “Don’t hang on to Me, because I haven’t gone up to My Father yet. You need to go to My brothers (His students) and tell them, “I’m going up to My Father and Your Father; to My God and Your God!”

So Mary Magdalene came and told the Students she had seen the Lord, and told them what He had said to her. So did the women. (Note: They thought she was out of her head and not making good sense.)

That same day, Monday after the Passover, Cleopas and his buddy were walking over to Emmaus, a little town about 8 miles from Jerusalem. A 3rd guy joined up with them and said, “Hey! What’s happening? What are y’all talking about?”

They said, “You mean, you don’t know? About the guy from Galilee they killed on a cross? The word on the street is He arose from the dead!” But they still didn’t know He was Jesus the Lord. He began to tell them all about the predictions of the Messiah in the Old Testament. When they stopped for the night and were eating dinner, He broke bread and prayed over it, and BANG! They suddenly knew He was Jesus. But just as suddenly, He disappeared!

Sometime during that same day, Jesus had a private meeting with Pete. Paul talked about it in First Corinthians 15:5. Pete never mentioned it that we know of. He was probably so tickled and happy Jesus had forgiven him for saying he didn’t know Jesus, he couldn’t talk about it.)

That same night, they were all hiding out in the same room (all except Thomas.) The women were probably there, and Cleopas and his buddy from Emmaus. They had all been trying to convince the Students they had really seen the living Lord. Then a hush came over the crowd. Jesus was there! There was no knock on the door. There was no door opening. He was just there. What was He going to say? Was He going to chew them out for running like a bunch of scared rabbits? They had scattered like a covey of quail! But Jesus calmed them down. “Hey! Peace!. It really is ME! It’s okay, y’all. I’m not mad at you.” They thought they must be seeing a ghost! “No, I’m not a ghost. Feel the holes in my hands and the hole in my side! Ghosts don’t have meat and bones, like I do. Gimme something to eat.” They gave Him a piece of fish and he gobbled it down. “See?” Then he breathed on them, (like His Father and our Father breathed the breath of life into us,) and said, “You’re gonna receive the Holy Spirit! Whoever you forgive, I’ll forgive! I’m going back up to be with My Father and your Father. He’s My God and He’s your God!”

But old Thomas, the pessimist, wasn’t with them that night. When they told Tom they had seen the Lord, Tom said, “Well, I ain’t believin’ it. Not until I see Him for myself, and touch the holes in His hands, and stick my hand into the hole in His side!”

Well, Doubtin’ Tom didn’t have to wait long; just 8 days later, Tom was with the other 10, same deal, and Jesus appeared again. Furthermore, Jesus repeated the words Tom had said, about the holes in Him. Tom thought, “How’d He know what I said?” Jesus told Tom, “C’mere, Tom. Stick your fingers into my nail holes. Stick your hand into my side hole!” Tom did, and then said, “My Lord and My God!” Jesus said, “Now, you’re blessed, Tom, because you have seen Me. Even more blessed, are all the folks who haven’t actually seen Me, but they will believe in Me anyway!”

John wrote all these events down so we would hear it directly from an eye-witness. But he said, “We all saw Jesus do a lot more miracles. I’m writing all this down so

whoever reads it will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If y'all believe that, you're gonna have true life in His name!"

There are lots of lessons to be learned from this 20th chapter. Here are a few:

- 1. The womenfolk had no idea how they were going to get in to put more spices on Jesus, but they suited up and showed up anyway. It's all about believing without seeing or knowing!*
- 2. Matthew's Good News Book tells about what happened to the soldiers guarding Jesus' tomb. First there was an earthquake, then an angel rolled the huge rock away from the door and sat down on it. When these super-tough-guy soldiers saw the angel in his dazzling white clothes, it scared the heck out of them. All they could do was stand there and watch. Then they took off running and told their bosses, even though the penalty for deserting their guard post was execution!*
- 3. The students/disciples/apostles/brothers were like us. They thought from an earthly, physical viewpoint. They had heard all Jesus had told them, but a lot of it was hard to understand and didn't register at the time. So here they were in their hidey-hole, feeling like a bunch of dumbbell cowards who had been fooled by a Guy who promised them everything, then let Himself be arrested, tortured and executed! And they had not lifted a finger to help Him. They just ran off like scared rabbits. Don't make fun of them. You and I would have been the same way. Remember, Jesus had not sent them the Holy Spirit yet. Even today, folks who don't have the Holy Spirit to guide them, think only in "realistic" terms.*
- 4. Even when the women brought word to them, they thought the women were crazy. But when the real, living Jesus showed up, they began to catch on! The big message was, "GO TELL." That's the message for you and me today. We still gotta go tell everybody. When Jesus came up out that tomb it was the most important event in all history. It has already changed far more lives than any other single event, and it continues to change the lives of everybody. We gotta tell everybody we run into, all day every day, what a change comes to us when we are directed by the Holy Spirit instead of by our own ideas and self-will.*

Chapter 21

It was a while later on that Jesus appeared again to 7 of His students, (whom He now calls “friends” and “brothers.”) They went back to Galilee, to the big lake there where they used to make their living fishing from boats. Peter was kind of the “straw-boss” leader of these guys. Thomas was with him, and Nathaniel, and James and John. (There were 2 more with them but we don’t know their names.) Peter said, “I’m goin’ fishin’, y’all.” He had a family to feed and needed to make a living, and maybe they were all hungry, too. So they said, “We’re goin’ with you!” So all 7 climbed into the boat and went fishin’ that night. But they had no luck. They kept hauling in empty nets. Next morning, there was Jesus, standing on the shore. “Hey, boys!!” Jesus hollered out to them. “Y’all got anything to eat?”

“Naw, we didn’t have any luck fishin’,” they hollered back.

“Y’all throw your nets in the water on the right side of your boat, and you’ll catch some fish!” Jesus replied. So they threw their nets into the water on the right side of the boat, and BANG! All of a sudden the nets were so full of big fish, they couldn’t haul them into the boat!

The “student Jesus loved” (probably John, you know,) said to his buddies, “Hey, y’all! That’s the Lord!!” Old gung-ho Peter put his coat on and bailed out of the boat and took to swimming ashore, about 100 yards. The other 6 rowed their boat ashore dragging the nets full of big fish. Soon as they got to shore, they saw that Jesus had built a fire and had cooked some fish and bread on the coals. Jesus said, “Fetch Me some of the fish y’all just caught!”

Peter went and dragged the net full of 153 big fish up onto the land. (Note: Peter must have been a strong guy to drag a net full of big fish. If they were 2 pounders they would have weighed over 300 pounds. And yet, the net didn’t break. I think the net must have been so full it was a miracle it didn’t break. After Jesus cooked a bunch of them, He said, “Hey, y’all! Breakfast is served! Come and get it!” So Jesus served up the fish and bread to them all. By now, none of them had asked Him who He was, because they really already knew He was Jesus. That was the 3rd time Jesus showed Himself to the Students after He came up out the tomb.

So after they all finished eating breakfast, Jesus asked Pete a question. “Hey, Simon, Jonah’s boy,” (squishy, wishy washy one; Pete’s dad’s name was Jonah; the Jonah of the Old Testament was disobedient, contrary and wishy-washy in serving the Lord. He ended up being gulped down by a great fish!) “Do you love Me more than these (fish, and the business of fishing)?”

“Why, of course I do, Lord. You know that!” Pete answered.

Jesus told Him, “Then you gotta feed my lambs.” (Note: lambs= new believers.)

Pretty soon Jesus asked Pete again, same question. (Note: Jesus was testing Pete to see if he was really ready to give up everything that was familiar to him and live the rest of his life serving Jesus and His way of life.) “Looky here, Simon, Jonah’s boy; do you love Me?”

“Yes, Lord. You know I’m fond of You!” (Note: Pete used a different word for “love” than Jesus had, both times.)

Jesus said, “Then you gotta tend my sheep!” (His sheep=members of His church to come.)

In a little while, Jesus asked Peter a third time. (Note: some say Jesus asked Pete 3 times to match the 3 times Pete had said he didn't even know Jesus!) "Hey, Simon, Jonah's boy. Are you even My friend?"

This bugged Pete so badly he replied, "Lord, You know everything! (You even know what's in my heart!) "So, You know that I love You!"

"Then you gotta feed My sheep!"

(Note: That's how Jesus made Peter examine his own motives and intentions, to see if Pete was really ready to lead the other Students, even until death! It also let the other 6 that were there, know that He had forgiven Peter and He still expected Peter to be their leader.)

Then Jesus dropped the bomb on Peter. "Here's a heavy truth for you, Peter. When you were a kid, you got dressed and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you get to be a geezer, you're gonna stretch out your hands, and other folks are gonna dress you and tie you up and take you where you don't wanta go!" (That's how Jesus told Pete how he was going to die, and how his dying would make God even more important.) Then Jesus said, "FOLLOW ME."

But Peter whirled around and saw his buddy, the "student Jesus loved," tagging along behind them. This was the same guy who leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper, and asked Him if John was the one who would betray Him. When Pete saw John, he asked Jesus, "But, Lord, what about that guy?"

Jesus answered, "If I want him to live and stick around until I come back, what's it to ya? YOU follow ME!"

That remark started a rumor among the Students that John wasn't going to die. But Jesus didn't say John wouldn't die, did He?

(So with this story, John wrapped up his "Good News Book.")

"I'm the student of Jesus who saw all these things happen, and here I am telling y'all and I wrote all this down for y'all. And that's not nearly all Jesus did. If all His doings and sayings were written down, I doubt if the whole wide world would hold all the books that would be written. AMEN!"

So what are the big time ideas we can take with us from this chapter and from the whole "Good News Book" of John, to use every day in our lives?

- 1. In this scene on the beach, Jesus took Pete through steps that would change him from Simon the Wishy-Washy who may have been feeling worthless, to Peter the Rock, leader of the Students as they set about spreading the Good News to the whole world.***
- 2. Jesus doesn't want quick answers. He wants us to dig deep in our hearts and dig out how we REALLY feel about Christ and about giving of our time and stuff to help others.***
- 3. Jesus warned Pete (and us) about comparing ourselves with others. We can only compare our outsides. Only God knows what's on the inside of us.***
- 4. Jesus warned Pete about asking God about things He doesn't tell us. He told Pete to "Mind your own business! You've got enough to do, following Me and sticking close in the way you live for Me."***
- 5. According to church history, Pete was crucified upside down, by his own request. He said he wasn't worthy to be on the cross right-side-up, like the Lord was.***

6. John lived to be a ripe old age, longer than any of the others, until near the year 100 AD. With the help of the Holy Spirit, they and all the Students served the Lord.

7. When John wrote his “Good News Book,” Matthew, Mark and Luke had already written theirs. But John thought something was lacking. He wanted us to know who Jesus really was, and that if we believe He is the Son of God, we can live forever”

The Word On The Street John 21:1-19; Additional fun things to know and tell

1. It looks like Jesus was having His “ups and downs” during the 40 days after He came back to life and before He took that final elevator ride, which we call his “ascension.” There are some good indications of this in the Good News Books. Like when He told the thief next to Him on the cross, “I’ll tell you this for sure. You’re gonna be with me today in paradise.” Also, He told Mary M. at the tomb that morning, “Don’t touch Me yet, Mary. I haven’t gone up to my Father’s yet.”
2. Another good point: John said in chapter 21 Jesus had a “charcoal fire” going, cooking bread and fish on the bank of the lake. That’s only the 2nd time a “charcoal fire” is mentioned in the New Testament. The first time was when Pete was warming himself in Caiaphas the priest’s courtyard at a “charcoal fire.” Maybe Jesus wanted the smell of burning charcoal to remind Pete and possibly other of his students of that night when Pete lied to everybody 3 times to get the heat off himself. This is the guy who had told Jesus, “Hey, Boss! Even if everybody else cuts out, I’m gonna still be hangin’ with You!”
3. One more thing; Mary M. didn’t know who Jesus was at first. Neither did the guys He walked with on the road to Emmaus. Something was different about Him. Now, here on the bank of the lake, John says they weren’t sure it was really Jesus, but nobody had the guts to say, “Hey! Is it really You, Jesus?” But they figured it was Him because of the fish He helped them catch.
4. Jesus helped the fisherman catch 153 fishes, even though they had fished all night and come up without one fish. Then after they all ate breakfast of fish and bread, Jesus said, “Hey, Simon-Bar-John.” (That meant Simon, John’s son.) “Do you love me?” (Actually He used the Greek word “agape,” which made His question like this: “Are you totally devoted to Me?”) Pete answered, “Well, yea, Boss. You know I love You like a brother!” Jesus said, “Okay then. Feed my lambs.” Pretty soon Jesus asked Pete again; “Hey, Simon; are you agape, totally sold out for Me?” Pete answered, “Well, sure, Boss!” What Jesus was doing was completely re-booting Pete’s life and re-commissioning him! “Do you brotherly love me more than these (other guys, more than they love Me, or more than you love fishing)?”
5. In effect, Jesus was saying, “Then I want you to quit fishing and be a shepherd for Me. I know your love isn’t perfect. But I’m gonna use you anyway – bring what you got.” Pete had been fishing all night and hadn’t caught a single fish, until He took Jesus’s advice as to how to fish. We feed sheep and lambs every day.

6. I don't want to be a dead sea or a stagnant pond, with good stuff running in but nothing going out. That doesn't cut it. "To keep it, I gotta give it away." I need to feed Melody, Cameron my grand-lamb, and be on the alert for anyone else who needs feeding. Who is pouring into me, and who am I pouring into? Where is spirituality on my priority list? I need to feed others.
7. There's no record of Pete ever going fishing again.



“I pray you will read with a renewed interest, the greatest and most important book ever written.”

—Bob Boyd bgboyd6@sbcglobal.net