

IS THERE MORE?

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE NON-RELIGIOUS

JOHN



JOHN

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE NON-RELIGIOUS: “WHO IS JESUS?”

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JESUS: MAN, MYTH, OR MORE?

Introduction

Some people say Jesus was a good man, an enlightened person, someone who said profound things and inspired people to love one another. But who was he really? And how can we even know?

There are four books in the Bible that claim to be accounts of Jesus' life. One of those is the book of John, believed to be written by one of Jesus' close friends. In it, John refers to himself as "the disciple Jesus loved."

In John's writing, he is focused on one clear purpose - to show who Jesus really is. He says at the end of the book: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name." (John 20:31)

This book is full of stories about personal encounters people had with Jesus. Through each encounter, we discover more about Jesus' character and the way he sees people and the world around us. Reading John, we can get a close-up look at who Jesus really is.

Our hope is that as we go through this book together, you can make up your own mind about who Jesus is - and maybe even experience a personal encounter with this man who John believed was God himself being revealed to a dark and broken world.

Questions

1. Many people have said things about Jesus throughout history. What do you think of each of these quotes?

“A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act”. (Mahatma Gandhi)

“Even those who have renounced Christianity and attack it, in their inmost being still follow the Christian ideal, for hitherto neither their subtlety nor the ardor of their hearts has been able to create a higher ideal of man and of virtue than the ideal given by Christ of old”. (Fyodor Dostoyevsky)

“As a child, I received instruction both in the Bible and in the Talmud. I am a Jew, but I am enthralled by the luminous figure of the Nazarene. ...No one can read the Gospels without feeling the actual presence of Jesus. His personality pulsates in every word. No myth is filled with such life”. (Albert Einstein)

“Christ’s system of morals and religion as He left them to us is the best the world has seen or is likely to see”. (Benjamin Franklin)

Read John 1:1-14

2. What stands out to you about John’s description of Jesus? In your own words, what are some of the things he says about Jesus?



3. What is John saying about the effects of Jesus coming into the world?
4. What do you think John means when he refers to Jesus in each of these different ways: “the Word,” “the true light,” and “the one and only Son”?
5. In your view, who is Jesus for John?
6. Why would John say that the world did not recognize or receive Jesus?
7. What do you think it means to become “children of God”?

Joan Osborne’s famous song “One of Us” reflects on what might be the biggest question this Bible passage raises.

“What if God was one of us?
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Tryin’ to make his way home?”

If God had a face, what would it look like?
And would you want to see
If seeing meant that you would have to believe
In things like heaven and in Jesus and the saints
And all the prophets?”

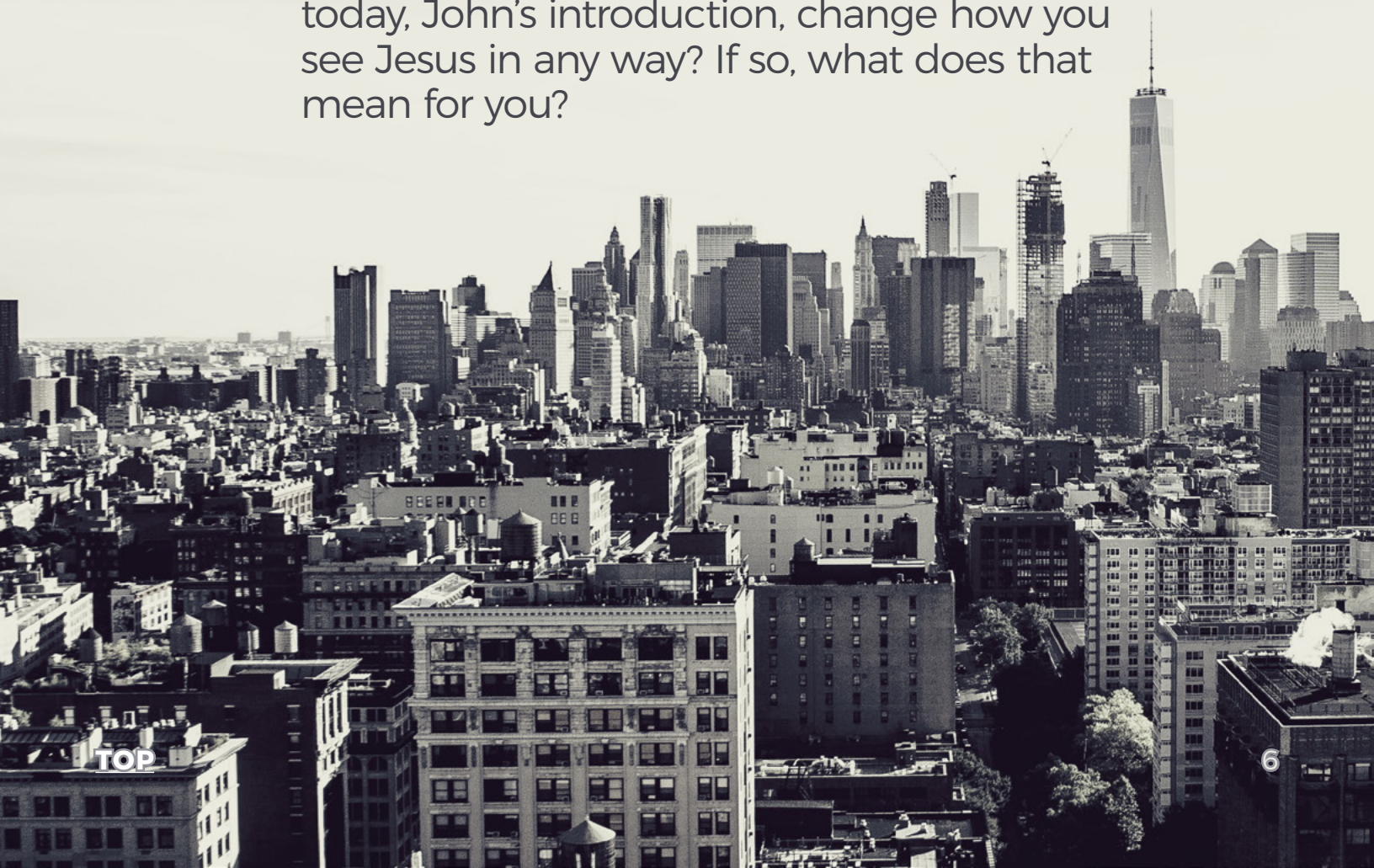


8. If you were to consider it true that God became human and came to live in this world with us, how would that make you feel, and what would it change for you?

Let's have a look at one last quote about Jesus.

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse”. (C.S. Lewis)

9. Do you agree with this quote? You may not yet be ready to decide who you think Jesus is - after all, we've only just started reading this book! But does the passage we read today, John's introduction, change how you see Jesus in any way? If so, what does that mean for you?



Conclusion

For John, Jesus was no mere human. This is probably the biggest and most significant claim in the Bible: God became one of us and lived in this broken world. The infinite meets the finite. God breaks into human history.

The significance of this is mind-blowing! For John, Jesus is the reason for all things. He is light and life! We are in darkness; we can't see things as they are. We are confused, lost, and in need. And Jesus is the light in the darkness.

Life has always been, and is even more so now, a mystery to us. What are we here for? What really matters? John sees answers to those questions in Jesus. He is the reason, the truth. Jesus is not simply pointing to God and speaking words about life - he is life. Life is in him because he is God. He is not simply shining light on us. He is light because he is God.

The effect of this is equally incredible. As the eternal comes in contact with us - fallen, imperfect, and broken humankind - we can become like him - eternal. We can know the truth about God, in our own language, in our own flesh.

No one has seen God, and no one could know exactly what he is like, until now. Now we can see him in Jesus. That is John's message.



JESUS, WINE, AND HOPE

Introduction

As we saw last time, John's primary purpose in writing this book was to show who Jesus really is.

He tells stories of personal encounters Jesus had with very different people. He also describes some of the miracles Jesus performed, but he does it in a specific way to reveal something about Jesus' character and purpose.

John registers Jesus' first miracle - and it isn't what you'd expect. He turns water into wine at a wedding party! Jesus seems to really be into parties. John's stories often happen at parties, festivals, and large gatherings. Community was important to Jesus, and he spent most of his time surrounded by friends, family, and a very diverse crowd of people.

Read John 2:1-11



Questions

1. What do you think of this story? What are your impressions?
2. Why is Jesus at this wedding? What kind of atmosphere do you imagine in a first-century Middle Eastern wedding?
3. Why do you think Jesus answers his mother like that? What do you think it meant for Mary to ask Jesus to perform a miracle? What could that lead to?
4. Why do you think Mary assumes Jesus would do something about the wine problem, even after he says his time had not come?



5. That water was changed into about 600 liters of wine! Why, in your opinion, does Jesus do this miracle? What does it show about Jesus' character or personality?
6. Is it significant that he used jars that were usually part of a ceremony to make people physically and spiritually clean?
7. What do you think John means by saying that the disciples "believed in him"? What does it mean to believe in Jesus?
8. In the Bible, weddings and wine are symbols of joy, celebration, restoration, and God's provision. They are a source of comfort and hope in times of trouble and brokenness. What things or people are a source of hope or comfort for you?



Conclusion

Maybe recognizing wine as a symbol of provision and restoration can help us see a bigger purpose to an otherwise unusual miracle for Jesus to start off with.

It was the bridegroom's job to provide the wine, but the bridegroom of this wedding didn't have enough. That's the reality of this world and our own lives: we often feel like we don't have enough - like we're missing something. We don't have within ourselves what it takes to be truly satisfied.

But here is a bridegroom who never fails. 600 liters is way more wine than a wedding that size would have needed. It's like Jesus wants to introduce himself in a way that shows that he can provide abundantly and satisfy beyond our greatest needs.

If Jesus can change water to wine, he can change anything. Jesus cares about wine, about a party, about marriage, even the smallest details of our lives, and his heart is to care and to satisfy.

Jesus satisfies our souls. Not just our immediate needs - but deep down, that deepest need, that void we need to fill, permanently, for all time.



JESUS VS. RELIGION

Introduction

One thing that stops many of us from reading the Bible or finding out more about God or Jesus is the idea that this is the kind of thing you do if you're "religious." And the reality is that most of us don't identify as "religious" and wouldn't want to fit into that category. We think of religion as a tradition from the past that doesn't relate much to our lives today.

Yet if God exists, he doesn't fit in that box called "religion" and isn't locked up in old religious buildings. In fact, when we take the time to read the biblical accounts of Jesus, we find that he was often protesting and opposing religious attitudes.

The "religion" Jesus opposed was a human-made system, often used to control people and obtain power. Even in its most innocent form, among the faithful just trying to do the right thing, religion is our human nature trying to tame God into something we can explain and control. But God can't be tamed.

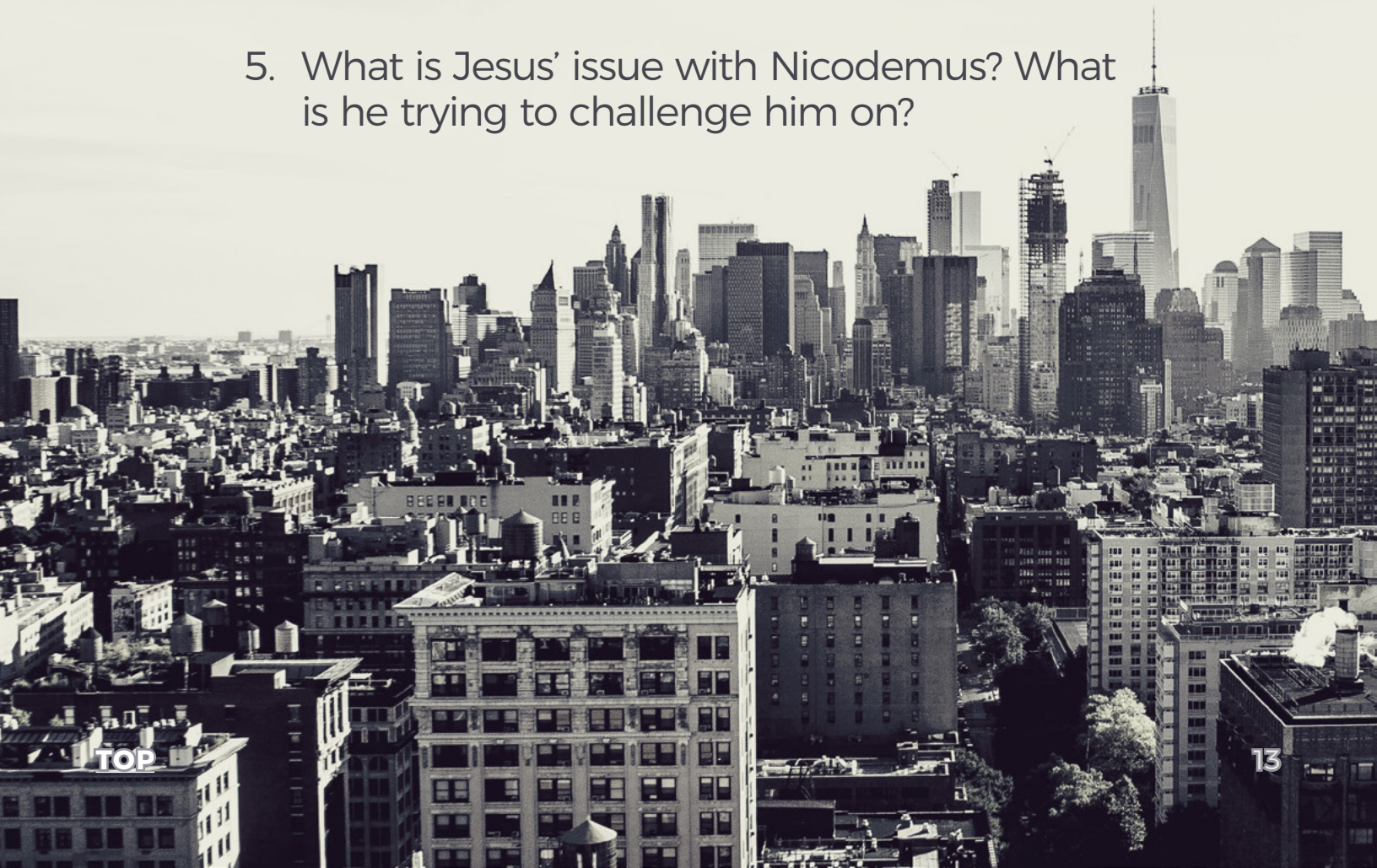
John tells us a story of a religious man who went to meet Jesus at nighttime, maybe wanting to avoid being seen with such a questionable character.

Read John 3:1-16



Questions

1. How does this man Nicodemus come across to you? What is he like?
2. What catches your attention in his conversation with Jesus? How do you perceive the tone of it?
3. Do you think Nicodemus is genuinely interested in Jesus' teaching? What are his intentions?
4. What does Jesus mean by being "born again"?
5. What is Jesus' issue with Nicodemus? What is he trying to challenge him on?



6. As a religious leader, Nicodemus is used to knowing things and having things under control, but how does Jesus describe the Spirit of God and those born of the Spirit?
7. Jesus seems to oppose the religious system Nicodemus is part of, so how is Jesus different from what might often come to mind when we think of a religious system or tradition? (verse 13)
8. Nicodemus rightly points out that “being born again” is humanly impossible. It is something God has to do. So how can we be born again?
9. Would you consider yourself among those described in verse 16? Are you born again? If not, is that something you would feel ready for now?



Conclusion

It seems that following Jesus and being religious are two different things. Religions of many different kinds are usually about trying to achieve something - to follow certain rules and habits to be acceptable. But Jesus explains to Nicodemus that no one can be part of God's kingdom through their own human efforts. We have to be born again.

Jesus isn't only speaking figuratively - "be born again" like "start again, be as a child." But he is literally pointing to the difference between himself having come from God and Nicodemus trying to be a good, religious person through his human efforts. Only those who come from above, like Jesus, can enter the kingdom. If so, then what hope do any of us have? It is humanly impossible to enter the kingdom of God.

What can we do?

Jesus makes a way for us. He opens the path for all of us to become sons of God. We are adopted by the Father, becoming ones who are "born from above." Just like we read in the first chapter,

John 1:12

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God".

Through Jesus, we become of another world and take on another nature. We are born from above and born into his family.

Put very simply, the difference between being religious and following Jesus is whether we trust in our ability to be good or acceptable or we trust in Jesus. Believing that he is who he says he is and can change us through his power.

JESUS, RACISM, AND FEMINISM

Introduction

So far, we've seen stories of people coming to Jesus and of things happening to him, but today we see Jesus on a mission, going to people. And his choice of where he goes first is very interesting.

In this story, Jesus breaks cultural boundaries, including racism and sexism, to bring truth and hope to a rejected place and a rejected people.

Read John 4:4-30

Questions

1. What do you see in this story? What are some interesting points for you?
2. What do verses 9 and 27 tell us about the culture between Jews and Samaritans and between men and women?
3. Why do you think Jesus talks to the Samaritan woman?

4. What do you think Jesus means when he says he is living water?
5. Why do you think Jesus suddenly gets personal, asking the woman about her husband and then miraculously telling her details about her life?
6. The woman continues to point out the racial barrier between Jews and Samaritans. What do you think of Jesus' response to this in verses 23 and 24?
7. How do you interpret Jesus' statement in verse 26?
8. Do you see similar cultural barriers between people now? Do you ever feel like you are treated with prejudice?
9. Has this story changed or added anything to your perspective of Jesus?



Conclusion

This story is not just about Jesus breaking cultural barriers and opposing racism to connect with the Samaritan woman and her town; it is about a message that transcends religious, ethnic, and cultural divisions. The Samaritans are waiting for hope and truth just like the Jewish people. They are waiting for a Messiah - one who would show them the way. Jesus introduces himself as this Messiah, both for Jews and for Samaritans, and ultimately for all cultures and people.

Jesus represents something our human culture cannot offer. The Samaritan woman has a well that her ancestors passed on, providing a sense of identity and tradition. But Jesus shows how insufficient this is to truly satisfy our souls. We need more than our culture and traditions can offer. We need more than any religion or philosophy can offer. Jesus describes himself as water that truly and eternally satisfies.

The woman understands Jesus is talking about something spiritual - about faith, purpose, and identity, and about a God who looks to our hearts rather than our physical and social differences.

So many today need to hear exactly this. We need truth that transcends our relativistic view of life and reminds us that there is more to it than the things we see. We need something that speaks to our hearts and can change us inside, healing our brokenness and loneliness.

This is what Jesus offers to the Samaritan woman. And it is only possible because of who Jesus says he is - the Messiah, the Son of God. If this is not true, then we are all just following our own ideas, religions, and philosophies. If what Jesus says is true, then it is greater than the Jewish and Samaritan divide, greater than all cultures, and greater than the problems of our hearts. It is the answer we're looking for. It can unite us and give us life.

JESUS, DEPRESSION, AND LONELINESS

Introduction

In the passage we'll read today, Jesus goes to a festival. Did you notice that Jesus is always going to festivals and parties? John tells this story around these visits to Jerusalem - Jesus goes up to Jerusalem and comes back to Galilee, and the stories happen along the way.

Sometimes in the middle of a party, in the busiest places full of people, we still feel loneliness. Loneliness is a pandemic today. Most people experience this. Not just the experience of being alone, or of not finding the ideal romantic partner, but a sense that we no longer know how to really connect with each other.

Read John 5:1-15

Questions

1. Can you imagine this picture of sick people by a pool and this paralytic man? What do you think that was like? What was life like for this guy?
2. Do you understand how this pool works? Do you think people were really healed by its waters?



3. How do you see Jesus' actions in this story?
How did he approach this situation?

4. Why do you think Jesus asks the man if he wants to be made well? Isn't it obvious that he does?

5. How does the man respond to Jesus' question and then to being healed?

6. The paralytic man seems to have not paid much attention to Jesus, but Jesus comes back and speaks to him again. Why?
What is Jesus getting at with his second encounter with the now healed man?



7. Why is Jesus talking about sin here? What is sin?

8. When Jesus asks the man if he wants to be healed, rather than answering “yes,” he explains more about his problem. He must have felt very lonely and down in life, finding it hard to believe that change might be possible. Have you experienced anything like this or seen this in friends and family? What do you think is needed when we experience loneliness and depression?

9. Do you think forgiveness of sins can have any effect on sickness, loneliness, or depression?



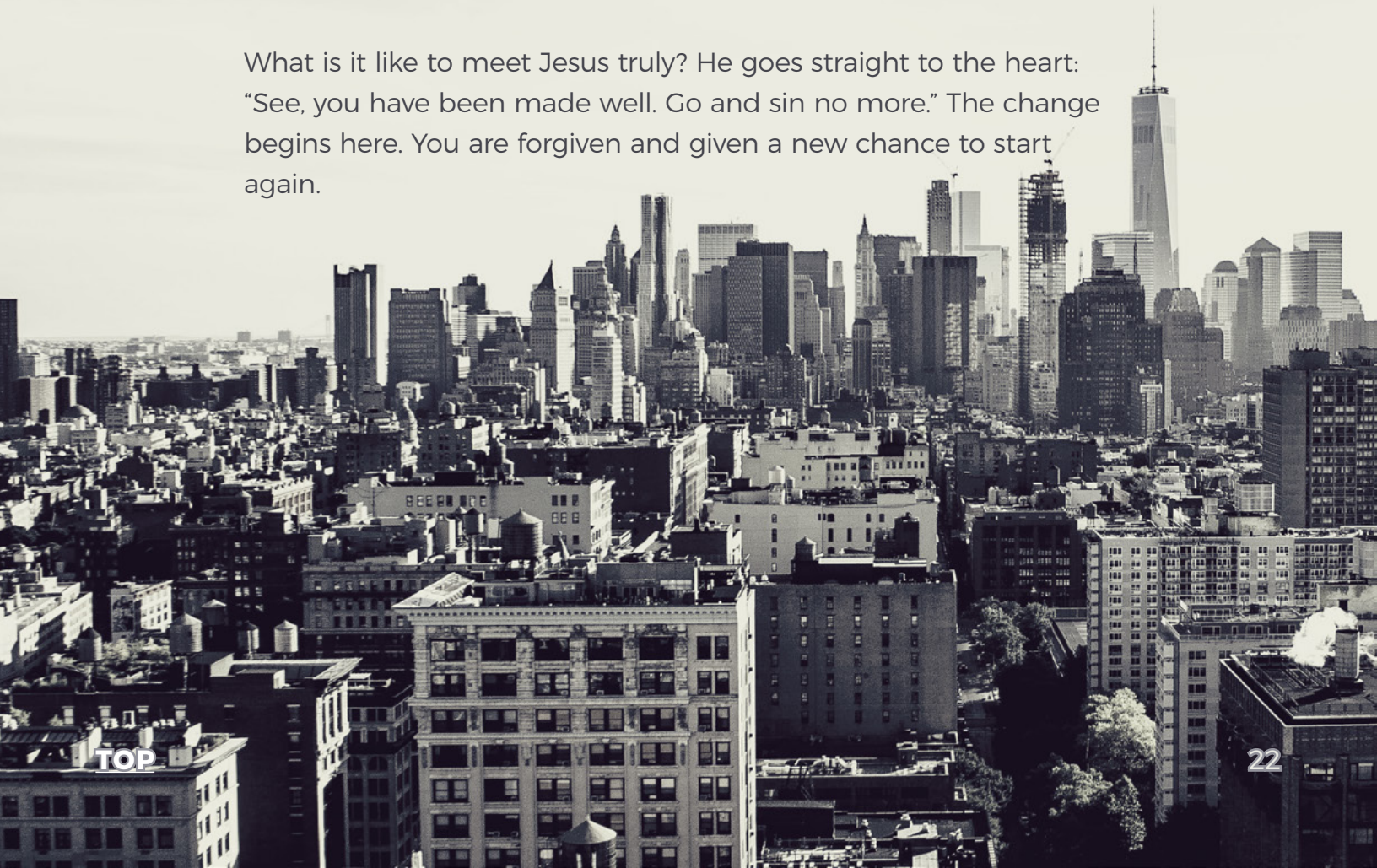
Conclusion

Our generation is like the paralytic man. We lie waiting, in a false hope that by human strength we might make it into the “pool of change” - this mystical thing we can’t explain. We have no real answers and no reason to live. We just follow the rules and do what everyone else does. The man in the story has lost hope and just lays there. That is the reality of many today, who believe there are no answers and no truth. So we try to enjoy life here and now, believing there is no purpose beyond that.

But Jesus sees the man. Through the crowd and the business of a festival, Jesus sees him and goes to him. He asks this key question: “Do you want to be made well?”. Jesus’ first concern is in awakening the man to something more - purpose and hope. “Do you want something to change?”

Even after healing the man, Jesus doesn’t leave it at that. He goes back to reveal what he truly wants to do - heal our hearts by forgiving our sins.

What is it like to meet Jesus truly? He goes straight to the heart: “See, you have been made well. Go and sin no more.” The change begins here. You are forgiven and given a new chance to start again.



JESUS, EQUALITY, AND JUSTICE

Introduction

In this chapter, we see Jesus bringing light into a dark world. We live in a dark world, a fallen world. This isn't how things are supposed to be. And it's not just out there, on the news. The pain, the suffering - it's inside of each of us, in our hearts. We walk in darkness until we meet this light.

We've been asking the question, "Who is Jesus?". In this chapter, we hear him saying,

I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. (John 8:12)

Many today are fighting for a better world with peace, love, equality, and justice. But how can we achieve that? What is equality and justice and where does it come from?

Read John 8:1-12

Questions

1. How do you see the world we live in? Do you experience it as a dark place in need of light?
2. Does this story raise questions for you?



3. Put yourself in the place of the woman. How is she feeling through this ordeal?

4. Put yourself in the place of the religious leaders. How do you think they feel through this story, especially at the end?

5. This law about stoning people to death for adultery probably sounds shocking to most of us. But what is justice for you? Should there be laws governing right and wrong, which also carry consequences? Is there justice without laws and consequences?



6. What do you understand from Jesus' answer in verse 7? We see here the same reality we see throughout history - a power structure full of inequality. It takes two to commit adultery, but only the woman is brought forward. The religious leaders here abuse their power and see themselves as morally superior. How does Jesus' response challenge this power game and break inequality?

7. Which figure in the story do you most identify with? Are you more like the religious leaders at the beginning (no sin, no problem), the woman at the beginning (full of shame), or the woman as we see her at the end (forgiven)?

8. If Jesus said this to you (verses 10 and 11), how would you feel? Have you ever experienced Jesus like this?



Conclusion

We want equality and justice, but we don't know how to get it.

Justice means all wrongs are made right, and those who oppress and harm are condemned and pay the consequences. But what if what Jesus says here is true - that we all live in darkness and need the light? What if we are all the oppressors who need to be condemned? Justice would then mean we should all pay the consequences.

Humanism tells us we're OK, we're good deep down inside, and that we can do whatever we want and be whoever we want. But then it tells us we are an accident and have no purpose. We're left feeling inadequate, unable to meet expectations, and empty inside.

Jesus tells us we're not OK - we are sinners. But then he welcomes us as the sinners we are, forgiving us and setting us free, once and for all.

At the feet of Jesus, the woman in this story finds a solution to the requirements of justice laid against her: forgiveness. At the feet of Jesus, the oppressors and the oppressed, all people, are made equal. All are sinners and in need of this forgiveness.

Following Jesus means knowing we are sinners, but also knowing that in him, we are forgiven. It means choosing to walk in the light by his strength. It is being honest with ourselves and trusting him. It is a confident perspective of freedom and grace.



JESUS, IDENTITY, AND PURPOSE

Introduction

These are such uncertain times! People are anxious about many things - jobs, money, the future, the environment, and politics. There's also the "fear of missing out," as we're influenced to constantly measure our own lives up against the lives of others we follow on social media. We find ourselves questioning, "Am I good enough? Is my life sufficiently meaningful?"

We're told no one knows the answers to the big questions in life - Who am I? Why am I here? Is my life just an accident?

We don't know who we are: our identity, where we come from, our origin, or where we're going, our purpose.

Maybe the reason for this is that these things are spiritual. Divine. Bigger than ourselves. These things come from God - but we think God is far away. In a big empty church. An old tradition that is no longer relevant to our lives.

But I want to look at a story that shows us a completely different picture of God. He walked this world with us. He knows our pain and our suffering. He walked the dirty streets, and he sat in the broken homes amidst the arguing, the fighting, the loneliness, and the sickness. He put on the clothes of a slave, knelt down, and washed our feet, covering himself with our dirt. That is who God is. And we can know him with certainty.

Read John 13:1-14

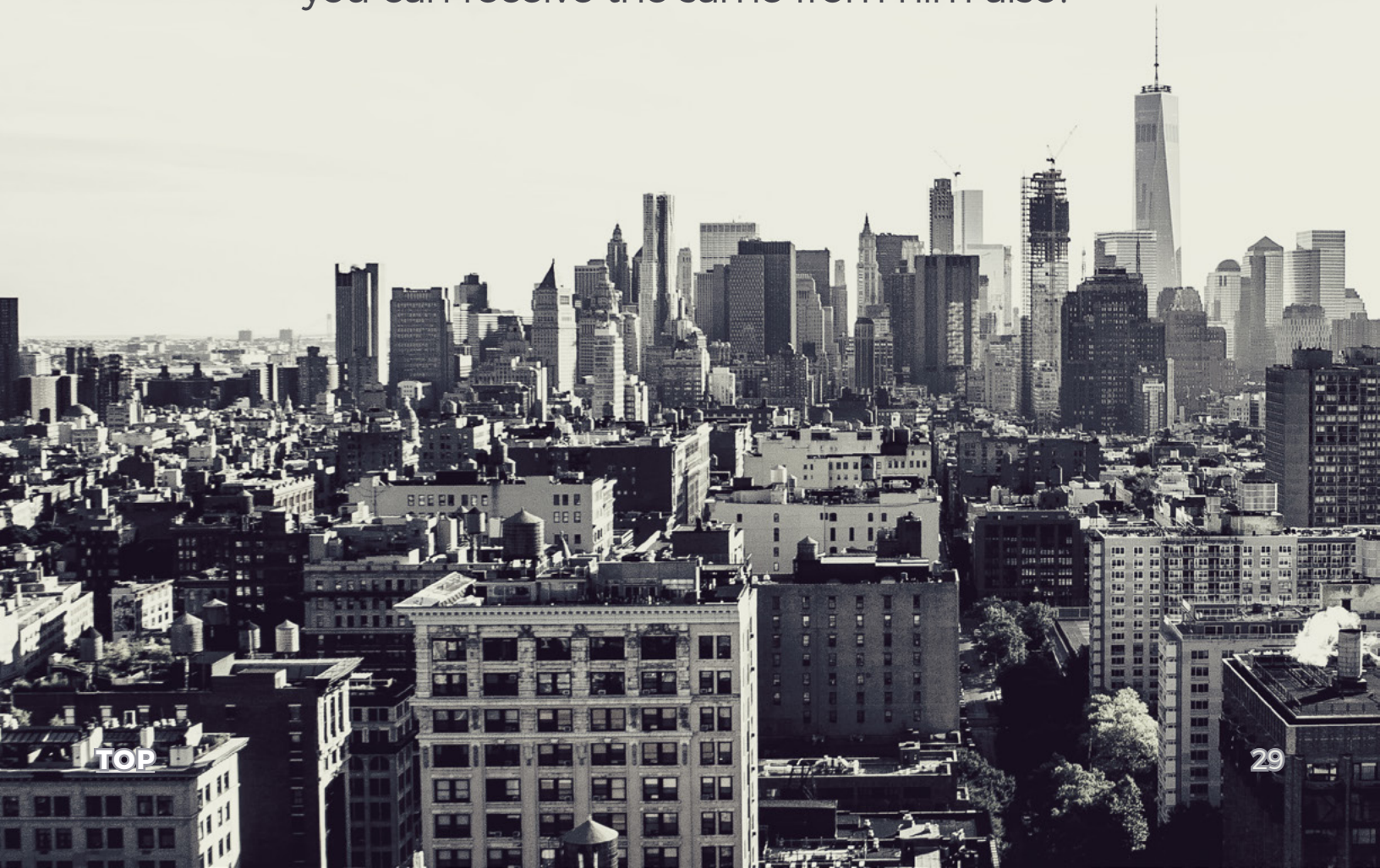


Questions

1. What is this story about for you?
2. What does John say about Jesus in the introduction to this story?
3. Why is it important that Jesus knew who he was, where he had come from, and where he was going?
4. What is Jesus doing in this situation? What do you think motivates him?



5. How do you think Jesus' act of washing his friends' feet comes across to those watching? What impact does it have?
6. Why does Peter object, and how does Jesus respond?
7. Earlier, we discussed how Jesus knew his identity and purpose. How do you feel about your own identity and purpose? Is this something you feel secure and resolved about, and if not, why?
8. Jesus gives the disciples an identity and a purpose, a mission to fulfill. Do you feel like you can receive the same from him also?



Conclusion

Jesus knew who he was - that he came from God the Father and would return to the Father. And because Jesus knew his identity, origin, and purpose, he could humble himself, serve, and ultimately give his life for us.

When we know God, we find all love and all power, all that is good. But we also discover our own identity, origin, and purpose. This is what people are looking for today. We have forgotten it because we have forgotten God. When we know him we are complete.

Imagine Jesus standing with an old towel wrapped around his waist, covered in the dirt from his disciples' feet as if he had been trampled like a doormat. He was wearing their dirt. To remove the dirt from their feet, he had to wipe it onto his own clothing.

Unless Jesus washes us clean, we have no part in him. We are sinners, and we have gone far from God. All of us. Our feet are dirty. Unless he makes us clean, we cannot be with him. God is pure, and his nature cannot embrace sin. How can we be made clean? Forgiveness. But we must realize that forgiveness is expensive. It costs God to forgive us, to clean us. It cost Jesus everything. Knowing who he was, knowing his power, he left it all behind and became a slave, washing our feet and then standing clothed in a filthy towel.

Jesus paid the price for my freedom and for your freedom. He walked these dirty streets. He sat in the broken homes, the loneliness, the sickness. He knelt and washed our feet, covering himself with our dirt.

And this in many ways symbolizes what he is about to do next - the main mission he came to earth to fulfill...



JESUS: MARTYR, LIAR, OR LUNATIC

Introduction

If you've been with us throughout this series, we've studied up to chapter 13 of John together. Amazingly, John spends the rest of the book - the whole second half - on the Easter weekend. Chapters 13-17 are all about his conversation with the disciples at their last meal together. In chapter 18 he is arrested, in 19 he is crucified, and in John 20, we read the beautiful account of Jesus' resurrection.

If you think about it, that's a bit weird. In most biographies of important people, the climax is usually some great achievement or discovery, while the person's death is usually a small part - almost a side note at the end. But for John, this is the climax of the story of Jesus.

Christians consider Jesus' death and resurrection the most important and significant moment of his story. We often think of the cross as a symbol in a church or a piece of jewelry we might wear around our necks. But, as we will read, Jesus died a horrible death on the cross - and it changed everything.

In the very first study of this series, we looked at a quote by author C.S. Lewis:

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg - or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse". (C.S. Lewis)

As we read the story of Jesus' crucifixion, we'll see that the whole case the religious leaders had against him was based on his claims about his identity: who he said he was. Lewis suggests there are only three possible conclusions about Jesus' claims: he was either a lunatic, a liar, or he was telling the truth. Now we can read the story and decide for ourselves which of these we believe to be true.

We'll pick up the account just after Jesus is arrested. After that moment, when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, he had dinner with them and then went out to pray in the garden. As he prayed late at night, the religious leaders sent guards to arrest him, and now we read what happened during this "trial" in the middle of the night.

Read John 18:28-19:16



Questions

1. What are your impressions of this story of Jesus facing religious and political authorities and being sentenced to death?
2. What are some of the things Jesus says, or things said about him, that catch your attention?
3. What reason do the religious leaders give for wanting to sentence Jesus to death?
4. Why does the Roman political authority sentence Jesus to death?
5. What does this trial show about these religious and political leaders?
6. John always seems to focus on an individual encounter with Jesus. In this case, we hear details of a conversation between Jesus and a Roman governor called Pilate. What are your impressions of this conversation?

7. Pilate makes a comment that would fit well with the way of thinking in secular society today: “What is truth?” This seems to be at the center of Jesus’ trial - truth. What is Jesus’ claim about truth?

8. It seems the same crowd that would have followed Jesus around, watching him preach and heal people, now shout out “crucify him”. In our time, we see this quick change in public opinion about people and ideas, with so many in our society easily manipulated by the media or polarized by politicians, confused about what to think or believe. Do you think public opinion about Jesus is also misguided or misinformed today?

9. Having read and talked about Jesus, his character, his actions and words, and now his trial and sentencing to death, what is your view of him? Was he telling the truth about his identity? And why did he have to die?



Conclusion

The Jewish religious system was proud of its morality, yet Jesus preached and lived to a higher moral standard than the religious system. The Roman political system was proud of its unified and just Pax Romana, yet Jesus established a community with a deeper unity and justice than the Roman empire. At Jesus' trial and death, the religious leaders denied God as their King and killed the Messiah they had long waited for, and the "perfect" Roman justice system condemned an innocent man in a court case flawed by corruption.

Jesus' death is considered so important because it represents God's heart and response to a fallen and broken world. It exposes the corrupt, selfish, and unjust system of this world and shows how far Jesus was willing to go to show people the truth about who God is and who he was.

And yet it seems his death wasn't simply a martyr giving his life for what he believed. It had a much bigger purpose. Symbolized in the story we read last time, about Jesus taking on the role of a slave to wash the disciples' feet, now Jesus takes our sin and debt upon himself and pays for it through his death on the cross.

Similar to the man named Barabas in this text, who was on death row for having participated in a violent uprising and was then set free as Jesus took his place, we too can be free from any condemnation because of Jesus' death for us.

That's why Jesus' death changes everything. It changes our situation before God. It offers us forgiveness for all the wrongs and brokenness in the world and in our own lives, and opens the way for us to have peace with God.



JESUS IS ALIVE

Introduction

In another book of the New Testament, the apostle Paul explains the importance of Jesus' resurrection to the Christian faith:

If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

(1 Corinthians 15:14, 17)

John and the other gospel narrations in the New Testament are first-century historical documents claiming that the man Jesus, who claimed to be one with God, came back to life after death through Roman crucifixion.

As we saw in the first study of this series, John was a close friend of Jesus and even referred to himself as “the disciple Jesus loved.” In this chapter, he tells how he was one of the first to find the empty tomb of Jesus and refers to himself as “the other disciple.” So we have a first-hand eyewitness account of this story, written, as John himself explains, so that “you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31)

In the last part of this series on John, we come to this extraordinary story that challenges our very understanding of life, death, the world, truth, and the unique person of Jesus - the one who rose from the dead.

Read John 20:1-31



Questions

1. What impacts you the most in this story?
2. What are your impressions of the different characters who find the empty tomb and, finally, the resurrected Jesus?
3. What details does John give of his visit to the tomb, and why so much detail?
4. What do you think Jesus means by the message he asks Mary to spread: 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'?
5. What is the significance of Jesus' first words to the disciples after his resurrection? (verse 19)
6. So many of us today would identify with Thomas' skepticism. But how does Jesus respond to Thomas' doubt?



7. John describes how seeing Jesus' empty tomb impacted him, saying that he "saw and believed" (verse 8). Do you see any reason to believe this account as historical fact, or does it come across as made up or figurative, as some have suggested?

8. Jesus met Mary and Thomas in very personal ways. Mary was confused by Jesus' missing body as she stood alone in the garden. But when Jesus calls her name, she recognizes her friend's voice. Thomas doubted Jesus had risen from the dead and missed the first time Jesus appeared to the disciples. But Jesus meets him personally to help him overcome his doubts. Jesus knows each of us personally and wants to meet us in a unique way. What has your personal experience with Jesus been, and what questions do you have for him as we end our study of John?

9. This passage also carries a very important example of the value the Bible gives to women in the context of that time and culture. Mary is the first witness of the resurrected Jesus and is given the job to share that message with others. If you have come to believe as John, Mary, and the others did, that Jesus truly rose from the dead, do you consider that an important message to spread today?

Conclusion

This chapter ends with John's mission and vision statement: he writes so we might believe who Jesus is. And the clearest statement of Jesus' identity and divinity comes from the mouth of Thomas the skeptic: "My Lord and my God."

Together with Thomas, John, the first disciples then, and the millions throughout history, we also stand by this belief - that Jesus is alive. He is who he said he was and has brought us peace with God.

Jesus makes us sons and daughters of God, just as he is. This means we have all the love and acceptance we ever need. Resurrection means we are with God.

Jesus gives us deep peace. The knowledge that he is in control, that it ends well, that this life and world are temporary, and that we are living for more than this. Resurrection means peace.

If you would like to know that peace and to be welcomed as a son or daughter of God, all you need to do is confess your faith as Thomas did, recognizing Jesus as Lord and God. Ask him to forgive you of your sins, to make you clean, and to adopt you as part of his family. That's what he died for - so you might have peace. He defeated death and can give you life.





**WE MOBILIZE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS TO
REACH YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WOULD
NOT WALK INTO A CHURCH**



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