

Seven Bible Studies 2017

Gospels

August 5: John 1-2 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for August 5, 2017

John 1-2

John and his brother James were called the “sons of thunder” by Christ. Along with Peter and James, he was included in an inner circle of Jesus’. Five times the phrase “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is used. This is understood to be John referring to himself. It is believed to be the last of the four Gospel accounts written and John is believed to have been the last of the Apostles to die.

The first three Gospels are known as the Synoptic Gospels because they tell the story of Jesus similarly. They spend a lot of time discussing Jesus as the Son of Man and His humanity. This account is more topical and less chronological. John speaks from the viewpoint of Jesus as the Son of God and His deity. Throughout the book, John emphasizes Jesus as God. This is seen in John’s account of Jesus’ seven “I Am” statements that would have connected a knowledgeable Jew to the interaction between Moses and God. John also spends more time discussing the events in the upper room, the conversation surrounding it and the Resurrection. This is understandable as the resurrection is the final and most undeniable proof that Jesus is the Son of God.

John starts right off claiming the deity of Christ. Jesus was with God during creation. In fact, nothing was made without Him. John also states that in Jesus was life. (vs 3) I believe this to be a reference to Genesis 2:7 when God “breathed into his (man’s) nostrils the breath of life.” That life brought light to man. A major lesson that God gives us through creation is that light always overcomes darkness.

John now talks about the role of John the baptist as the preparer for Christ. He gave a witness to the Light, but was not the true Light. The true Light, Jesus, was to give man the opportunity to believe. This is a spiritual Light that was to shine throughout the world and throughout the ages. However, the world, as a whole, did not accept Him as God. Those that did accept Him were allowed to become the children of God. This was not because of a special lineage (will of the flesh) or because of the scheming’s of man (will of man). It is the will and plan of God.

Jesus became flesh (was born) and lived as a man. Jesus was not a spirit or apparition. He was as real as you and those you love. He came to bring grace and truth but also to declare the Father to man.

When John the baptist was quizzed by the religious leadership of the Jews as to who he was, he correctly points out that he is not the Christ, Elijah or the prophet. He is simply the one that is preparing the way for the Christ. He even tells them that the Christ is here, but they do not know Him yet.

While John the baptist is baptizing people in the Jordan, Jesus approaches. John proclaims Him as the Lamb of God that will take away the sins of the world. He also proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God.

The next day Jesus returns. One of John the baptists disciples began following Jesus. This was Andrew and he eventually gets his brother Simon. Jesus tells Simon that his name will be Cephas, which means a stone. The day after that, Jesus finds Phillip who is from the same city as Peter and Andrew. Phillip then goes and finds Nathanael. Nathanael questions whether anything good can come from Nazareth. When Nathanael approaches Jesus, He informs him that He saw him under a fig tree before Phillip found him. This causes Nathanael to instantly believe, but Jesus lets him know that there will be many more and greater signs than that.

Three days later Jesus attends a wedding in Cana. The planners of the feast had embarrassingly run out of wine. Mary wants Jesus to do something about it. Jesus is not as interested. However, Mary tells the servants to do whatever Jesus tells them. He does tell them to fill water pots with water. After they do, He tells them to take some to the head of the feast. He is so impressed with the quality of the wine that he believes they had been saving the best for last. (Maybe that is where this saying comes from, I don't know.) John makes sure that we know that this was the beginning of the signs that Jesus did to prove His deity.

When Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover, He finds people conducting carnal business on the Temple grounds. There is no doubt that this had become a common practice of the day and Jesus had seen this before, perhaps when He was 13. He makes a whip and drives them out while tipping over the tables. He tells the crowd that His Father's house (the Temple of God) is not to be a place of making money. The Jewish leaders want to know what authority Jesus has to do this. He gives an answer with a hidden meaning. He tells them that when this temple is destroyed, He will raise it up in three days. They mock Him because it took 46 years to build the Temple. John makes sure we know that Jesus was not talking about the place of worship, but His physical body. Again, John is emphasizing the deity of Christ through the proof of the resurrection and that those that heard Him remembered this.

It is interesting that Jesus did other signs at this time, but did not do them as publicly as He soon would. John comments that Jesus was not ready to have other men testifying about Him. God's timing is always right, but does not always make sense to man. Jesus, as God, knew that the growth and timing of the Jews anger and hatred of Him was key to the timing of His death. I believe this is what Jesus was considering. If He did too much too soon, their anger would peak at the wrong time. There are other times that we can see Jesus controlling the timing of certain things, but I find this manipulation of the Jewish leadership intriguing.

Comment:

Joshua Riggins:

Doug, I am a bit behind, but hope you will bear patiently with a question to this 3 week old post.

What thoughts do you have on Christ's statement to his mother in John 2:4? Specifically the phrase, "my hour has not yet come." Based on John's use of this phrase throughout the book (cf. 7:30, 8:20, 12:23, 13:1, etc.) it would seem that he was alluding to the time of his crucifixion. If this is the case, what is the point Jesus is making to his mother?

Comment:

Charles Fry:

Joshua, consider the symmetry between Jesus' statement to his mother here:

John 2:4 (NASB)

4 And Jesus *said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."

And then again here:

John 19:26 (NASB)

26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He *said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"

Very dramatic bookends, Jesus speaking to his mother at the beginning and conclusion of his ministry, the identical form of address, "woman," the double entendre of "behold your son" as his hour has now come, the care for this woman at both ends, the contrast of the wedding feast and the cross, but the cross actually being the avenue to his own great wedding feast...

Comment:

Doug Twaddell:

I would agree that He is referring to the crucifixion. John, more than the other Gospel writers, points to Jesus avoiding or freeing Himself from situations that would lead to His capture. Once His time had come, He willingly submitted to the mob. He also tried many times to prepare His followers for His death. I believe these statements we're to that end. Thank you Charles Fry for the insight. I had not seen the symmetry.

August 12: John 3-4 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 8-12-17

John 1-2

During the night, a Pharisee named Nicodemus comes to see Jesus. He probably came at night because we are told he was a "ruler of the Jews." His interaction with Jesus would not have been well received by the council. Unlike his colleagues, Nicodemus expresses that he knows Jesus is from God. In fact, he uses the pronoun "we" indicating that this was a conclusion that other Jewish rulers had come to, as well. Jesus points out to him that a person must be born again to see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus is confused thinking that Jesus is indicating a second physical birth. Jesus explains that He is speaking of being born of the water and the Spirit, not physical birth. This combination is shown in other places to be baptism. He then says that, just like the beginning and end of the wind, the beginning and end of a spiritual birth cannot be determined by man.

When Nicodemus again shows a lack of understanding, Jesus indicates that he should be able to understand as a teacher of Israel. If Jesus talks about earthly things and they do not believe Him, how will they believe them when He talks about heavenly things that are beyond their senses? Jesus is the only human that has seen the heavenly places. He is the only one that can explain them to us. This statement would seem to discount anyone else being able to do that. No one, no matter how sincere, has been taken to heaven and then "sent back" with a message. Later in life, John will be allowed to see into heaven in a vision, but only Jesus has experienced the full reality of heaven with complete understanding.

Jesus then explains the purpose of His death by referencing Moses and the children of Israel when they encounter the poisonous snakes. (Num 21) John 3:16 may be the most well-known verse from the Bible, but it very well be the most misunderstood, too. It is not accidental that Jesus speaks these words after describing a rebirth with water and Spirit. Yes, whoever believes on Jesus will be saved, but that belief is not simply an acknowledgement or feeling, it

is a rebirth that requires both water, something we can sense, and Spirit, something beyond our senses.

John refers back to an idea that he brought up in the beginning of this book, light. He quotes Jesus talking about how the light should be used to illuminate the darkness, but those that are evil actually prefer the darkness. That is one way we can know if we or another is truly following God. If they love and desire the truth, they are seeking the light. If they ignore the truth or rationalize a lie, they are not seeking the light.

Jesus and His followers now come to Judea where they were baptizing people. In chapter 4 verse 1, John makes a note that Jesus was not physically baptizing anyone, but His disciples were. John the baptizer was also baptizing people. John makes a conscious effort to point out the exact place and why he was there, because there was much water. This, too, has a purpose. God is making it clear that, even though we must be born of water, just a little water will not do for baptizing.

Some of John the baptizer's disciples and other Jews have a disagreement about purification. This, too, is important. The idea of Baptism was not new to the Jews. They had been doing it a long time as a purification ritual. They understood the process without explanation because they called by a descriptive term, immersion (overwhelming). The dispute, unlike today, was not about how to baptize, but about who was authorized to baptize. They are concerned because Jesus' followers were also baptizing people. John the baptizer reminds them that this is how he told them it would be. He had said repeatedly that he was not the Messiah; he was just preparing the way. He had also told them that when that happened, the Messiah would increase and he would decrease. This was as it was supposed to be. He encouraged them to investigate, believe and follow the Son of God to eternal life.

The belief among the Jews was that Jesus' disciples were baptizing more people than John the Baptist. This would have been a great concern for the Jewish leadership. As attention shifted to Christ, he left Judea and went back to Galilee. As they passed through Samaria, they came to a well that Jacob had dug and given to Joseph. The disciples go on into town to buy food and Jesus rested by the well. When a woman comes to get water, Jesus asks her for a drink. She is taken aback by this because she is a Samaritan woman and Jesus is a Jewish man; two culturally significant reasons that He should not have spoken to her.

Jesus tells her that if she knew who He was, she would definitely be interested in getting a drink of living water from Him. She chides Him for saying He could get her water because He does not have anything to drop down into the well. She also mocks him, slightly, by asking Him if He is greater than Jacob who dug the well. Jesus responds to her by telling her that with the well water she will be thirsty again later. With His water, she will never be thirsty again. This is one of the many moments that I wish I could hear the inflection in the woman's voice. I get the impression that she is now just having fun with Jesus. Maybe she thinks He is a little off, mentally. She wants some of that water so she is never thirsty and does not have to ever come back to the well. She is thinking only physically. Jesus is trying to turn a physical point into a spiritual lesson.

Jesus now asks her to go get her husband. This is not a simple answer for her. She has a past that is confusing. What she decides to say is that she does not have a husband. Jesus tells her that she is right because she has had 5 husbands and the one she is now with is not her husband. She realizes that Jesus should not have been able to figure that out from their limited and strange interaction. She decides that He might be a prophet of some kind. With that, she asks Him a serious question. Since the division of the kingdom under Jeroboam and Rehoboam, northern tribes had been worshipping away from Jerusalem. Now, with no tribal division, there is a division between those that consider themselves pure Jews and those that are of mixed heritage, in this case the Samaritans. As with all feuds, the longer they go on the less the current population really knows about the cause or underlying issues. All she wants to know is who is right? Where should someone wanting to be true to God worship? His answer is not what she expected. He tells her that eventually it will not be about a place, but about an attitude. The where will not matter, but the why and how will.

Now Jesus has her undivided attention. She is convinced in her mind that He may be the prophesied Messiah. This would indicate that she was knowledgeable about the subject and was looking for Him. When she asks about it, Jesus confirms her suspicion. At this point the disciples return and are very confused about why Jesus would be talking to her. She leaves her water pot behind, which started this whole thing, and runs back to the city. She immediately goes to the gate to tell the city leaders who she met and what happened. They come to meet Jesus for themselves.

Meanwhile, Jesus has more conversation with His disciples. They want Him to eat. He says He has food to eat that they do not know about. This confuses them even more because that is why they went to the city, to buy food. They are trying to figure out who gave Him food without the others knowing. Jesus must again help them transfer the physical point to a spiritual lesson. He speaks to them about the work they will be doing. It will be work that was started by others even though they will continue it. The result of the work is to the benefit of all and the glory of God.

Many of the Samaritans believed based on the word of the woman Jesus talked to at the well. After He stays there a few days, many more believe because of the things they hear Jesus say. Notice we are not told of any miracles performed here. Perhaps one of the most striking statements is in verse 42. The men of the city tell the woman that they now believe, not because of what she said but because of what they have heard themselves. This should be the goal of every teacher. Not to convict others just because they said it, but because they student can see it for themselves. As teachers of the word, we should never take that experience or ability away from someone. Instead, we should cultivate it as a hungering and thirsting for the word.

When Jesus leaves there and reaches His original destination of Galilee, He finds believers. He had left this place before because they would not accept Him. It was hard for them to see Him as anything other than the carpenter's son. But now many, who had seen the events at the Temple and heard the teachings, believed.

When Jesus comes back to Cana, where he turned the water to wine, a nobleman with a sick son begs Christ for help. Jesus seems to be frustrated that they are so interested in seeing signs. He finally tells the man to go home and that his son is healed. The man believes Jesus and heads for home. On the way, he meets some of his servants that tell him the exact time that the boy was healed. The man knows it happened when Jesus spoke the words. John also points out that this is the second sign that Jesus did in Galilee.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

(John 3-4) I think you're right, Doug, about the likelihood the woman of Samaria had some humor in her repartee with Jesus, and I think surely he likewise was "teasing" her with his banter. Serious thoughts, a beneficial message, but light and friendly and somewhat humorous in tone. Maybe in the exchange with Nicodemus too. Many times Jesus must have had a smile in his voice and on his face in these kinds of encounters. His overt friendliness must have been apparent. Even so, the woman was ready to change the subject in a hurry when the conversation got into her personal life, but there was no "escape."

August 19: John 5-6 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 8-19- 17

John 5-6

John recounts a miracle at the pool of Bethesda. This pool was thought to have healing qualities. In Jesus day, the Romans considered it an Asclepeion. These were healing temples dedicated to the Greek god of medicine, Asclepius. He was attributed to carrying a staff with a snake wrapped around it. This symbol is still used today in association with the medical arts. In Jewish tradition, an angel was responsible for “stirring the waters” to make healing available. Some of your translations will bring that out and some will not have the last part of verse 3 through verse 4. Versions translated before 1900 used Greek manuscripts that included the passage. However, there were discoveries of older manuscripts in the 1800’s that revealed that the verse was probably not in John’s original writing. In about 24 manuscripts, the scribes made notations for the next scribe that it was probably not original and four of the last five Greek words in verse 4 are not found in where else in any of John’s writings. So, versions translated after 1900 do not include it.

At this pool, Jesus encounters a man that had been afflicted with an infirmity for 28 years. Jesus asks him if he wants to be healed. The man is concerned that, because of his affliction, he is unable to be first into the pool. This shows that he placed some hope either the Greek mythology, Jewish tradition or both. Jesus chooses to heal him, which would have directly opposed both. The man picked up his cot and started walking through Jerusalem.

Some Jews see him and complain that he is carrying his bed on the Sabbath. The man tells them that the one who healed him told him to do that. They wanted to know who had done that. However, the man did not know who Jesus was. Later on, Jesus saw him in the Temple. This is an indication of the man’s faith in God. Jesus encourages him to not sin anymore and warns him of the consequences if he does. When he realizes that it was Jesus who healed him, he runs to tell the Jews. They are now angry with Jesus because he healed on the Sabbath. Jesus’ response is to tell them that He and His father have been working. The Jews become even angrier because He indicated He was equal to God the Father.

Jesus takes this opportunity to teach about His relationship with the father. He points out that the Son can only do what the Father does. This is because the Father loves the Son and will do even greater things. He brings up that the Father has the power to raise the dead and the Son can also give life. Also, the Father has given the authority to judge to the Son. If you want to honor the Father, you must honor the Son. Eventually even the dead will respond to the voice of the Son and He has the power to give life to those that believed but will execute judgement on those that do not. Jesus now uses the pronoun “I” instead of the noun “the Son of God” to make sure that they know He is talking about Himself and proclaims that His judgment is righteous because He is only interested in the will of the Father, not His own will.

Jesus admits that anyone could say anything about themselves, so now gives them a list of witnesses to the truth that He is the Son of God. He speaks of John the baptizer giving witness of Him. He points to the works that He has done. He brings up what the Father has said about Him. He also brings up what the Old Testament writers had to say about Him. Specifically, He challenges them about what Moses said about the coming Messiah. If they, they Jews that

held Moses and the Old Law on such a high pedestal, will not listen to Moses, then what would be the motivation to listen to Him?

As the time for the Passover came near, Jesus went to the Sea of Galilee where many people followed Him. As the people approach, Jesus asks a question to test His apostles. He wants to know what they will do to feed all these people. Phillip points out that they do not have nearly enough money to buy food. Andrew knows of a boy that has five loaves of bread and two fish, but readily admits that it is not enough. Jesus has them instruct the people to sit down and they discover that there are about 5,000 men (not including women and children). Jesus takes the boy's lunch, prays over it and has them pass it around. When everyone is full, they collect more leftovers than the food they started with. Their response is to praise Jesus as the Prophet of God.

Jesus recognizes that the authorities are on their way intending to arrest Him. He leaves and goes into the mountains alone. After a while, the apostles get in a boat to go to the other side of the sea. While crossing, a serious storm blows in. In the middle of the sea, tired, concerned and unable to see for the darkness, Jesus comes walking to them on the water. He has to calm them down, but when they realize it is Him, they allow Him to get in the boat and immediately they are at the shore where they were trying to go.

When the people realize where Jesus went, they follow and find Him. He tells them that they are only there because He fed them physical food. Instead, they should work for the spiritual food that He can provide. When they want to know what to do to be able to do the works of God, He tells them that the work of God is believing in the Son. They want to know what sign will happen and reference the manna that God provided in the wilderness. They seem to still be looking for Jesus to provide for them physically. Jesus tells them that the true bread from heaven is the One that came from heaven to give life to the world. They ask that this bread be given to them always. The word "always" indicates that they still did not understand that Jesus is trying to give them spiritual food for a spiritual life.

He finally comes right out and says that He is the bread of life. This is the first of the seven "I Am" statements that John records. These statements should remind anyone with knowledge of the story of Moses how God instructed Moses to refer to Him when facing Pharaoh or the people.

The Jews are now upset because they cannot reconcile two concepts: How could Jesus "come down from heaven" if they know his parents? Jesus emphasizes that if they knew and believed the Father they would know and believe Him. Jesus reiterates whoever ate the manna in the wilderness died but whoever eats the bread from heaven will not die. He then makes a controversial statement that the bread of life is His flesh that He will give for the life of the world. This was problematic because they were still thinking about physical bread and physical life. They don't understand how Jesus could give them His flesh to eat.

Jesus takes it one step farther by saying that if they did not eat His flesh and drink His blood, they would not have life in them. Keep in mind that cannibalism as well as the drinking of any blood was prohibited under the dietary commands of the Old Law. He is also teaching these things in a synagogue of the Jews.

When His followers are having trouble with these teachings, he tells them that there will be even more difficult things to understand. He tries, again, to help them see that He is trying to teach them spiritual lessons for spiritual life, not physical. He also points out that there are some among them that do not believe. There were many of His followers that that left that day and never returned. These teachings were just too much for them.

He turned to His apostles and asked them if they were going to leave, too. Peter has a great response: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Peter knew that Jesus could teach them how to gain eternal life and confesses that they were convinced that He was the promised Messiah and the Son of God. Jesus again points out that one of them is not completely convinced. John tells us that Jesus already knew that Judas would betray Him.

Comment:
Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Kevin Crittenden:
I'm not sure I know how to reconcile Acts 7:60 -

"And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

with John 5:22

"For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,"

Thoughts?

Replies:
John Morris:
I may misunderstand your question, so please help me if I'm missing something. I understand the "Lord" of Ac. 7:60 to be the "Lord Jesus" of Ac. 7:59, in which case Stephen is calling on Jesus (our judge, as you point out) to show mercy to the members of the Sanhedrin.

Butch O'Neal:
Yes...this seems so to me also. What reconciling seems necessary?

Doug Twaddell:
It is permissible and right to ask for mercy both for yourself and for others. I cannot expect God to be merciful to me but not to someone else.

August 26: John 7-9 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 8-26-17

John 7-8

Again, we see Jesus avoiding the Jews because it was not yet time for His sacrifice. His brothers try to convince Him to go to Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. Their pretense is to allow disciples in the south to see His works. However, John tells us that His brothers did not believe. Later, His brothers come around, but not yet. Jesus tries to explain that they don't understand why or how much the world will hate Him and tells them to go ahead and go. They go without Him.

After they leave, Jesus does go, but incognito. The Jews were actively searching for Him, but could not find Him. John also points out the wide ranging opinions that were among the people. The people, though, did not discuss these things openly because they were afraid of the leadership. During the feast, Jesus goes to the temple and was teaching. Those that heard Him were amazed because of His lack of traditional education. He responds to this by

describing His relationship with the Father. What He teaches is from the Father. His authority is from the Father. He wants to give all glory to the Father.

He asks them why they want to kill Him. They try and pretend they are not. Jesus reminds them of an event from chapter 5 when He healed a man on the Sabbath and they became angry. He gives the hypothetical case of a boy that is to be circumcised on the 8th day, but that day fall on the Sabbath. If they would circumcise him, what is wrong with healing on the Sabbath?

The people now have doubts about the Jewish leadership. Their logic makes them wonder if it is known that He is the Christ because they don't stop Him from talking. They are confused because they think they know His origin but their understanding of the Christ is that His origin will be a mystery. Jesus tells them that they do know where He comes from. The Jewish leaders reinforce their goal of capturing Him because the people are beginning wonder if this isn't the Christ, what would another do that would be greater?

Jesus tells the people that He will only be with them for a short time and then they will not be able to find or follow Him. This leads them to believe that He might be getting ready to go to the Jews that had left Judea and moved to other parts of the world.

On the last day of the feast He repeats a teaching He gave to the Samaritan woman that He can provide living water. When He said this, it stirred more debate about Him. This time it was concerning the prophecy about the Christ coming from Bethlehem from the seed of David. The Sanhedrin sent men to take Him, but they did not. When they returned to the council, the officers question the men as to why they did not bring Jesus. They indicate they are captivated by His teaching. The officer's point out that none of them believes and they are concerned that the crowd does not know the law and call them accursed. Nicodemus, who visited Jesus at night in chapter 3, brings a point of order that they should hear Jesus out before they pass judgement. They challenge him to point out any prophet that came from Galilee.

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives for the night and came back to the temple in the early morning. The Jewish religious leaders bring Him a woman who had been caught committing adultery. They ask Him if they should follow the Law of Moses and stone her. Jesus appears to ignore them, but then gives His famous instructions: "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." Their conscience gets to them and they all go away one by one leaving the woman alone with Jesus. He tells her to go and not to continue sinning.

John records another "I Am" statement of Jesus. This time He says "I Am the light of the world." The Pharisees make the claim that because He is witnessing about Himself, His claims are not valid. Jesus tells them that what He says is true no matter who it is about. He also points out that the law says two witnesses make a thing true. He claims Himself and the Father as the two witnesses. When they question who His father is (probably wanting Him to either claim or reject Joseph as His father) He tells them that if they knew Him they would know the father. When He tells them that He is going where they cannot go, they wonder if He is going to kill Himself. In response, He tells them that He is not from this world like they are and if they cannot find their way to believe in Him they will die in their sins.

They point bland ask Him, "Who are you?" He tells them that the answer is the same as He has been saying all along. Again, He points to the Father, but they just don't (or won't) get it. He tells them that they will understand more when they crucify Him. He then tells the people that if they live in His word they are true disciples and that by doing that they will know the truth that will make them free. They question His statement by commenting that they are Abraham's descendants and have never been in bondage to anyone. I am not sure they were being honest about their own history because the Law of Moses was given after they were released from the

hand of the Egyptians and the Old Testament (Hebrew history) is full of times when they were in bondage many times. Instead of addressing this, which might have pointed their minds in a physical direction, He comments on the idea of being a slave to sin, which is not only a spiritual direction but also applies to everyone. He contrasts the position of a slave and a son. A son had the authority to free a slave. Because of their confidence in their physical lineage, they have no interest in the freedom from sin that the Son of God can offer them. When they again claim Abraham as their father, Jesus tells them they are not doing the works of Abraham so they must be following another. They are incensed at this idea and claim God as their Father. Jesus, once more, points out that if they were truly following God they would love Him instead of hate Him.

Because they will not listen with a true heart, they cannot understand His teachings. He tells them that their father is the devil (the other one that he alluded to earlier) who is a murderer and always lies. This is why they do not understand Him. Because they are so wrapped up in the lies of the devil, they cannot bear the truths of God. They now claim that Jesus is a Samaritan and has a demon, two vile accusations to a Jew. He tells them that because they are dishonoring Him they are dishonoring the Father. God, whose glory Jesus seeks, will judge them. If they will just keep His word they will never see death. Now they think they have Him. They know that Abraham and the prophets, God following and righteous men, are dead so they think Jesus is overstating His case. Jesus again points out that His only goal is to honor the Father, the one they claim as God. He says, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." This makes no sense to them because there is now way, physically, that Jesus could have seen Abraham. Jesus tells them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." In the mind of the Jewish leaders, this is Jesus claiming equality with God both in name (I AM) and in eternal presence. This is more than they can bear. They begin to pick up stones to kill Him on the spot, but Jesus hides himself and walks right through them on His way out of the temple.

There is a lesson to be learned from the Jewish leaders. We must make sure that we are seeking the truth and the glory of the Father, not ourselves. We cannot put confidence in anything (lineage, tradition, appearances, etc.) other than the truth given to us by God. All those things lead us to be a slave of sin and the devil. The truth of God, with the authority of the Son, is the only thing that can set us free from that bondage.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

September 2: John 10-12 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 9-2-17

John 10-12

Jesus begins by making an analogy with a sheepfold. This was a place that shepherds could keep their sheep safe during the night. If someone got into the pen without going through the only gate, the easy assumption is that they are not supposed to be there. The shepherd would go in through the gate. The sheep would only follow the voice they are accustomed to.

When they do not understand the lesson, He speaks more plainly to them. He says, "I Am the door." This is to describe His role as in allowing His sheep in, but not those that would harm

the sheep. He also says, "I Am the good shepherd." This is to describe His leadership of the flock. A hired hand will not treat or protect the flock the same way as the shepherd will.

He alludes to "other sheep that are not of this flock." This is a reference to those that will follow Him that are not part of the physical Jewish lineage. He also proclaims His voluntary willingness to give up His life for the sheep. Again, these teachings divide the loyalties of the people. Some wonder if Jesus has a demon. Others question if a demon would heal someone.

When the Feast of Dedication comes, Jesus goes to Solomon's Porch at the Temple. The Jews want Him to announce if He is the Christ. He tells them that, through His works, He has already showed who He is. He reminds them of the sheep and Shepherd analogy and points out that since they will not listen to Him, they must not be His sheep.

When He concludes the discussion by saying that He and His Father are one, they pick up stones to kill Him. Jesus asks them which of His works are worthy of stoning? The crowd tells Him that they will stone Him because He has blasphemed. Jesus quotes from Psalm 82. Asaph writes that the children of Israel are the sons of God. Jesus makes a play on words here. All that follow the Father, acceptably to Him, are the children of God. As a Jew, it is true that He is "a son of God." However, He is also "THE Son of God." He encourages them, as He has before, to decide whether or not His works are from the Father. When they try to seize Him, He again escapes and goes to the Jordan where John the baptizer is teaching. Those that follow Him there point out that John did not perform any signs, but all the things that John said about Jesus were true.

Meanwhile, at Bethany, Lazarus becomes ill. His sisters, Mary and Martha send for Jesus to come. He tells those with Him that it is not a sickness unto death. Jesus stays two more days where He is and then announces His intention to go back to Judea. They try to dissuade Him by reminding Him that the Jews still want Him dead. Jesus talks to them about walking in the light and that Lazarus is sleeping. They don't understand, thinking that sleep will help him get better. Jesus tells them that he is dead and that they all must go to him to help everyone believe.

When they get to Bethany, Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days. Martha meets Him on the way and wonders why He did not come and heal her brother. He tells her that Lazarus will rise again. She confesses her understanding that the resurrection at the end of time is fact. He tells her, "I am the resurrection and the life." She now confesses her belief that He is the Christ, the Son of God.

Martha leaves to get Mary. When they both go to see Him, everyone else follows. Mary also wants to know why Jesus did not come quicker to heal her brother. Seeing the anguish that Mary and Martha are experiencing and being touched by the sorrow of all those with them, Jesus is moved to tears at the tomb. Jesus, more than anyone else, knew both what was to happen immediately and what would happen eventually with the two resurrections of Lazarus. However, even He felt sorrow at the death of a dear friend and the anguish of others. Others there also question whether Jesus could have healed Lazarus. Jesus tells them to move the stone that was sealing the tomb. Martha is concerned about the smell because he has been dead so long. Jesus reminds her of what He said to her earlier about the resurrection. Jesus prays to the Father out loud so that those that hear will learn more about their relationship and so that The Father will receive the glory and yells, "Lazarus, come forth!" Lazarus walks to the entrance to the tomb, still wrapped for burial, and is alive. I have often wondered if Jesus called him by name because of what would have happened if He had given a more general command.

You would think that this would have the same effect on all that witnessed it, but not so. Some believed while others went and told the Jewish leadership what happened. The Jewish council gets together to discuss what they are going to do. They are concerned that if Jesus is not dealt with, the Romans will take away their authority and dissolve the nation. Caiaphas, the high priest, gives an unintended prophesy about Jesus dying for the nation. His meaning is that Jesus should die so they can keep their place. The true meaning goes deeper than he could have ever imagined. With an increased zeal for His death, Jesus leaves the area of Jerusalem. The council sends word that anyone who knows where Jesus is should report it so they can capture Him.

About a week before Passover, Jesus goes back to Bethany. While they are eating supper with Lazarus and his sisters, Mary pours expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and wipes it off with her hair. Judas complains that they should have sold it and given away the money. However, he does not really care about the poor; he has been embezzling money from their shared resources. Jesus tells them to let Martha do this because it is symbolic of His burial. Many people come to see both Him and Lazarus while the leaders are now planning on killing Lazarus, too.

When Jesus does finally go to Jerusalem for Passover, the people meet Him and cover the ground with branches. This was a sign of welcome for a king entering a city. This is all part of the prophecies being fulfilled. John, in 12:16, points out that none of them understood these things until Jesus was glorified and the Spirit gave them understanding.

Many people witnessed the raising of Lazarus. As they told others, it caused a large number to follow Him. The Pharisees realize that they have been unable to silence Jesus. No wonder they want to kill Him and Lazarus. It looks like the miracle had the desired effect.

During the feast, some Greek proselytes arrive to see Jesus. Jesus announces that His hour, which He repeatedly said is not here in the past, has now come. It is time for the seed, Him, to be planted in the ground to die so it can bring forth much fruit, us. The timing of the raising of Lazarus was important which means that the illness was also important. We see here God working among men and men not understanding the eventual purpose. That was the final push for the Jewish leadership's efforts to kill Jesus.

Jesus also admits that His soul is troubled. When he cries out, "Father, glorify Your name," a voice comes from heaven. Some thought it was thunder. Others thought an angel had spoken. Jesus tells them that God spoke for their sake. Jesus points out that He will be lifted up, His crucifixion, and will draw people to Him. This confuses them because they believe that the promised Christ will remain forever. Jesus tells them that He will only be with them a little while and then He leaves being hidden from them.

John points out that even though Jesus did many miracles, most people did not believe. This is a fulfillment of prophesy. However, John does say that many of the rulers believed but were afraid to speak openly. Their love for men superseded their love for God. Jesus again connects belief in Him with belief in the Father because His authority from the Father and His will is the same as the Father.

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:

I feel like I'm walking along with Jesus when you explain these scriptures and the perspective shines a new light on these familiar passages. I appreciate it. I pray you are feeling well.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

September 9: John 13-15 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 9-9-17

John 13-15

After they are finished eating, Jesus takes a towel and bowl and begins to wash the feet of the Apostles. Peter does not want Him to do that. This was a task for the lowest servant, not the Son of God. Jesus tries to help him realize that he will understand this later, but Peter continues to refuse. Jesus tells him that this must be done or Peter has no part with Jesus. Now Peter wants Jesus to wash his whole body. Jesus explains that they don't need a bath, just to be served. He singles out one of them, not by name, which is not clean. He means Judas.

When Jesus is done, He begins to talk to them about why He washed their feet. If Jesus, their Lord and Teacher, was willing to kneel before them in service, they should be willing to do that for others. Jesus does not want them to ever think they are too important or greater than anyone. That should be the lesson for us. We should always be ready and willing to serve others.

Again, Jesus indirectly points out Judas by quoting a prophecy from Psalm 41. He also reminds them that He is telling them ahead of time so that they will remember His words when the prophecy is fulfilled. When Jesus tells them plainly that one of the twelve will betray Him, they become concerned and want to know who it is? Jesus gives them a sign concerning dipping bread in seasoned oil, a fulfillment of the earlier prophecy. When Judas is given the bread, Jesus tells him to do it quickly. Amazingly, the others do not know what is going on. They think that Judas is supposed to go buy supplies for the poor. Judas leaves.

When Jesus and the others leave, He reminds them that He will only be with them for a short time and they should love each other. This is to be a defining marker in their lives. This should be the main reason that others recognize them as followers of Jesus. How do people recognize us as followers of Jesus? Do they see bumper stickers or jewelry? Do they see signs in or around our house? Do they know that we immerse, have communion every Sunday and don't sing with instruments during services? Our love for one another and those around us should be our honor so that God is glorified and Christ is lifted up.

When Peter insists that he is willing to lay down his life to follow Christ, Jesus gives the prediction about the rooster. John spends very little time on this event. Instead, he spends more time detailing what Jesus says to the apostles during this time.

Jesus tells them that, even though they cannot follow Him right now, He is going to prepare a place for them. When it is their time to follow, they will have a place with Him. Thomas wants to know how they will get there if they don't know where He is going. He tells them that He is the way, the truth and the life and is the only way to the Father. If they know Him, they know the Father and the way.

Phillip wants Jesus to show the Father to them. Jesus seems frustrated that they do not understand that He and the Father are one. Jesus' words are the Father's words. Jesus'

authority is from the Father. He tells them that if they love Him they will keep His commandments. If they do this, He will ask the Father to send another Helper, the Spirit, to help them. Jesus explains the connection farther. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus. If we are obedient to Jesus, we are in Him and He is in us. Therefore, our connection to the father is through Jesus and our obedience to Him.

Judas, not the betrayer, wants to know how Jesus will show Himself to them. Jesus gives them a series of ways that they will know Jesus is with them. The first is that when they are obedient to Jesus, He and the Father will be with them. Second, He will send the Holy Spirit to help them remember His teachings. Third, Jesus will send them His peace so they will not be afraid. Instead of being sad about Jesus leaving, He wants them to rejoice that He is going to the Father so all these other blessings can be theirs.

John records a series of teachings Jesus gives on how believers should relate to others. Jesus starts by describing the believer's relationship with Him as a vineyard. He is the vine, the Father is the caretaker and we are the individual branches. The only way we can be fruitful is through our connection to the vine. If we are not fruitful, the caretaker will prune us away for the sake of the other branches. We stay connected to Jesus through our love for Him that is expressed in our obedience to Him.

Next, Jesus reminds them that the relationship between believers should be defined by love. We can fully understand love from His example. He was willing to give His life for us and we should be willing to give everything, even our lives, for each other. The teaching shown by Jesus washing their feet was to put this in concrete terms. If Jesus is willing to serve us because of His love for us, we should be willing to serve others because of our love for them.

The third relationship, and the most difficult, is between believers and non-believers. Jesus warns us that the world will hate us like it hated Him. If we act like the world, the world will love us because we are like them. The world hates Jesus because He exposed sin. This hatred without a just cause is another prophecy from Psalm 69.

Jesus reminds them again of the Holy Spirit that will give them remembrance of these truths. The Spirit will testify of Jesus to the apostles and they will witness of Jesus to the world.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:

Thanks, Doug! I love reading the gospels. Especially love the example of Christ washing the disciples feet. For He came not to be served but TO serve. A testimony to remember everyday of our lives that we might be like Him, serving others and not self.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Doug!

September 16: John 16-18 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 9-16-17

John 16-18

Jesus tries to prepare His followers for the persecution that will follow His resurrection. He talks about those that will kill them because they believe they are serving God. I can't help but wonder if He was thinking about Saul of Tarsus among many others. He comforts them with the thought that it is good for them if He goes away so that He can send the Holy Spirit to comfort them. The Spirit will guide them to the truth by speaking to them the words of Jesus which are the words of the Father. I would like to point out that Jesus uses the pronoun "He" when referring to the Holy Spirit.

The apostles question what He means. He tells them that their sorrow, at His death, would be replaced by joy, at His resurrection and the giving of the spirit. He uses the example of a woman in labor. Although it is painful and difficult at the time, that is replaced with joy at the sight of the child. Even though the pain is known about and remembered, it is no longer important. That is the way it will be with their sorrow and the joy to follow.

He also tells them that when they ask Him for things in His name, after His resurrection and ascension, He will provide. Specifically, he is telling them that He will no longer speak in parables or sayings, He will speak plainly to them and they will understand. When they admit that when He speaks plainly it reinforces their belief, He tells them that they will need a strong belief. They are about to be scattered and the world will cause them trouble, but He has overcome the world.

John now records a prayer offered by Jesus that appears cover three main subjects. The first part of the prayer is for Himself. He thanks the Father for allowing Him to bring eternal life to mankind and praises the Father for the glory He is about to receive.

The second part of the prayer is for the disciples that are currently living. He prays for the Father to watch over them when He leaves. Once He leaves, they will be more susceptible to Satan. So far, Jesus has been protecting them. The only one He gave over was Judas because that was necessary to fulfill scripture. Jesus asks the Father to sanctify them, set them apart, with His truth and defines that truth as His word.

The third part of the prayer is for all future believers. He describes these disciples as the ones that will believe based on the testimony of those He taught while He was here. Jesus is talking about us! His main concern is that they will have unity among themselves. He explains how that happens. Since Jesus is one with the Father, when we are one with Christ then we are one with the Father. All those that are one with the Father and the Son are by definition unified with each other. Since we can never be unified in our opinions, we must be unified by absolute truth and love. That truth is only found in God's Word and that kind of love is shown to us through the Father and the Son.

John now moves on to his account of Jesus' arrest. While they are in the garden, Judas approaches with a mob and troops to betray Him. John records that when they realize that Jesus is before them, they back up and fall to the ground. Jesus tells them that if they are seeking Him, they should let the rest of those with Him go. Peter now pulls out a sword and strikes the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Jesus tells Peter to put the sword away and, according to other accounts, heals the man.

They tie Jesus up and take Him to Annas. Annas was the previous high priest and is the father-in-law of the current high priest, Caiaphas. Extra-biblical sources tell us that the Romans were frustrated and angry with Annas. The council was afraid of potential repercussions so they replaced him. However, Caiaphas was mostly a figurehead as nothing was done without the approval of Annas. If nothing else, this is evidence of how corrupt they had become and how far they had strayed from the implementation of the Old Law.

It is during His time with Annas that Peter is watching and is approached the first of three times about his relationship with Jesus. Annas asks Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. Jesus points out that there are many people, including members of the council, that heard Him teach, received answers to their questions and know His disciples. He encourages them to ask some of them. Someone hits Him for speaking to the high priest in that manner. Jesus challenges them to point out what He said that was disrespectful.

Annas now sends Jesus to Caiaphas. Again we see that Peter is watching and is now approached the final two times about his relationship to Jesus. When Peter denies Jesus the third time, the rooster crows, which was the sign that Jesus had given him.

Jesus is now taken to the Praetorium to face Pilate. Interestingly enough, the Jewish leaders do not go in because they do not want to be unclean for Passover. This forces Pilate to go outside to speak to the Jews and back inside to speak with Jesus. This could not have made Pilate very happy with them and was probably a factor in his desire to get this entire mess over with and go back to bed. Since Pilate sees their issue with Jesus as a matter of Jewish law and not Roman, he wants them to go away and deal with Jesus themselves. The Jews complain that, since the Romans do not allow them to administer the death penalty, they want Pilate to make a ruling.

Pilate directly asks Jesus if He is the King of the Jews. First Jesus wants Pilate to admit whether the question is his or from the Jews. Pilate seems exasperated and wants to know why Jesus is before him. Jesus admits to Pilate that He is a king, but that His kingdom is not of this world. As proof, Jesus points out that there is no one fighting for Him. In the end, Pilate determines that Jesus is not a threat to the Roman Empire and has done nothing wrong.

Pilate offers to release Jesus for the traditional pardon of a criminal at Passover, but the Jews will not hear of it. They insist that Jesus be held and that Barabbas be released.

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:
Thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:
Thanks again Doug.

Comment:

Ginger Hermon:
Thanks, Doug! You do a great job recapping each week. I love Christ proclaiming He has overcome the world! Gives me hope every day. I'm so grateful we have all 4 gospels. Golden nuggets from each. Do you believe it was John himself as the "other" disciple (known to the high priest), who brought Peter in and heard the testimony in the courtyard?

September 23: John 19-21 (Doug Twaddell)

Reading for 9-23-17

John 19-21

Having failed at attempting to release Jesus, Pilate has him whipped. The soldiers also put a crown of thorns on His head and a purple robe. They mocked Him as the King of the Jews and hit Him. Pilate presents Him to the people and tries again to release Him. The crowd begs for His death and advances the charge that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. This adds to Pilate's fears about Jesus, so he asks Him where He is from. Jesus simply does not respond. Pilate tries to coerce Jesus by flaunting his authority. Jesus tells Pilate that the authority is from God. Pilate becomes more anxious to release Him, but the Jews make Pilate choose between Jesus and Caesar. Pilate chooses Caesar.

Pilate again presents Jesus with the crowd continuing to call for His crucifixion and make the blasphemous claim that they have no king but Caesar. While charging Jesus with blasphemy, they deny God's authority.

Jesus carries the crossbeam of the cross to Golgotha where He is crucified with two others. Pilate has the charge against Jesus posted as "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The Jews take offense to this and want it changed to "He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate refuses to change the sign. The soldiers divide up His clothes which is the fulfillment of prophecy from Psalm 22.

We find out that Mary, Jesus's mother, is there as well as Mary's sister and Mary Magdalene. Jesus sees John with them and gives the care of His mother to John.

Jesus also asks for a drink so that another prophecy from Psalm 22 is fulfilled and then announces that it is finished as He dies. Since the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the crosses during the Sabbath, they ask for the soldiers to break their legs to speed up their death. When they get to Jesus, He is already dead. Instead of breaking His legs, they drive a spear into His side and blood and water come out. Again, both of these are prophecies being fulfilled.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both secret followers of Christ, claim the body and prepare it for burial. This would definitely mean that their discipleship is no longer a secret. They put Jesus in a new tomb that had no other bodies in it.

On the first day of the week, after Sabbath is over, Mary Magdalene visits the tomb and finds the large stone covering the entrance moved out of the way. She reports this to Peter and the others who go to see for themselves. They discover that there is no body, but the burial wrappings are there. John points out that they were apparently not aware of the scriptures that predicted Jesus rising from the dead.

As everyone else goes home, Mary stays. Two angels appear to her and she admits to them that she is concerned because she thinks someone has stolen that body of Jesus. Now Jesus appears to her, but she does not know it is Jesus. Thinking He is the gardener, she accuses Him of removing Jesus. When Jesus says her name, she immediately recognizes Him. He tells her to tell the others that He will be ascending to the Father.

That same week the disciples are together. Even though the doors are closed, Jesus appears with them. He shows them His hands and feet. Jesus breathes on them and gives them the Holy Spirit. Thomas is not present for this event. When the others tell him about it, he will not believe it without proof. Eight days later, Jesus appears to them again when Thomas is there. Upon seeing the hand and feet of Jesus, Thomas calls Him, "My Lord and my God." Jesus pronounces a blessing on those that will not see the scars but still will believe.

John reminds us that Jesus did many things that were not recorded, but we have enough to believe.

John records that later some of the disciples are together when Peter announces that he is going fishing. All of them go out in a boat. As morning comes, they see a man standing on the shore who tells them to try fishing on the right side of the boat. They do and cannot bring all the fish into the boat. When they figure out it is Jesus, Peter jumps in the water and swims for shore. They rest follow in the boat. When they get to shore, Jesus has a fire going and is cooking breakfast for them.

After breakfast, Jesus has an interesting conversation with Peter. Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him three times. The first time, Jesus uses the Greek word *agapao* (to love dearly). Peter responds with the Greek word *phileo* (to be fond of). Jesus seems to be asking for a deeper love that Peter is not admitting to. This same exchange happens the second time. The third time, Jesus also uses the word *phileo*. One of the distinctions that can be drawn between the two concepts is that *agapao* is from the heart and is a matter of judgement and principle, while *phileo* is from the head and is a matter of sentiment or feeling. The principle custom of showing *phileo* was a kiss of greeting. Perhaps Jesus was pointing out that even Judas felt *phileo* for Him and He wants Peter to go beyond that to *agapao*.

Jesus then tells Peter that when he is older, he will be carried somewhere with his hands stretched out where he does not want to go. John tells us that this was a reference to Peter's death. Peter seems to understand this and asks about John. Jesus tells Peter to not worry about what will happen to John. The way Jesus phrased it, "If I will that he remain till I come," caused some to wonder if John would not die. John now identifies this disciple as himself and again says that there is no way to record all the things that Jesus did.

Comment:

Steven Wright:

There is a physiological explanation for the water and the blood accumulated in the chest cavity of course, and, the most important point is your point Doug, about prophecy, but also, for the Romans, this was about official confirmation that he was indeed dead! Amazingly, there were then, and still are today, those who try to deny this fact, that he really and truly indeed did die! Thank you for the study!

Comment:

Butch O'Neal:

YES, thank you, Doug!

Comment:

Cherris Lehman:

Thanks Doug!

Comment:

Charles Fry:

It has been pointed out to me and I'll share here that the word for "fire" in John 21:9 (a charcoal fire, a fire of coals) occurs only here and in John 18:18, which is the night Peter warmed himself by the fire and denied Jesus 3 times. John was surely calling our attention to the correlation between the denial in the courtyard and the renewal on the beach.

It is interesting (to me) that Jesus appeared to the disciples on the first day of the week (John 20:19) and then again after 8 days (we'd say a week later, the following first day of the week being the eighth day) he appeared to them again in similar circumstances. Ancient Christian

writers made much of the allegorical meaning of the "8th day", the first day of the week, as a new beginning, the Sabbath being past, the day of dedication/circumcision. Several writers in the 2nd and 3rd and 4th centuries stressed the importance in God's calendar of the 8th day, which is the first day.

When John tells us about the three questions and answers between Jesus and Peter (21:15-19), the words "agapao" and "phileo" may be synonyms used interchangeably, not a contrast or point of dissension. Elsewhere John uses the two words as synonyms, as for example in mentioning the "disciple Jesus loved" we have "agapao" in John 19:26 and "phileo" in John 20:2. Likewise in John 14:23 Jesus says the disciples love him, and the Father loves them, and the word is "agapao", while in John 16:27 Jesus says the Father loves the disciples and the disciples love Jesus, and the word is "phileo." There is a good deal of evidence that these two Greek words were used interchangeably. Peter's answers were not likely a prevarication, but intended as a direct and unassuming affirmation to Jesus' question each time.

Comment:

Doug Twaddell:

Thanks Charles. I had not considered the 8th day. I do think it is important. Also, I think there is significance in asking Peter three times.

I understand the possibility of the synonyms, but I think the use of both words in such specific contrast and in such close proximity has significance.

Ginger Hermon:

So heart wrenching! Thank you for highlighting these amazing chapters, Doug. Praise God for these 4 gospels. Thanks again for your earnest efforts in the 7 Bible study.