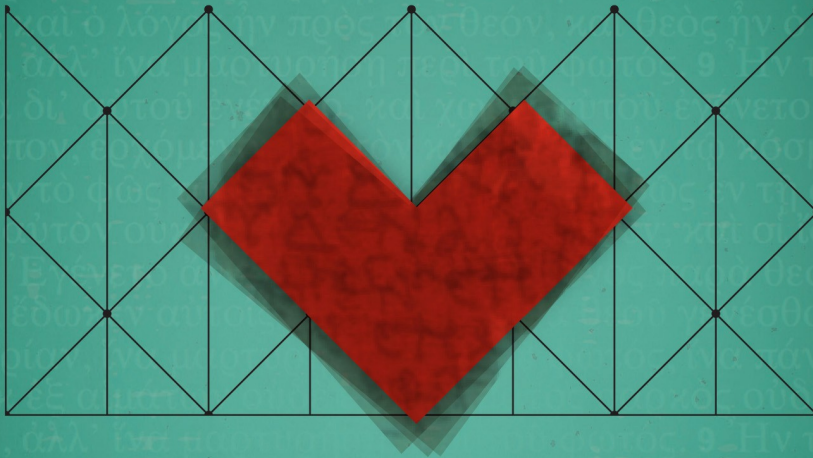


THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



BELIEVE

Studies in the book of John

PART FIVE—John 7:1-8:30

Group Applications

Personal Study



We would like to thank our pastors and elders for their leadership,
and the following people who contributed to the content and production of this booklet:

General Editor

Bryan Zhang

Authors

John 7:1-24..... Brittany Harlacher
John 7:25-36 Karen Martin
John 7:37-52 Erin Petscher
John 7:53-8:11 Yaacov Petscher
John 8:12-20 Jason & Becca Hollister
John 8:21-30 Geoff & Meredith Schaefer
Discussion Questions..... Scott Stake

Copy Editor & Production

Debbie Tanis

Proofreaders

Lori Ivarson

Jeannie Pierce

Judy Stringer

Cover Design by Sara Davis

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John 7:1-24

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. **Habakkuk 2:14**

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all.

1 Chronicles 29:11

The Glory of God vs. The Glory of Us

The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" **John 7:15**

Jesus is teaching the crowds and the crowds are amazed. But this is not a godly amazement. They are not enthralled with what He is saying. Instead, they are impressed with how He sounds. The crowds are focused on outward appearance. How often do we follow the crowd? We listen to a funny preacher, a talented singer, or a good-looking actor simply because they are funny, talented, and good-looking. But we need to be asking ourselves if what they are saying is truth. What are they actually teaching us?

So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me." **John 7:16**

Jesus knows our hearts and He knew the hearts of the people in the crowd. He needed to redirect their thoughts. So, He points them back to God. How? By deflecting their praise of Him back to the One who deserved their admiration. Most teachers would love the praise of crowds. Most any of us would. But Jesus is not interested in receiving praise. He needed the crowd to understand their love of self was hindering their understanding of the love of God. He confronts human pride and our love of praise and shows us how we are to give glory to God by humbling ourselves.

...are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? **John 7:23**

Jesus exposed the legalistic hearts of the Pharisees. They twisted God’s gift of the Sabbath into a stringent prohibition against an act of mercy. The Sabbath was a day to rest and enjoy the life God has given. By healing the man, Jesus enabled Him to actually enjoy the gift of the Sabbath as God had always intended. The Pharisees were more concerned about their self-imposed standards than the kindness of God.

“What I (Jesus) stand for is at the heart of the law, and it is deeply offensive to you —namely, that human beings exist for the glory of God, and should have wills that love to live for the glory of God. And you have made the law a servant of your self-exaltation, not a means of God-exaltation.”¹

Sermon Notes

¹Piper, John. “Willing God's Will as a Way of Knowing Christ's Word.” *Desiring God*, 14 Feb. 2011, www.desiringgod.org/messages/willing-gods-will-as-a-way-of-knowing-christs-word.

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. Why do you think there is a pull to give authority to those who are beautiful or talented?

2. How does Christ give us an example of giving glory to God, rather than self?

Go

1. How can focusing on the glory of God, rather than on the glory of self, help us to share the gospel?

2. How can "glory of self" hinder evangelism?

Discussion Questions

1. Share a time when you wanted to make something public rather than keep it private. What was the situation? What was your motivation?

2. Jesus refuses to make his ministry public at this time. What reason does He give? How might we learn from and admire Jesus in this situation?

3. Share a time when God confronted you. What were the circumstances? How did you respond?

4. While Jesus's brothers (in the previous passage) want Jesus to do more miracles, many of the Jewish people in Jerusalem feel threatened by his miracles (particularly the healing on the Sabbath in chapter 5) and want to see Him dead. Why do they respond this way? What is going on in their hearts?

5. Jesus confronts the Jews with their legalism. What is legalism? How does Jesus tie legalism to authority and glory in this passage?

Additional Reading

From *Glimpses of Grace* by Gloria Furman¹

The reason for guarding the gospel and applying the gospel is the same—the gospel is the means by which we can behold the glory of God. The law, though perfect and good, cannot give us unhindered vision into the throne room of the Most High, because we can't obey it perfectly. The problem is not with the law; the problem is with us....

Paul explains how we can behold the glory of the Lord because of the gospel. "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). The very sight of Christ in his glory is transforming. When the Holy Spirit of God reveals to us the glory of God in the face of Christ, we are transformed. There is no need to veil our faces, because we are in Christ, and he has given us the spiritual acuity we need in order to behold the Lord's glory.

In this beholding of the Lord, we find the greatest joy imaginable and supreme glory that no eye has seen and no ear had heard. "From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him" (Isa. 64:4). "Behold your God!" is the most loving command we could receive from the Lord. He is beautiful beyond our human capacity to describe, yet he exuberantly instructs his people to declare his glory:

Go on up to a high mountain,

O Zion, herald of good news;

lift up your voice and strength,

O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not;

say to the cities of Judah,

"Behold your God!"

Isaiah 40:9

The reason "Behold your God!" is good news is that Jesus Christ made it possible for us to see God and live. Without his mediation on our behalf, we may not see God and live. In Christ, we can see God and live forever.

¹Furman, Gloria. *Glimpses of Grace: Treasuring the Gospel in Your Home*. Crossway, 2013.

John 7:25-36

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

John 14:7

...that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:2-3

For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He had no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

Isaiah 53:2

Knowledge, Truth, and the Word

Throughout the past several verses, we witness the crowd at the temple considering, questioning and judging who Jesus is, yet no one in any official capacity has responded to, or even tried to stop Jesus's teaching. The crowd begins to wonder if the religious leaders have affirmed Jesus as the Messiah. Perhaps the leaders in the temple have allowed Jesus to speak because they hear the crowd disagreeing with Him and anticipate that the crowd will reject Him. And that is what the crowd does when they say they know where Jesus came from (inferring his birthplace and parentage). They believe that when the Messiah appears, no one would know his origin, therefore denying Jesus's claims. This view acknowledges some expectation of mystic surrounding the coming of the Messiah (likely also a hope for a grand entrance). Instead of asking God to help them understand what is true, they first considered what the authorities believed, and then secondly, on what terms they wanted their Messiah. Knowledge begins with God and is given by God (Proverbs 9:10), and God desires to reveal Himself to his people (1 Corinthians 2:10). If they had consulted the scriptures, which are the very words of God, they would have seen evidence for Jesus's claims (Micah 5:2, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 53:2).

Jesus cries out to them that, yes, they do know of his human birth but they do not know who sent Him. The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges writes, "They have an outward knowledge of Him and His origin (John 6:42); but He has an inner and higher origin, of which they know nothing. So that even their self-made test, for the sake of which they are willing to resist the evidence both of Scripture and of His works, is complied with; for they know not His real immediate origin." It's ironic that the test they had made (that they should not know the origin of the Messiah) is accurate, but they are blind to their own lack of vision. The crowd had knowledge of the facts, but they don't have understanding (the ability to translate meaning from the facts) or wisdom (knowing what to do next, given an understanding of the facts and circumstances).

Some of the crowd sought to arrest Jesus after his proclamation, yet others believed in Him, saying, "When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done?" (John 7:31) This acceptance of Jesus seems as though they thought, "Could someone else come and do more works than Him? Maybe, but this should be enough to satisfy." In John 12:37, we read that the culmination of Jesus's signs/works still does not produce belief. The reality is that we need to accept the truth of Jesus by faith because the truth of Jesus is salvation, which can only be accomplished by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Accepting the truth by faith requires us to respond individually to Jesus, regardless of what anyone else says about Him. We are not to judge Jesus by his outward appearance, but by the testimony of God, in his word, and the work Jesus accomplishes, which He was sent to do (John 5:36). When Jesus said, "He who sent me is true," the word true wasn't merely truthful, but meant the truly existent one —a truth that exists beyond our knowledge of time and space. This foundation of the truth of all that is, is the foundation on which Jesus came.

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. When have you been tempted to go along with the crowd instead of speaking up for what you know to be true?

2. What evidence is there from Jesus's origin that points to Him being the Messiah? (Micah 5:2, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 53:2)

Go

1. What are common fears that keep us from proclaiming Christ?

2. How can this passage encourage you if you are speaking to a group that denies Christ?

Discussion Questions

1. Share a time when you were confused. What were the circumstances? How did you feel? Did the situation get resolved?

2. In this passage, people are trying to make sense of what they know about Jesus and whether He could be the Christ. What are some things that were confusing to them? What are some things that confuse people today about Jesus and whether He is God?

3. How does Jesus respond to the people's confusion? How might we respond to people's confusion about Him?

4. The chief priests sought to arrest Jesus, but were unable to because "his hour had not yet come." How do you think this impacted Jesus's ministry? How might God's protection and care for you shape the way you live your life?

5. While many are confused about Jesus, some people believe in Him and need no further signs or proof. What are some ways Jesus has proved Himself to you as the Christ? Spend some time praising Jesus as a group.

Additional Reading

From *Elliot's Commentary for English Readers* by C.J. Ellicotts¹

And I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true.—Once again He asserts that He claims no position of independence. He is the first great Apostle (comp. Hebrews 3:1), but He is not self-commissioned. Had He not been the Christ, their objection that they knew His origin might have had force. But sent by Him who is the really existent One, and whom they knew not, His origin is unknown to them, and their technical test is fulfilled. In the fullest sense, they neither knew Him nor from whence He came.

For the meaning of the word “true,” see Note on John 1:9. It is almost impossible to give the sense of the original except in a paraphrase. We must keep, therefore, the ordinary rendering, but bear in mind that it does not mean, “He that sent Me is truthful,” but “He that sent Me is the ideally true One.” “You talk of person, and of origin, of knowing Me, and from whence I came, but all this is knowledge of the senses, and in the region of the phenomenal world. Being is only truly known in relation to the Eternal Being. He that sent Me to manifest His Being in the world is the truly existent One. In Him is My true origin, and Him ye know not.”

From *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* by James Orr²

Gradual Disclosure of Messiahship: Growth of Unbelief

On the other side, there is as manifestly an evolution of unbelief from the passing doubt of the moment on to the complete disbelief in Jesus, and utter rejection of Him.

It is only fair here to the Gospel to observe that the confessions to which we have already referred are on the part of individuals who came into special relationship with Jesus. Such is the case with regard to Nathaniel, Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria and the Samaritan people, and the writer places the reader in that close relationship so that he who reads may believe. But such close relationship to Jesus is only the lot of a few in this Gospel. It is not true, as already remarked, that in this Gospel Jesus is represented as definitely proclaiming Himself as the Messiah. There is something of the same reserve here as there is in the Synoptics. He did not assert His claim; He left

¹Ellicott, C. J. “Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers.” *John 7:28*, Biblehub.com, biblehub.com/commentaries/john/7-28.htm.

²Orr, James, M.A., D.D. General Editor. “Entry for ‘JOHN, GOSPEL OF’”. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. 1915.

it to be inferred. His brethren hint that He ought to put His claims really to the test (John 7:3). An account of the doubts and speculations regarding Him is given in John 7. The people hesitate, and inquire, and speculate, Is He a good man, or a deceiver? (7:12) Had He really a mission from God? (7:14)--all of which goes to prove that only certain individuals had such intimate knowledge of Him as to lead to acceptance. In John 10 we read, "And it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem: it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's porch. The Jews therefore came round about him, and said unto him, 'How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly'" (10:22 -24). "It is very clear," as Dr. Sanday says, "that no sharply defined issue was set before the people. They are left to draw their own conclusions; and they draw them as well as they can by the help of such criteria as they have. But there is no Entweder-oder—either Messiah or not Messiah—peremptorily propounded by Jesus Himself" (The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel, 164). The sum of the matter as regards the development of unbelief is given by the evangelist in the words: "Though he had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on him" (12:37). On the other hand, the culmination of faith is seen in the word of the Lord to Thomas: "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (20:29).

Resources

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/john-gospel-of.html>

<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/john/7-28.htm>

John 7:37-52

I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.

Ezekiel 39:29

Satisfying our Thirst

At the Feast of Tabernacles, Israel remembered God's promise to their people of Messiah-King who would rule in righteousness. The Feast of Tabernacles would reach its climax on the final day, called "the Great Hosannah," which looked forward to the day when the Christ would appear.

However, the Feast of Tabernacles not only looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, but to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as well. During the festival, the Jews would pour out water representing the day when God's Spirit would be poured out on all Israel, and the Lord would dwell with His people once again. The Jews looked forward to the outpouring of the Spirit as the day when God would turn their hearts to love and they would worship Him in heartfelt obedience (Ezekiel 39:29, Isaiah 32:12-20; 59:20-21, Joel 2:28), and even referred to the gift of the Spirit as the "promise of the Father" (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4).

When Jesus jumped up crying, "If any one thirst, let Him come to Me and drink", He wasn't being subtle. Confusion was virtually impossible. Instead, He deliberately clarified it that He was the answer to their very present needs. He showed that He was the fulfillment then, and He continues to fulfill us now. After His resurrection He sent His Holy Spirit, and we no longer need a Feast of Tabernacles to remind us. Every day believers can rejoice that He has filled us with His Spirit. We live in an age that Moses and the Prophets longed for—the age of the Spirit when God dwells in us and empowers us for his glory.

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. What does it mean to “thirst” for the Lord?

2. What does the Old Testament promise about the Holy Spirit?

Go

1. How would you explain the Holy Spirit to a neighbor?

2. What could you discuss from this passage with a non-believer?

Discussion Questions

1. Share a time when you were part of a group discussion in which there were 2 opposing viewpoints. What was the issue? What happened?

2. On the last day of the feast, Jesus offers living water. What does this mean? How have you experienced this living water?

3. Why do you think this created such division?

4. What arguments do the Pharisees and their followers make to support their claim that Jesus is not the Christ? What additional statements might people use today?

5. What evidence do Jesus's followers use to support their claim that He is the Christ? What additional evidence would you give?

6. How might knowing the values and beliefs of those who don't believe in Jesus help you better minister to them and hold out Jesus to them? Spend some time praying for those you know who do not believe in Jesus.

Additional Reading

From the sermon *Rivers From the Heart* by John Piper¹

We are afflicted and blessed with a chronic restlessness, an insatiable soul-thirst, for this reason: that we might keep looking until we find Christ. And that having found him we might be turned back to him again and again when we taste of other springs and find them bitter. We were made for God. The taste buds of our souls were made to relish fellowship with the Son of God. But we have become sinners, and the fundamental meaning of sin is thirsting for things other than God. Our sinful nature is a condition of diseased spiritual taste buds. Therefore, the prerequisite for coming to Christ and finding joy in him is renewal of our spiritual taste buds. Paul said, "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him" (1 Corinthians 2:14). The unspiritual man looks at a believer who delights in drawing near to Christ in worship, prayer, study, and witness, and all he can see is a fool or a hypocrite. He cannot imagine that any of those things is a delight. He has no thirst for Christ, and so the invitation of Jesus is a dead issue.

But God is gracious. He frustrates the human race again and again. He causes every wreath to wither, every gold cup to tarnish, every muscle to sag, every face to wrinkle, every sexual exploit to go sour, every sin to sting, until we have put him off too long. He wants us for himself. He wants everything but himself to grow dim in our eyes. He offers to heal our spiritual taste buds. And if you feel the slightest desire for Christ this morning, then you can know that God is doing surgery on the diseased taste buds of your soul so that you will thirst for Jesus. You may only feel a desire to thirst. That, too, is a kind of thirst for God. Do not let it die. Fan it into a flame with earnest pleadings for God's kindling mercy. Let nothing stand in your way. There is only one condition: earnest desire for what Jesus has to give. The very last chapter of our Bibles leaves this merciful invitation ringing in our ears:

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

You need no money and no moral track record. You only need genuine desire. "Let him who desires take the water of life without price." May God be gracious to everyone here to heal the tongues of our soul and make us taste the difference between sweet poison and living water.

¹ Piper, John. "Rivers From the Heart." *Desiring God*, 19 July 1981, www.desiringgod.org/messages/rivers-from-the-heart.

Resources

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/rivers-from-the-heart>

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John 7:53-8:11

A Perplexing Passage

In this passage, we enter one of the most perplexing sections in John's gospel. The narrative describing Jesus's interaction with the scribes and Pharisees provokes many questions.

What did Jesus write in the ground?

Why did they walk away?

Where was the man who was caught in sin?

But the most looming question surrounds a strange footnote at the bottom of our Bibles that says, "The earliest manuscripts do not include 7:53-8:11." What do we do with that? Do we now question the inerrancy of God's Word? Why would Bible translators put that in there? What does this mean for our faith in the Bible?

Thankfully, we have good answers to those questions. To get at the heart of how we treat this text, let's get the hard stuff out of the way by looking through the lens of textual criticism. Textual criticism is sort of like biblical archaeology, where someone discovers ancient texts, compares them, and looks for all the overlapping parts and the potential errors. Through this lens, we can say the following things. It is nearly universally agreed upon that this part of John didn't appear in the gospel until approximately 350 years after John's writing. New Testament scholars such as D.A. Carson have noted that, "These verses...are absent from virtually all early Greek manuscripts that have come down to us." Additionally, despite textual critics noting that this portion of Scripture was not originally included by John, there are three pieces of information that help us see its inclusion in the gospel.

First, writings from church history affirm its inclusion. Papias, who wrote from 95 A.D. to 120 A.D. referred to this story, as did Didymus the Blind (313 A.D.–398 A.D.), thus showing that even though the story didn't appear in written form until the 5th century, it was known as a story orally. Second, historians like Bruce Metzger and Gary Burge have stated that even though the story was not originally included in the gospel, "the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity" meaning that the writing style, theme, and location of the account are consistent with the teachings of Jesus

and is worthy of inclusion for teaching and preaching. Third, the preponderance of copies of early New Testament writings (over 5,000) show that even though this section shows up in later writings, when it does show up it shows up consistently.

So back to my question of what we do with this passage. Don't feel the need to get certified online for Apologetics and Textual Criticism 101. We can be thankful that the amount of evidence that exists about this passage tells us that due to a number of factors, like oral traditions of communication or even John 21:25, God is sovereign and has provided an abundance of resources to help us in sifting through the truth of His word. In terms of a practical step, John Piper provides us with helpful words for understanding and using this particular passage:

...what I will do is take its most remarkable point and show that it is true on the basis of other parts of Scripture, and so let this story not be the basis of our authority, but an echo and a pointer to our authority, namely, the Scriptures, that teach what it says.¹

As we apply Piper's recommendation to our understanding of the text, we may see that the blessing of the Word is its consistency in its presentation of the ugliness of sin, the need of a Savior, and the mercy and grace that comes by taking up His cross and following Him.

¹Piper, J. (2011). Neither do I condemn you. Retrieved from https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/neither-do-i-condemn-you_-3. Date: 12/09/2017

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
 2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?
-
-

Grow

1. What was your initial reaction to reading that this section was not included in the original manuscripts?
-
-

2. What questions do you have about how we got the Bible? Write them down and do some research.
-
-

Go

1. How would you explain the footnote to this section to an unbeliever?
-
2. How would you help someone understand that this section does not take away from the trustworthiness of the Bible?
-
-

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever felt condemned by someone or a group of people? Describe the situation and what happened.

2. In this story, an adulteress woman is brought to Jesus in order to test Him. What is the test?

3. Even though this woman was deserving of condemnation under the law of Moses, Jesus does not condemn her to stoning. How can He do this? See Romans 3:25b and 8:1 for help.

4. While Jesus does not condemn the woman to death, He does tell her to sin no more. How is Jesus calling you to repent and turn from your sin? How might His kindness (Romans 2:4) lead you to repentance?

5. What does Jesus's merciful response to the woman tell us about the heart of God? How might we better imitate His heart to others? Is there anyone in particular God is calling you to forgive?

Additional Reading

From *Neither Do I Condemn You* by John Piper²

The Science of Textual Criticism

The New Testament that we know was originally written in Greek. The first printed Greek New Testament—that came off a printing press—was published by Erasmus in 1516. It turned the world upside down. If you want a great glimpse of this period and the heroism it produced, read David Daniell’s biography of William Tyndale.

This means that for 1500 years the manuscripts of the biblical books were passed down to us through handwritten copies. This is how we have access to the actual words that the New Testament writers wrote with their very hands. None of those first, original manuscripts is known to exist. Which is probably just as well, since we would probably turn it into an idol and charge money for people to come worship.

So the books of the New Testament were preserved for us by faithful, hardworking copyists. Some of these copies were in a script called uncials (referring to manuscripts with all capital Greek letters), others were in a script called minuscule (referring to manuscripts with small Greek letters). A smaller number are called papyri because they are very early and written on the special paper-like material made from the Papyrus plant that was prevalent in the Nile Delta. One last group of manuscripts is the lectionaries—which were collections of texts for reading in public worship.

Simply Staggering

Now here is what’s amazing. The abundance of these manuscripts of the New Testament, or parts of the New Testament, as compared to the number of manuscripts for all other ancient works is simply staggering.

There are ten existing manuscripts of Julius Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* (composed between 58 and 50 BC). And all of these date from the tenth century or later.

There are twenty manuscripts of Livy’s *Roman History* written roughly during the time when Jesus was alive.

²Piper, J. (2011). *Neither do I condemn you*. Retrieved from <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/neither-do-i-condemn-you--3>. Date: 12/09/2017

Only two manuscripts exist for Tacitus's Histories and the Annals, which were composed around AD 100—one from the ninth and one from the eleventh century.

There are only eight manuscripts of the History of Thucydides who lived 460–400 BC.

Compare those numbers with the manuscripts and partial manuscripts for the New Testament. These numbers are from the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Muenster, Germany, which is the most authoritative collection of such data in the world. There are 322 uncial texts, 2,907 minuscule texts, 2,445 lectionary portions, and 127 papyri, for a total of 5,801 manuscripts. These are all hand-written copies of the New Testament or parts of the New Testament preserved in libraries around the world and now captured electronically. No other ancient book comes close to this kind of wealth of diverse preservation.

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John 8:12-20

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you: that God is light; and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:5-7

Light of the World

“Again Jesus spoke to them saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” (John 8:12) As He so often does, Jesus uses physical realities around Him to communicate spiritual truth. He takes things his hearers would have been familiar with to explain who He is. Here, He is speaking to Jews during the Feast of Booths. During this feast, they would have been remembering and celebrating God’s deliverance of His people from Egypt as they journeyed to the Promised Land—when God led them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God had literally been the light of His people then, and that would have been clear in their minds as they heard Jesus’s words.

As Jesus calls Himself the light, He continues to press in on the fact that He is God’s Son. The Pharisees doubt Him, accuse Him. It is reminiscent of many of Jesus’s interactions with the Pharisees that John has recorded thus far. Jesus asserts his deity and the Pharisees scoff. Jesus says He the Light and they criticize Him as bearing false witness about Himself. And yet Jesus insists. He bears witness about Himself and the Father bears witness that He is from God. He and the Father are one. Because God is light, Jesus is the light of the world.

What does it mean for Jesus to be the light of the world? What does light do? It illuminates. It provides clarity. Light expels darkness. Where there is light, darkness cannot exist. Light replaces the darkness with itself. The light of Christ is the glory of Christ. And what is darkness? Absence of light. Darkness is lost-ness. It is without God-ness. Darkness is sin. And Jesus has come to expel the darkness. To get rid of sin. He has come to replace the sin in our hearts with the glory of Himself. He has come to lead us out of our dark captivity to sin into the light of the Promised Land.

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. If we believe that Jesus is the light, then why do believers still have seasons of darkness?

2. What does it mean in your life right now to follow Jesus and walk in the light?

Go

1. Compare John 8:12 with Matthew 5:14-16. How does this impact the way that you share the gospel with others?

2. How can you use the dark times in your life to show others the light of Christ?

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been afraid of the dark? Share your circumstances and how that made you feel.

2. Jesus says that He is the light of the world and whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness. What does this mean? How have you seen this take place in your life?

3. Jesus also says that whoever has Him has the light of life. How are light and life connected in Jesus? See John 1:4 for help.

4. When confronted about the truth of His testimony, why does Jesus speak of His relationship with His Father? Why is the union between the Father and the Son so important to the Christian faith?

5. Because the Pharisees are in the darkness, they do not understand who Jesus or the Father is. Who are people you know who are currently in the darkness? Spend some time praying for them and that they would be given spiritual sight to see Jesus as the light of the world.

6. There also are many people groups who are unreached with the gospel and currently live in darkness, never hearing the name of Jesus. Please pray for our gospel partners who are trying to reach them in China, the Philippines, Morocco, and Nepal.

Additional Reading

From *The Glory of Christ* by John Owen¹

Those who cannot see His glory by faith do not know Him. When they worship Him, they worship an image of their own devising. Not to see that Christ is the only true representative of the glory of God to the souls of men, is to be an unbeliever. This was the sad state of the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles of old. They did not, they would not, they could not, behold the glory of God in Him and that was why they did not believe in Him (I Cor. 1:21-25). The one who does not see the wisdom and power of God and all the other holy properties of the divine nature in Christ, as well as seeing Him as the only way of salvation is, to put it bluntly, an unbeliever.

¹Owen, John. *The Glory of Christ*, pp12-13. Puritan Paperbacks, 1994.

John 8:21-30

But the Lord God called to man and said to him, "Where are you?" **Genesis 3:9**

Above or Below?

Questions to Consider:

I. Where are you?

II. Who is Jesus?

Recently, a young student asked me with all sincerity, "What is sin?" It was a real concern for him. "What is it? I mean, is it alive; is it inside me?" he worried. I commended the question. We went back to the beginning, just like John, just like Jesus. It is best to go back to the beginning to define terms. We read that in the beginning the man and the woman walked with God in perfect harmony. We read that the serpent introduced a terrible lie about God's character, "Did God actually say...?" (Genesis 3:1) We read how the serpent tempted the woman to doubt God's goodness, and embracing this lie gave birth to sin. The Fall: above to below. From what we read in the beginning, I could show my student that the genesis of sin was not believing what God said to be true and good. So not believing God leads to death—spiritual death. Sin is therefore unbelief. Sin is death. My student pondered this.

The gospel according to John continually and graciously calls us to consider where we are and to believe who Jesus says he is. In this passage, Jesus's words about the Jews' unbelief are harsh, but helpful. Jesus warns them about their predicament: "You will die in your sin" and "Where I am going you cannot come." Then he specifically lays it out: "You are from below; I am from above", and "You are from this world; I am not of this world." It is helpful to be honest with those in danger. Am I dead in sin and unbelief? Am I stuck below? Am I obsessed with this world? We know that this world is passing away and will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:7). How kind of Jesus to offer hope! "For unless you believe..., you will die in your sins." I can go where Jesus is if I believe. Believe what?

The next question is the most important question a person can ask of Jesus. "Who are you?" Regardless of whether this was a mocking or taunting question by the Jews, it is magnificent for us

to consider Jesus's response. I like to make lists from God's word. I especially like to stop and consider what Jesus says about who He is. Jesus, the Master Teacher, goes back to the beginning. From reading the Holy Scriptures, I can trace the following truths from this passage back to the beginning of God's Story to the gospel according to John:

Jesus has been speaking from the beginning. Jesus was in fact at the beginning with God (John 1, Genesis 1).

1. *Jesus is judge.*
2. *God sent Jesus.*
3. *God is true.*
4. *Jesus speaks on behalf of God.*
5. *Jesus predicts his death and resurrection. (His resurrection would communicate the power and authority of God to conquer death.)*
6. *Jesus and God are one. All Jesus does pleases the Father.*

Throughout John's gospel we have seen a great problem. This problem can be traced back to the beginning of The Story. There is a problem of darkness and a need for light. There is a problem of unbelief and need for belief. There is a problem of death and need for life. I am thankful God has spoken to us and there is life in his words. Please consider where you are. Please believe who God says He is in Christ Jesus.

Treasure

1. Read through the passage two or three times.
2. Write down 10 observations about the text. Start by asking who/what/where/when/why/how?

Grow

1. In what ways would you describe what your life would be like apart from Jesus?

2. What actions or thoughts limit how we think about Jesus?

3. What does Jesus mean by 'death'?

Go

1. What are some ways you can ask people about who they think Jesus is?

2. What are different opinions non-Christians have of Jesus?

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had to move or had a friend move away? Share your experience and how that impacted you.

2. Jesus tells the Pharisees that He is going away and they cannot come with Him. Why? Compare and contrast this statement to what He told His disciples in John 13:36-14:6.

3. While Jesus states that those who are in sin cannot come with Him, He also offers eternal life to those who believe in Him. How might Jesus' gospel witness in this passage serve as an example for you as you seek to be a witness to others?

4. Jesus references His Father's authority, teaching, presence, and pleasure in verses 28 - 29 as important aspects of His relationship with His Father. Talk about each of them and why they are important.

5. Now discuss the above aspects and how they impact your relationship with God. Are some more important to you than others? Why or why not?

6. How can your group pray for you to grow in your relationship with your heavenly Father? Spend some time in prayer as a group.

Additional Reading

From *Four Ways a Person Can Die in Their Sins* by John MacArthur¹

There are four elements from John 8:21–30 that show how a person can die in his sin:

Be Self-Righteous

The first way to guarantee that you will die in your sin is to be convinced that you don't need to be saved, that you are spiritually all right. Satan is clever. When he puts together a phony system based on human achievement and works-righteousness, he does it in such a complex and supposedly biblical way that it is tremendously deceiving. People become captivated in cults and falsely assume they can gain righteousness by what they do. But no one ever comes to Christ who doesn't see Him as a Savior who takes away sin and himself as a sinner who needs his sin taken away.

Be Earth-Bound

In John 8:23 Jesus says, "I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world." He tells the Pharisees that they are part of the world system of which He is not. The term "world" simply refers to the invisible spiritual realm of evil. You could characterize the system in this way: it is materialistic and humanistic, believing that man is going to solve his problems by himself and rule his own fate; it is lost in preoccupation with sex; it is plagued by carnal ambition, pride, greed, jealousy, envy, self-pleasure and selfish desire, murder, and so on. Its opinions are wrong, its aims are selfish, its pleasures are sinful, its influences are demoralizing, its politics are corrupt, its honors are empty, its smiles are phony, and its love is fickle. Furthermore, it is in the process of dissolution; according to 1 John 2:17, "the world is passing away." It will self-destruct.

Be Unbelieving

In John 8:24 Jesus says, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." So the third way to guarantee you will die in your sins is to be unbelieving of the gospel. You don't have to go out and kill someone and be bad to go to hell, because hell is not just for criminals, it is for everyone and anyone who refuses Christ. It isn't enough to believe that Jesus is the One you think He is; you must believe that He is the One He claimed to be—"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), "he who believes in Me will never thirst" (6:35),

¹Four Ways a Person Can Die in Their Sins. *Crossway Articles*, 18 May 2011, www.crossway.org/articles/four-ways-a-person-can-die-in-their-sins/.

"I am the Light of the world" (8:12), "I am the good shepherd" (10:11), "I am the door" (10:9), "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6). Because Jesus was identifying Himself with God, saving faith not only becomes a question of turning from sin, but trusting the Son as well. It's a question of believing Jesus is who He claimed to be.

Be Willfully Ignorant

When someone hears a speech about Christ, but doesn't let it register, that person is willfully ignorant. The Jewish leaders had enough evidence about Christ, they just refused to believe, and in their chosen ignorance, even mocked Him. They were willfully ignorant of Christ's identity: "So they were saying to Him, 'Who are You?'" (John 8:25). Far from being an honest question, this could be paraphrased, "Who do you think you are, fella? These are some pretty ridiculous things you are saying, telling us that we're going to die in our sin."






FOUR OAKS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Killearn Congregation

4500 W Shannon Lakes Dr




www.fouroakschurch.com/killearn

@fouroakskillearn   

Midtown Congregation

526 E. 8th Ave

www.fouroakschurch.com/midtown

@fouroaksmidtown   

850.385.0004 | fouroakschurch.com | info@fouroakschurch.com | @fouroakschurch

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