

# JOHN

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## BACKGROUND

See [Matthew: Background](#).

## AUTHOR

Though the text gives no name, the consistent testimony of the early church is that the author is John, the beloved disciple ([John 21:20-25](#)) and early church leader ([Galatians 2:9](#)). The eyewitness quality of the Gospel confirms this. John also authored the three letters bearing his name and Revelation.

## DATE

Early church fathers believed it was written in John's old age, probably A.D. 85-95, some 20 years after the Synoptics. John's five books were the last NT books written.

## LOCATION AND RECIPIENTS

Eusebius says John lived in Ephesus after Paul founded the church there. From there he conducted a kind of home-missions ministry. His Gospel and letters were a part of that ministry.

## PURPOSE

While the synoptic Gospels focused on the historical facts of Jesus' life, John interpreted those facts to show that Jesus was, indeed, the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior of the world. He sought to instill faith in his readers ([John 20:30-31](#)).

## UNIQUE FEATURES

- While omitting many of the miracles reported in the synoptic Gospels, John chose seven, apparently to help show that Jesus is the Messiah:
  - changing water to wine ([John 2:1-11](#))
  - healing the nobleman's son ([John 4:46-54](#))
  - healing the lame man at Bethesda ([John 5:1-18](#))
  - feeding 5,000 ([John 6:5-14](#))
  - walking on water ([John 6:16-21](#))
  - healing the blind man ([John 9:1-7](#))
  - raising Lazarus ([John 11:1-45](#))

- He also recorded seven occasions when Jesus bore witness to his Messiahship:
  - "I am the bread of life" ([John 6:35](#)).
  - "I am the light of the world" ([John 8:12](#)).
  - "I am the gate" ([John 10:7](#)).
  - "I am the good shepherd" ([John 10:11, 14](#)).
  - "I am the resurrection and the life" ([John 11:25](#)).
  - "I am the way, the truth, and the life" ([John 14:6](#)).
  - "I am the true vine" ([John 15:1](#)).

## COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

» **See also:** [Illustration: Fourfold Gospel Account, The](#)

*The Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke):*

- The Synoptics are primarily historical; John is primarily theological and interpretative, omitting many key historical facts:
  - Jesus' genealogy and birth
  - his baptism and temptation
  - his Galilean and Perea ministries
  - his healing of demoniacs
  - his parables
  - the Transfiguration
  - the Lord's Supper
  - Gethsemane
  - the Ascension
- Instead, John focuses on:
  - Christ's early ministry in Judea and Jerusalem; while the Synoptics record only one visit to Jerusalem, John mentions four ([John 2:13-25](#); [John 5](#); [John 7:10-10:39](#); [John 12-19](#)).
  - his contacts and private conversations with individuals (see [John 3:1-21](#); [John 4:1-26](#))
  - his ministry to the disciples (see [John 13-17](#))
- John and the Synoptics supplement each other concerning the events of the "Last Supper":
  - If we had only the Synoptics, we would know nothing of the washing of feet ([John 13](#)).
  - If we had only John, we would know nothing of the institution of the Lord's Supper ([Matthew 26:26-30](#)).

*1 John:*

- John's Gospel was written to lead people to faith in Christ ([John 20:30-31](#)); the epistle was written to confirm believers in their faith ([1 John 5:13](#)).

*Revelation:*

- John's Gospel presents the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth on earth; Revelation presents the ministry of the exalted Jesus from heaven.

## OUTLINE

1. JESUS THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD ([John 1:1-18](#))

1. His existence from the beginning ([John 1:1-5](#))
2. The witness of John the Baptist ([John 1:6-8](#))
- C. The witness of the Light ([John 1:9-13](#))
- D. The incarnation of the Light ([John 1:14-18](#))

II. JESUS THE EARTHLY SON OF GOD ([John 1:19-18:11](#))

A. His early ministry ([John 1:19-4:54](#))

- A. Baptism ([John 1:19-34](#))
- B. First disciples ([John 1:35-51](#))
3. Changing water to wine ([John 2:1-11](#))
4. First cleansing of the Temple ([John 2:12-25](#))
5. Nicodemus; the new birth ([John 3:1-21](#))
6. Testimony of John the Baptist ([John 3:22-36](#))
7. Woman at the well ([John 4:1-42](#))
8. Healing the government official's son ([John 4:43-54](#))

B. His ministry in Jerusalem ([John 5](#))

1. Healing the lame man at Bethesda ([John 5:1-18](#))
2. Teachings ([John 5:19-47](#))

C. His Ministry in Galilee ([John 6:1-7:9](#))

1. Feeding 5,000; walking on water ([John 6:1-21](#))
2. Bread of Life ([John 6:22-7:9](#))

D. His return to Jerusalem ([John 7:10-10:42](#))

1. Debates and discourses ([John 7:10-53](#))
2. Woman taken in adultery ([John 8:1-11](#))

3. Light of the World ([John 8:12-30](#))
  4. Abraham's children ([John 8:31-59](#))
  5. Healing the blind man ([John 9](#))
  6. Good Shepherd ([John 10](#))
- E. His ministry at Bethany ([John 11:1-12:11](#))
1. Lazarus raised ([John 11](#))
  2. Anointing by Mary ([John 12:1-11](#))
- F. His ministry's conclusion ([John 12:12-50](#))
1. Triumphal Entry ([John 12:12-19](#))
  2. Teachings ([John 12:20-50](#))
- G. Preparing his disciples for his death ([John 13-17](#))
1. Washing his disciples' feet ([John 13](#))
  2. Heaven; the Holy Spirit ([John 14](#))
  3. Vine and branches ([John 15:1-17](#))
  4. Persecution; the Holy Spirit ([John 15:18-16:33](#))
  5. Prayer for his disciples ([John 17](#))
- H. His arrest ([John 18:1-11](#))

### III. JESUS THE EXECUTED SON OF GOD ([John 18:12-19:42](#))

- A. His religious trial ([John 18:12-27](#))
- B. His civil trial ([John 18:28-19:16](#))
- C. His crucifixion ([John 19:17-37](#))
- D. His burial ([John 19:38-42](#))

### IV. JESUS THE EXALTED SON OF GOD ([John 20:1-21:25](#))

- A. His empty tomb ([John 20:1-10](#))

- B. His postresurrection appearances ([John 20:11-21:25](#))
1. To Mary ([John 20:11-18](#))
  2. To his disciples ([John 20:19-23](#))
  3. To Thomas ([John 20:24-31](#))
  4. By the Sea of Galilee ([John 21](#))

## TIMELINE

5 B.C.:	Birth of Christ
A.D. 26:	Begins ministry
A.D. 27:	Talks with Nicodemus
A.D. 28:	Chooses 12
A.D. 29:	Feeds 5,000, raises Lazarus
A.D. 30:	Death, resurrection, ascension

**[John 1:1-5](#)** *The wonderful works of the Word.* Often considered the most profound passage in all of Scripture, the first five verses of John's Gospel introduce Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God. [John 1:1](#) affirms three great truths concerning him:

- His eternity: "In the beginning the Word already existed."
- His personality: "He was with God."
- His deity: "He was God."

"Word" is the Greek word *logos*, used frequently throughout the Greek NT and other literature of the day. It can mean message, word, concept, expression, or speech. Greek philosophers used the term, as did Philo, the first-century Jewish philosopher. However, John used it in a unique way, to teach that Jesus was the embodiment or expression of all that God is (compare exposition on [§Col. 1:15-23](#)).

[John 1:2-5](#) expands on [John 1:1](#):

- Jesus Christ was with the Father in eternity past ([John 1:2](#)).
- As a part of the Godhead, he was the Creator ([John 1:3](#)).
- He is both the light and life of all humankind ([John 1:4](#)).
- The darkness of the fallen world could not "extinguish" his light ([John 1:5](#)).

John's prologue establishes his special interest in showing that Jesus of Nazareth truly was the Son of God (see [Purpose](#)). These opening verses help establish the Bible's unique teaching that God is a Trinity (see exposition on [§Genesis 1:26-31](#)).

**[John 1:6-8](#)** *A witness for the Word.* John noted God's special commissioning of John the Baptist to introduce Jesus the Messiah. Samuel was the first pre-Christian Israelite prophet, and John was the last: Samuel introduced Israel's first King ([1 Samuel 10](#)); John presented its eternal King ([John 1:29](#)).

**[John 1:9-13](#)** *Both rejected and received.* Though Jesus had created the world, when he was born, the world did not recognize him. Even his own people rejected him. There were however (and still are!) some who "accepted" him, and by so doing they became children of God. To accept Jesus means to believe in him ([John 1:12](#)). Birth into God's family ([John 1:13](#)) does not happen because of "physical birth," reformation ("human passion"), or by the actions of one's Christian parents ("human . . . plan"). Salvation is a supernatural new birth that can only be accomplished by God. "Gives light to everyone" ([John 1:9](#)) does not imply universal salvation, only universal revelation of truth (compare [John 16:8-11](#)).

**[John 1:14](#)** *When God becomes human.* Recalling perhaps his three years of ministry with Jesus, John expressed wonder at the fact that God the Son came from heaven to earth and lived as a human. This is commonly called the Incarnation—literally, the taking on of flesh, from *carnis*, Latin for "flesh" (see [Col. 2:9](#)). John had seen Jesus' divine glory, especially at the Transfiguration (see [Matthew 17:1-9](#)), but in many other ways as well. Jesus embodied God's grace and truth (compare [John 14:6](#)). On "lived . . . among us," see exposition on [Exodus 29:43-46](#).

**[John 1:15-18](#)** *Not law, but grace.* John recalled the message of John the Baptist concerning Christ's greatness. Christ did not come to give a new law, but to proclaim and by his sacrificial death make possible God's grace, which is God doing for humans what they cannot do for themselves. Though several OT saints "saw" God (see [Isaiah 6:1-7](#)), none had seen his essential nature. This was disclosed only in and through Jesus (see [John 14:8-9](#)).

**[John 1:19-28](#)** *Is he Christ? Elijah? The Prophet?* When people began wondering if John the Baptist was the long-awaited Messiah, they inquired of him, and he denied any such claim. He quoted Isaiah's predictions of both the Messiah and his own humble role in preparing the way for him ([John 1:23](#); see [Isaiah 40:3](#)). When they pressed him further concerning why he baptized, he again humbly spoke of someone "right here in the crowd" ([John 1:26](#)) who truly was the Messiah. On "Elijah" ([John 1:25](#)), see [Malachi 3:1](#); [Malachi 4:4-6](#) and exposition on [Matthew 17:10-13](#). The "Prophet" ([John 1:25](#)), predicted by Moses (see [Deut. 18:15](#)), was none other than Christ himself (see [Acts 3:22](#)).

**[John 1:29-34](#)** *"Behold! The Lamb of God!"* Jesus came to be baptized by John, and John clearly identified him as

- the person who, as the sacrificial Lamb of God, would make final atonement for sin ([John 1:29](#))
- the eternal Messiah ([John 1:30](#))
- the one who would baptize "with the Holy Spirit," as shown by the Spirit's descending upon him as a dove ([John 1:32-33](#)). John's own practice of water baptism was but a shadow of Christ's Spirit baptism ([John 1:33](#)).
- the Son of God ([John 1:34](#))

[[Matthew 3:13-17](#); [Mark 1:9-11](#); [Luke 3:21-22](#)]

**[John 1:35-42](#)** *"We have found the Messiah!"* On John's recommendation, two of his disciples began to follow Jesus. One of them, Andrew, brought his brother Simon to Jesus. Jesus renamed him Cephas, a transliteration of the Aramaic word for "stone," which the NT usually renders in Greek as Peter. This name would prove prophetic of Peter's leadership among the disciples and in the early church. The synoptic Gospels record a later encounter when these brothers became Christ's disciples (see [Matthew 4:18-20](#)).

**[John 1:43-51](#)** *"He is Jesus of Nazareth!"* In similar fashion to Andrew ([John 1:41-42](#)), Philip led his brother Nathanael to Jesus, testifying that he was the Messiah. Hearing that this Jesus was from Nazareth, Nathanael was skeptical ([John 1:46](#)), but a display of Jesus' omniscience was enough to change his mind ([John 1:48-51](#)). Nathanael probably knew the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (see [Micah 5:2](#)), so the mention of Nazareth probably confused him (see exposition on [Luke 2:1-7](#)). He probably had a low view of Nazareth, which housed the Roman garrison for northern Galilee, making "Nazarene" a term of utter contempt among Jews.

**[John 2:1-11](#)** *Wonderful wine for the wedding.* A wedding in Cana provided the occasion for Jesus' earliest recorded miracle (see [John 2:11](#)). When the host ran out of wine, Jesus turned water into wine of extraordinary quality, to everyone's amazement. The wedding feast probably lasted a week, as in the cases of Jacob (see [Genesis 29:27](#)) and Samson (see [Judges 14:17](#)). Running out of wine during such a long feast could be a serious problem.

Jesus' statement to Mary ([John 2:4](#)) was not crude or uncaring. The NLT translates it "How does that concern you and me?" "Wine" (Greek *oinos*, [John 2:3](#), etc.) can refer to either grape juice (see [Matthew 9:17](#)) or fermented wine (see [Ephes. 5:18](#)). Either way, the passage should not be seen as a license for the use of alcohol.

**[John 2:12-17](#)** *Zeal for his Father's house.* In Jerusalem for the Passover, Jesus was distraught to find money changers doing business in the Temple, and he drove them out, reminding his disciples of one of David's psalms (see [Psalm 69:9](#)). Jesus would "cleanse" the Temple at least once more (see exposition on [Luke 19:45-48](#)).

**[John 2:18-22](#)** *"You'll do what in just three days?"* Jesus went on to predict that "this temple" would be destroyed and rebuilt in just three days. Knowing how long Herod had spent building the Temple, the Jews were incredulous ([John 2:18-20](#)). Some three years later, at his crucifixion, they would use this seemingly outlandish boast to ridicule Christ (see [Matthew 26:61](#); [Matthew 27:40](#)). As John noted, however, Christ was speaking not of the Temple but of his body, as the disciples would realize after his resurrection ([John 2:21-22](#)).

**[John 2:23-25](#)** *Believers? Not really.* Jesus knew that many of the Jews who professed to believe in him had only a superficial faith, relating to his miracles and not to his deeper ministry of deliverance from sin. John would later come back to this theme of "unbelieving believers" (see [John 6:22-66](#); [John 8:31-59](#)).

**[John 3:1-21](#)** *"For God so loved the world."* Perhaps fearful of his colleagues, a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, seeking deeper spiritual truth from this miracle worker. Jesus cut short any philosophical discussion, declaring that salvation required being "born again" ([John 3:3](#); compare exposition on [John 1:9-13](#)). When Nicodemus seemed confused and spoke of physical birth,

Jesus explained that this new birth was spiritual in nature ([John 3:4-7](#)). To the human understanding it is like the wind, whose origin and destination are a mystery ([John 3:8](#)). When Nicodemus was still confused, Jesus reminded him that the OT spoke of the need for a new birth ([John 3:9-10](#); see exposition on the following passages: [§Jeremiah 31:31-34](#); [§Ezekiel 11:14-21](#); [§Ezekiel 36:16-38](#); [§Joel 2:28-32](#)).

Jesus claimed his right to speak with authority ([John 3:11-13](#)), as Nicodemus should have realized, having seen his miracles (see [John 3:2](#)). He reminded Nicodemus of the time when a lifted-up serpent saved Israel from a plague (see exposition on [§Numbers 21:4-9](#)), and predicted that his own approaching death would in like manner bring spiritual healing to all who believed in him ([John 3:14-16](#)).

Presenting the gospel in a nutshell, [John 3:16](#) clarifies

- the source of the gospel: God's love, demonstrated in the giving of his only Son to die on the cross
- the beneficiaries of the gospel: "everyone who believes"
- the required response: simple faith in Jesus (see [John 6:29](#))
- the importance of that response: Those who believe will live forever; those who do not believe will perish.

Jesus continued to stress the importance of the gospel and of responding to it in faith ([John 3:17-21](#)). All are born sinners and are condemned until they accept Jesus, the cure for sin ([John 3:18](#)).

Jesus said we must be "born of water and the Spirit" ([John 3:5](#)). While "born of . . . the Spirit" seems clearly to mean regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit, scholars take various views on "born of water." Some say it means that baptism is essential for salvation, but that would seem to contradict [John 3:15-16](#), which makes it clear that salvation is by faith alone. More likely, it refers to one of three things:

- the breaking of water during physical birth
- the cleansing by God's written Word in the new birth (compare [John 4:14](#); [Psalm 119:9](#); [Ephes. 5:25-26](#); [Titus 3:5](#))
- the cleansing by the Spirit in the new birth; that is, "water" and "Spirit" are really talking about the same thing (compare [Ezekiel 36:25-27](#))

Either on this occasion or later, Nicodemus believed in Christ (see [John 7:45-52](#); [John 19:38-42](#)).

**[John 3:22-36](#)** *"He must increase, I must decrease."* When Jesus and his disciples began baptizing people near where John was baptizing, and attracting large crowds, John's disciples expressed concern about the situation ([John 3:22-26](#)), but John responded in words of admiration and worship of Christ ([John 3:27-36](#)). He was quite willing to let Jesus get all the glory ([John 3:30](#)).

**[John 4:1-4](#)** *A shortcut through Samaria . . .* Not wishing to be pitted against John in a baptismal contest ([John 4:1](#)), Jesus left Judea for Galilee. He went there by the shortest route, straight through Samaria ([John 4:4](#)), even though most Jews took a longer route to avoid that despised region (see exposition on [§2 Kings 17:24-41](#)).



**John 4:5-26** . . . *brings living water to a Samaritan*. Arriving in the Samaritan town of Sychar, Jesus encountered a woman at a public well. When he asked her for a drink, she was surprised that he would speak to any woman in public (see [John 4:27](#)), let alone a Samaritan woman ([John 4:7-9](#)). Thus having her full attention, Jesus was able to point her to

- the possibility of spiritual refreshment and eternal life ([John 4:10](#), [13-14](#))
- her need for both ([John 4:16-24](#))
- the fact that he himself was the source of both ([John 4:26](#))

**John 4:27-42** *The soul winner from Sychar*. After her conversation with Jesus, the excited Samaritan woman went back to Sychar and told everyone what he had said to her ([John 4:27-29](#)). Many of them came to meet Jesus ([John 4:30](#)) and believed in him, not just as a miracle worker but as the Messiah ([John 4:39-42](#)). Meanwhile, Jesus exhorted his disciples concerning the importance of their ministry ([John 4:31-38](#)).

**John 4:43-54** *The nobleman's son*. After two days in Sychar, Jesus came to Galilee, where he was well received ([John 4:43-45](#)). When a nobleman sought healing for his son, Jesus pronounced the son healed without actually seeing him. When the nobleman heard that his son had recovered at the exact time of Jesus' pronouncement, he and his whole family believed ([John 4:46-54](#)).

**John 5:1-9** *He misses the stirring, but gets his healing*. Back in Jerusalem on a Sabbath, Jesus visited the pool of Bethesda. Many sick people were gathered there, believing it to provide healing periodically when an angel stirred its waters. According to local tradition, only the first one in the water after each stirring would be healed. When a sick man explained to Jesus that he was never able to reach the water first, Jesus healed him—a perfect picture of spiritual healing that comes only through faith and not by self-effort.

**John 5:10-23** *Sabbath breaker and blasphemer?* When the Jewish leaders realized Jesus had healed the man on the Sabbath, they began persecuting and plotting to kill him ([John 5:10-16](#)). When Jesus spoke of God as his own Father, their hatred grew more intense ([John 5:17-18](#)). Jesus spoke of his oneness with the Father and their shared purposes in relating to humankind ([John 5:19-23](#)).

Jesus told the healed man to sin no more, lest he end up physically worse than before being healed ([John 5:14](#)), implying that, in this case, the suffering had resulted from specific sins. However, not all sickness results from specific sins (compare [John 9:1-3](#)).

**John 5:24-30** *Two resurrections: The good and the bad*. Jesus proclaimed the gospel in the simplest of terms: Faith in him brings assurance of eternal life ([John 5:24](#)). The Greek verb tense of "have already passed" implies this is a permanent, accomplished fact (compare [John 3:16-18](#)). He went on to describe two important periods of time in God's dealings with people:

- "The time is coming, in fact it is here . . ." ([John 5:25-27](#)) points to the time when people will be able to receive Christ and be spiritually regenerated. This time period, the church age, has lasted two millennia so far.
- The second "time" that is "coming" ([John 5:28-30](#)) refers to the future resurrection of the dead, which will occur in two parts ([John 5:29](#)). The saved will be raised, and then 1,000

years later the wicked will be raised for the final judgment (compare [Daniel 12:2](#); [Rev. 20:4-5](#)).

**[John 5:31-47](#)** *Four witnesses to the living Word.* Jesus offered four "witnesses" to validate his identity as the Son of God:

- God the Father ([John 5:31-32](#), [37-38](#))
- John the Baptist ([John 5:33-35](#))
- his own miraculous signs ([John 5:36](#))
- OT Scripture ([John 5:39-47](#))

The Jews, however, had failed to believe the testimony of these witnesses ([John 5:37-47](#); see [John 1:26-34](#)).

**[John 6:1-13](#)** *"Feed all 20,000? No way!"* Jesus miraculously fed perhaps as many as 20,000 people—counting women and children—despite the disciples' skepticism about feeding so many with the meager supplies on hand. Various scholars have suggested at least five reasons for this miracle:

- to show his concern for physical as well as spiritual needs
- to strengthen the disciples' faith
- to prove his messianic claims; the Jews had a tradition that the Messiah would feed them just as Moses had done (see [Deut. 18:15](#); [Ezekiel 34:14](#))
- to show the value of small things when given to him
- to illustrate God's faithfulness (see [Matthew 6:31-33](#))

[[Matthew 14:13-21](#); [Mark 6:33-44](#); [Luke 9:10-17](#)]

**[John 6:14-15](#)** *His purpose: Not a crown but a cross.* When many in the crowd rightly recognized Jesus as the Messiah, they tried to make him their earthly king. Knowing, however, that such was not God's plan, Jesus withdrew from them to spend some time alone in prayer, as he often did (see [Luke 5:16](#)).

**[John 6:16-21](#)** *Walking in wind and wild waves.* As Jesus prayed alone, his disciples were rowing their boat across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum when a storm arose. Jesus appeared to them walking on the water. This was not some flippant show of his power. He had seen their dilemma from the mountain where he was praying and went to their rescue. [[Matthew 14:22-33](#); [Mark 6:45-52](#)] The storm must have been very intense to frighten these men, most of whom had dealt often with Galilee's treacherous waters (see exposition on [Luke 8:22-25](#)).

**[John 6:22-40](#)** *"I am the bread of life."* The next day those present at the miraculous feeding went to Capernaum looking for Jesus ([John 6:22-24](#)). When they found him, he accused them of seeking him only because he had fed them, and urged them instead to seek spiritual blessings ([John 6:25-27](#)). When they expressed a desire to please God, he said that the only thing they needed to do was to believe in him ([John 6:28-29](#); compare [1 John 5:4-5](#)). When they asked for a sign comparable to manna, Jesus said that he himself was the "bread of life," who could satisfy their spiritual hunger and give them everlasting life ([John 6:30-40](#)). Jesus' remarks should have reminded the people of his provision of physical bread, proving he could fill their spiritual needs as well.

It is interesting that Jesus spoke those words in the synagogue in Capernaum (see [John 6:59](#)), whose ruins include an engraving of a pot of manna. [John 6:35](#) is the first of Christ's seven "I am" statements in John (see [Unique Features](#)). On [John 6:37](#), see exposition on [§1 Peter 1:1-2](#).

**[John 6:41-59](#)** *Confusion about the Bread of Life.* Knowing Jesus' earthly family, the Jews were offended by his claims to be the "bread of life" ([John 6:41-42](#)). Jesus responded that only those granted faith by God could understand and respond to him, but those who did respond would find everlasting life ([John 6:43-50](#)). Prophesying his sacrificial death, Jesus then declared that his very flesh was the bread of life ([John 6:51](#)) and that only by in some way "eating" his flesh and "drinking" his blood could anyone have everlasting life ([John 6:53-58](#)). Jesus' words caused much confusion among his listeners ([John 6:52](#)), who may have forgotten that he was speaking symbolically of their need to believe on him (see [John 6:47](#)).

Much controversy surrounds these verses. They led ancient Rome to accuse Christians of cannibalism. And they seem to support the doctrine of transubstantiation—that the bread and wine of Communion actually become the body and blood of Christ. But [John 6:47](#) and [John 6:63](#) underscore the intended spiritual application: Eating Christ's body and drinking his blood simply mean accepting his sacrifice on the cross.

**[John 6:60-66](#)** *Rejecting the Bread of Life.* Not only the Jewish leaders (see [John 6:41-42](#), [52](#)), but even some of Christ's disciples (not including the 12—see [John 6:67-69](#)) found his "bread of life" teaching difficult and therefore ceased to follow him. Jesus made it clear, however, that true spiritual life could be found only in him. It is noteworthy that this mass defection came so soon after an amazing miracle ([John 6:1-13](#)).

**[John 6:67-71](#)** *Accepting the Bread of Life.* Jesus asked his disciples if they too intended to desert him. Peter responded by affirming their belief that Jesus was the only source of eternal life. This was one of two noteworthy times when Peter eloquently declared faith in Christ on behalf of all the disciples (see [Matthew 16:16](#)). He would be their spokesman at Pentecost as well (see [Acts 2](#)). [John 6:64](#), [70-71](#) reveals for the first time that Jesus knew one of the 12 would betray him.

**[John 7:1-9](#)** *The hostility of his half brothers.* When opposition in Judea drove Jesus back to Galilee, he encountered hostility there as well—from his own half brothers (other sons of Joseph and Mary). Though they initially rejected his messianic claims ([John 7:5](#)), two of them—James and Jude—later came to faith, as seen by the NT books that bear their names. Assuming their conversions occurred after the Resurrection (see [1 Cor. 15:7](#)), they are a dramatic testimony to the historical reality of that event. (See [Matthew 13:55](#).)

**[John 7:10-13](#)** *Devout man or deceiver?* As Jesus went again to Jerusalem, there was much discussion among the masses as to whether he was a good man or a master deceiver ([John 7:10-13](#)). Though many of the leaders wanted to kill him (see [John 5:10-16](#)), they dared not even debate with him for fear that the people would be on his side ([John 7:13](#)).

**[John 7:14-24](#)** *"If you can destroy on the Sabbath, why can't I heal?"* When Jesus again taught in the Temple, the people were amazed at his level of scholarship, considering his lack of formal education ([John 7:14-15](#)). Jesus said that anyone sincerely seeking God could understand the truth ([John 7:16-18](#)). He then exposed a contradiction in their approach to the law: They were willing on the Sabbath to

circumcise, which involved destruction of flesh, but objected when Jesus *restored* flesh in a Sabbath healing ([John 7:19-24](#); see exposition on [§John 5:10-23](#)).

**[John 7:25-31](#)** *"How could anyone match his miracles!"* Even in Jerusalem, people rejected Jesus because they knew his human origins and believed that the Messiah would be more mysterious in nature ([John 7:25-27](#); compare [John 6:42](#)). Jesus said that they *knew* he was the Messiah, whether they admitted it or not ([John 7:28-29](#)). Others in the crowd did believe, concluding that no one could possibly perform more miracles than Jesus had performed ([John 7:31](#)). Through all the confusion, God was protecting his Son so that he could complete his mission ([John 7:30](#)).

**[John 7:32-36](#)** *Is he going to the Gentiles?* When the religious leaders sent soldiers to arrest Jesus, he declared that he would soon be returning to "the one who sent me" and that none of them would be able to follow him there. Not understanding what he meant, they speculated that he was planning to leave Israel and preach to the Gentiles.

**[John 7:37-39](#)** *Watered by the Spirit.* On the last day of the Festival of Shelters (see [John 7:2](#); [Leviticus 23](#)), Jesus invited the people to accept him for salvation and for filling with the "living water" of the Holy Spirit (compare [John 4:14](#); [Acts 2:2-4](#)). The "Scripture" Jesus referred to ([John 7:38](#)) may have been [Psalm 78:15-16](#), which would have been appropriate for the Festival of Shelters, since it recalled the wilderness wanderings.

**[John 7:40-53](#)** *"Don't tell us you're his disciple!"* The people were divided and confused in their opinions about Christ, yet there was still apparently enough support for him that no one dared arrest him ([John 7:40-44](#)). When the chief priests asked the soldiers they had sent ([John 7:32](#)) why they hadn't arrested Jesus, they expressed admiration for him. The priests pointed out that only the ignorant masses—and none of the educated leaders—were following him ([John 7:45-49](#)). Nicodemus then spoke up for Jesus and was sharply rebuked by his fellow Pharisees ([John 7:50-53](#)).

On Nicodemus's faith, see [John 3:1-21](#); [John 19:38-42](#). [John 7:46](#) shows that people were impressed by Jesus' authoritative teaching as well as his miracles. [John 7:52](#) shows the regional prejudice of Jews living in Judea (compare [John 1:46](#)).

**[John 8:1-11](#)** *The Word writes words on the ground.* The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery to Jesus in an effort to entrap him ([John 8:6](#)):

- If he told them to stone her according to the law of Moses, the Roman authorities might have been irritated since only they could execute criminals.
- If he told them to forgive her, he would appear to go against the law.

Pretending not to hear their accusations, Jesus knelt and wrote on the ground, then declared that whoever among them was sinless could initiate the stoning. When all the men had left, probably due to guilty consciences, Jesus forgave the woman and urged her to mend her ways—showing the wonderful balance between God's grace and human responsibility.

The Pharisees' verbal allegiance to the law ([John 8:5](#)) was hypocritical, since in bringing the woman to Jesus they themselves had broken the law:

- Jesus was not the proper authority (humanly speaking) to officiate at a trial.

- They had failed to also bring for stoning the man caught with her (see [Leviticus 20:10](#); [Deut. 22:22-24](#)).

No one knows what Jesus wrote on the ground, but some have suggested it was the names of those among the Pharisees who themselves had committed adultery.

**[John 8:12-20](#)** *"Who says you're the 'light of the world'?"* Turning again to the Pharisees, Jesus declared himself to be the "light of the world" ([John 8:12](#); see [John 1:5-9](#)). When they responded that his testimony about himself was invalid, since he had no corroborating witness ([John 8:13](#)), Jesus said that he did have such a witness—"my Father" ([John 8:14-18](#)). Apparently the Pharisees thought he was referring to an earthly father ([John 8:19](#)). Even amid such heated confrontations, God's hand of protection was upon Jesus ([John 8:20](#); see [John 7:30](#)).

**[John 8:21-30](#)** *"Someday you'll understand!"* When Jesus again told the Pharisees that he would soon be "going away" from them (compare exposition on [John 7:32-36](#)), they wondered whether he was going to kill himself ([John 8:21-22](#)). Jesus warned them that if they didn't believe in him they would die in their sins ([John 8:21](#), [23-24](#)). When he again claimed the truth of his message, they still did not comprehend what he was saying ([John 8:25-27](#)). He said that everything he had been saying would make sense after they had crucified him ([John 8:28-29](#)).

While Jesus' words of reprimand may sound boastful or uncaring at times, Scripture makes it clear that the Pharisees and others who chose to reject him had been given ample evidence to believe:

- his miracles and acts of compassion
- his remarkable prophetic gift (see [John 4:19](#), [29](#))
- his irrefutable teachings (see [John 7:46](#); [Matthew 22:46](#))
- his faultless character ([John 8:29](#); see [Acts 10:38](#))

Even as he scolded the Jews for their unbelief, "many . . . believed in him" ([John 8:30](#)).

**[John 8:31-36](#)** *The slavery of sin, the freedom of the Son.* Jesus urged the Jews who had believed in him to "keep obeying my teachings" (also translated "abide in my word"). Doing so would establish them in the truth, which in turn would give them true freedom. When they misunderstood the kind of freedom Jesus meant, he explained that he meant freedom from sin. It is the nature of sin to enslave; it is the nature of truth to set free. And only in God's Word can real truth and freedom be found.

The Jews' statement about never having been enslaved was wrong even in physical terms: They conveniently forgot their enslavement in Egypt and Babylon.

**[John 8:37-59](#)** *"Will the real seed of Abraham please stand?"* Jesus continued speaking, presumably to those in the crowd either still disbelieving or uncertain in their professed faith (compare "you are trying to kill me" in [John 8:37](#) with [John 8:30-31](#)). Jesus declared that they sought to kill him, not because they were descendants of Abraham, but because they were children of the Devil ([John 8:37-47](#)). To be a physical descendant of Abraham does not qualify one as his spiritual descendant.

As the irate crowd hurled accusations at Jesus, he continued to claim divine authority ([John 8:48-55](#)). He went so far as to claim to have lived before Abraham, and then even applied to himself a

description of eternity with which God the Father had described himself ([John 8:58](#); see [Exodus 3:14](#)). It is no wonder that, at this point, the unbelieving Jews tried to stone him. Whatever one might say about Jesus' being a great moral teacher, his claim of deity leaves room for only one of three responses:

- he was a lunatic,
- he was a liar,
- or he was truly God, just as he claimed to be.

**[John 9:1-7](#)** *When the Light gives sight.* When his disciples wondered whose sin had caused a man's blindness, Jesus said he had been born blind so that "the power of God could be seen in him" ([John 9:3](#)). Then, once more declaring himself to be the light of the world ([John 9:5](#); see [John 8:12](#)), Jesus told the man he could be healed by washing in the pool of Siloam. The man did so and was healed. This is the only recorded time Jesus required anyone to do anything other than believe in order to be healed.

The disciples and apparently the Pharisees as well believed that suffering results from personal sin ([John 9:2, 34](#); see exposition on [§John 5:10-23](#)). Some rabbis even taught that a baby could sin in its mother's womb. Although the issue is complicated, since the consequences of parents' actions can profoundly affect the lives of their children (see exposition on [§Ezekiel 18:1-18](#)), Jesus made it clear that suffering does not always result from sin ([John 9:3](#)).

**[John 9:8-41](#)** *When those with sight refuse the Light.* When word began to spread concerning this healing, the formerly blind man told his skeptical friends that "the man they call Jesus" had healed him ([John 9:8-12](#)). When the friends brought the man to the Pharisees, they said that Jesus could not be from God since he had healed on the Sabbath ([John 9:13-17](#)). Then, they decided that the man had not really been blind at all! ([John 9:18](#))

The man's parents confirmed that he had been blind but, out of fear of the Pharisees, claimed not to know who had healed him ([John 9:19-23](#)). When the Pharisees again quizzed the healed man, he stuck to his story and gave eloquent testimony to Jesus, and the Pharisees threw him out of the synagogue ([John 9:24-34](#)). When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the healed man and identified himself as the Son of God, whereupon the man worshiped him ([John 9:35-39](#)).

When some listening Pharisees sarcastically asked Jesus if he considered them also to be blind, he stated the paradox that permeates the story: Those claiming the most spiritual sight are often the most spiritually blind ([John 9:40-41](#)).

Note the progression in the blind man's perception of Jesus: from seeing him as an ordinary man ([John 9:11](#)) to realizing he was a prophet ([John 9:17](#)) to worshiping him as Lord ([John 9:38](#)). How tragic, however, that the man's seeing parents apparently refused the light of Christ because they preferred the approval of the Pharisees ([John 9:22](#); see [John 12:42-43](#); [Proverbs 29:25](#)).

**[John 10:1-10](#)** *The Shepherd gives life to his sheep.* Having again rebuked the Pharisees for their unbelief, Jesus presented himself as a "good shepherd" ([John 10:1-30](#)). He began by talking of how he selects and ministers to his flock ([John 10:1-10](#)). Several truths are highlighted in these verses:

- Jesus is the only true Shepherd; all other religions or ways of coming to God are false ([John 10:1-2](#)).

- Both the "gatekeeper" and the sheep recognize Jesus as the true Shepherd ([John 10:3-5](#); compare [John 1:29](#); [John 4:29](#)).
- Jesus has a close relationship with his sheep, unlike other religious leaders ([John 10:3-5](#); compare [Psalm 23](#)).
- Jesus is the way to salvation ([John 10:9](#)) and to sanctification ([John 10:10](#)). Some have suggested that "life" ([John 10:10](#)) speaks of the peace *with* God that comes with salvation (see [Romans 5:1](#)), while the life we can have "in all its fullness" (or "more abundantly") speaks of the peace *of* God that comes with sanctification (see exposition on <sup>§</sup>[John 17:6-19](#); [Phil. 4:7](#)).

**[John 10:11-18](#)** *The Shepherd gives his life for his sheep.* Using the image of a shepherd who is willing to give his life to protect his sheep, Jesus predicted his own substitutionary death on the cross. The decision to lay down his life was his own but was worked out in his relationship with the heavenly Father ([John 10:15](#), [17-18](#)). Jesus also predicted his resurrection ([John 10:18](#)). (See also [Hebrews 13:20](#); [1 Peter 5:4](#).)

**[John 10:19-21](#)** *Messiah or madman?* As on previous occasions, Jesus' teaching caused division among his listeners (see [John 7:43](#); [John 9:16](#)). Some accused him of being demon possessed or insane. Others remembered the miracles and hoped he really was the Messiah.

**[John 10:22-30](#)** *"My sheep hear my voice."* Once again the Jews asked Jesus whether or not he was the Messiah ([John 10:22-24](#)), and he replied that he had affirmed his Messiahship many times already, both by his words and by his works ([John 10:25](#)). Those who believed (the sheep) had heard and had begun to follow him ([John 10:27](#)), while those who didn't believe had not ([John 10:26](#)). To the believers, Jesus promised an eternal life that they could never lose ([John 10:28](#); see [2 Cor. 1:19-22](#); [Ephes. 1:13-14](#); [1 Peter 1:3-5](#); and exposition on <sup>§</sup>[Romans 8:31-39](#)). It was guaranteed by both the Father and the Son, who, said Jesus, are one ([John 8:29-30](#)).

The Good Shepherd sermon took place during the Festival of Dedication ([John 10:22](#)), which commemorated the rededication and cleansing of the Temple following its defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes 170 years before Christ (see [Matthew: Background](#)). It is celebrated today as Hanukkah.

**[John 10:31-33](#)** *"He says he's the Son of God? Stone him!"* Hearing Jesus claim to be one with God, the Jews tried to stone him. While some today might say Jesus was speaking of a vague spiritual unity with God, the Jews understood his words as a claim of deity and, considering it blasphemy, prepared for the appropriate response (see [Leviticus 24:16](#)).

**[John 10:34-42](#)** *"If you don't believe my words, believe my works."* Jesus asserted that, even if the Jews couldn't accept his claims of deity, the miracles he had performed should be sufficient grounds for faith. When he again referred to his deity, however ([John 10:38](#)), they again tried to seize him. He escaped, and ministered beyond the Jordan ([John 10:39-42](#)). Note Christ's affirmation of the OT's authority and inerrancy ([John 10:35](#)). On "You are gods" ([John 10:34-35](#)), see exposition on <sup>§</sup>[Psalm 82](#).

**[John 11:1-5](#)** *"He's sick. Can you help him?"* When Mary and Martha notified Jesus that Lazarus was sick, Jesus told his disciples that the illness would bring glory to God.

**[John 11:6-16](#)** *"He's dead. I'll go and raise him!"* Though Jesus had a deep affection for this family from Bethany, he remained where he was for two days ([John 11:6](#), see NLT, NIV). When he finally announced his plans to go to Judea, where Bethany was located, his disciples tried to discourage him, remembering previous trouble there. Jesus then told them that Lazarus was dead but that he intended to raise him ([John 11:7-15](#)).

The deliberate two-day delay ([John 11:6](#)) may have been in response to a Jewish superstition that a person's spirit hovered over the body for three days after death and that resurrection during that time was at least remotely possible. Jesus wanted to be sure that there could be no such erroneous explanation for his raising of Lazarus.

Death for the believer is a peaceful sleep ([John 11:11](#); see [Acts 7:60](#); [1 Cor. 15:6](#); [1 Thes. 4:13](#)). However, it is not an unconscious "soul sleep" (see exposition on [Luke 16:19-31](#)). [John 11:14](#) shows Christ's omniscience.

**[John 11:17-37](#)** *"I am the resurrection and the life."* When Jesus arrived at Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days. When Martha expressed regret that Jesus hadn't arrived in time to heal Lazarus, but confidence that he would one day live again ([John 11:17-24](#)), Jesus hinted that Lazarus might be living again very soon ([John 11:25-27](#)).

Jesus then saw Mary, who also expressed regret over his delay but didn't share Martha's hope of resurrection ([John 11:32](#)). During a previous encounter with Christ, it had been Mary who demonstrated the greater faith (see [Luke 10:38-42](#)).

As Jesus watched Mary weep, he too was moved to tears and was "deeply troubled." The Greek word used here is *embrim*, suggesting anger. It is translated "scolded" in [Mark 14:5](#). This suggests Christ's grief and anger over death itself, the tragic result of Adam's sin (see [Romans 5:12](#)).

**[John 11:38-44](#)** *"Trust me! Remove that rock!"* Jesus asked for the stone to be removed from the grave entrance, despite the fact that Lazarus's body would have begun to decay. He then offered thanks to God and called for Lazarus to come out of the tomb, and Lazarus came out, still bound in his grave clothes (see exposition on [Luke 7:11-17](#)).

**[John 11:45-57](#)** *"This destroyer of death must die!"* There were two responses to the resurrection of Lazarus: Many believed on Jesus ([John 11:45](#)), while the Jewish leaders intensified their efforts to destroy this giver of life ([John 11:46-53](#)). Meanwhile Jesus retreated to be alone with his disciples, even as his enemies in Jerusalem continued to look for him ([John 11:54-57](#)).

Note that the Jewish leaders were concerned primarily with maintaining their own positions of power ([John 11:47-48](#)). When Caiaphas suggested killing Christ as the best way to do this, he was unwittingly being used by God to predict Christ's death and the salvation it would bring ([John 11:49-52](#)).

**[John 12:1-8](#)** *While one anoints, another complains.* Less than a week before his death, Jesus was once again in the home of his friends Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. As they shared a meal, Mary took expensive perfume and anointed Jesus ([John 12:1-3](#)). Judas complained that she should have given the money to them to give to the poor. Judas's motive in saying this was greed, since he, as treasurer for the group, could have embezzled from her gift ([John 12:4-6](#)). As he had done before (see [Luke 10:42](#)), Jesus commended Mary's proper sense of values. [[Matthew 26:6-13](#); [Mark 14:3-9](#)]



» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 12:9-11](#)** *"He'll die again!"* Since many were being converted by the resurrection of Lazarus, the priests began plotting to kill him as well as Jesus!

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 12:12-19](#)** *Joy and consternation at his coming.* The next day, Jesus and his disciples entered Jerusalem for Passover week, to the great joy of the huge crowds who had come there just to see him ([John 12:12-13](#)). This caused his enemies much alarm ([John 12:19](#)). [<sup>s</sup>[Matthew 21:1-11](#); [Mark 11:1-10](#); [Luke 19:29-38](#)]

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 12:20-22](#)** *"Sir, we would see Jesus."* When some Greeks sought an audience with Jesus, they approached the apostle Philip, possibly because he had a Greek name. Philip and Andrew spoke to Jesus about them, displaying again their heart for evangelism (see [John 1:40-42](#), [45-46](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 12:23-26](#)** *"It's time to plant the grain of wheat."* While the Greeks may have expected Jesus to talk about his triumphant reception at Jerusalem's gate, instead he spoke symbolically of his fast-approaching death. Just as a grain of wheat must be planted and die to produce more wheat, Jesus must now die to give spiritual life to all who believe in him ([John 12:23-24](#)). Likewise, his followers must die to their own lives to produce the fruit of God's Kingdom. If they do so, they will be richly rewarded in due time ([John 12:25-26](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 12:27-30](#)** *His voice reassures his Son.* As Jesus contemplated his approaching crucifixion, God the Father audibly spoke words of comfort to him. The people mistook it as either an angel or thunder.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 12:31-36](#)** *His crucifixion, Satan's condemnation.* Jesus explained that his crucifixion would mean salvation for people from all nations but would mean judgment for Satan, the "prince of this world" ([John 12:31](#)). When the people again showed their lack of understanding, Jesus encouraged them to believe in him while he was still with them ([John 12:32-36](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 12:37-41](#)** *Isaiah and Israel's blindness.* Thinking about Israel's incredible unwillingness to follow their Messiah, John recalled two prophecies of Isaiah that suggested that their rejection of Christ would lead to even greater spiritual blindness (see [Isaiah 6:10](#); [Isaiah 53:1](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**John 12:42-43** *The case of the cowardly chief rulers.* Many Jewish leaders accepted Jesus but refused to confess him publicly, for fear that they would be banished from the synagogue.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**John 12:44-50** *Not to destroy but to deliver.* Jesus, the Light of the World, was sent by the Father to save the world, not to condemn it ([John 12:47](#)). The world did not need to be condemned, because it was already condemned (see [John 3:18](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**John 13:1-17** *The Creator cleanses his creatures' feet.* John now wrote about Christ's last Passover with his disciples ([John 13-17](#)). Aware that his greatest conflict was upon him, Christ nevertheless showed selfless love to the very end, even though one of his inner circle had already decided to betray him ([John 13:1-2](#)).

To show what it means to serve ([John 13:15](#)), Jesus washed his disciples' feet. Peter felt uncomfortable with the situation and initially refused the offer, but soon changed his mind ([John 13:8-9](#)).

Jesus said his disciples were already "bathed" (Greek *louo*, to bathe completely) and only needed to have their feet washed (Greek *nipito*, to splash; [John 13:10](#)). The picture is of getting one's feet dirty while returning from a public bath, thus needing to wash them again at home. Likewise, a sinner who repents is forever clean (see [Hebrews 10:1-12](#)), though on occasion he or she may become defiled by sin and require a "nipito" cleansing (see [1 John 1:9](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**John 13:18-30** *Naming his betrayer.* Even as he enjoyed fellowship with his disciples, Jesus told them that one of them would soon betray him ([John 13:18-21](#)), then revealed that Judas was the betrayer. Apparently, however, the disciples didn't understand what he had said ([John 13:22-29](#)). Satan now went beyond influencing Judas ([John 13:2](#)) to possessing him ([John 13:27](#)).

**John 13:31-38** *"Your love will show them my love."* Now that the wheels were in motion for his betrayal and death, Jesus spoke again of his departure and gave a parting exhortation to his disciples: They were to love each other as he had loved them, in order to help others be saved. When Peter said he was willing to die for Christ, Christ predicted that, though Peter eventually *would* die for him ([John 13:36](#)), in the immediate future he would deny him ([John 13:38](#)).

**John 14:1-4** *Preparing a place in the Father's palace.* Before ending the Passover evening with prayer (see [John 17](#)), Jesus taught on many important themes ([John 14-16](#)). He began with words of comfort ([John 14:1-4](#)) in light of the previous prediction of his death and Peter's denial. He would prepare a place in heaven for all believers and would one day return for them ([John 14:1-3](#)). Jesus assured them that they knew full well where he was going and how to get there ([John 14:4](#)). [John 14:3](#) is the only reference to the Rapture in all of the Gospels (see exposition on [§1 Thes. 4:13-18](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 14:5-6](#)** *"I am the way."* When Thomas protested that he did not know where Jesus was going or how to get there, Jesus responded that he himself was the way. Jesus claimed to be the only way to God, not just one way among many.

**[John 14:7-15](#)** *"Show us the Father."* When Philip asked for a revelation of God, Jesus replied that to see and hear from him was to see and hear from God, for he did nothing except at God's direction ([John 14:7-10](#)). Jesus promised to answer the disciples' prayers and exhorted them to prove their love for him by obedience ([John 14:13-15](#)).

**[John 14:16-26](#)** *"The Comforter is coming!"* Jesus promised to send "another Counselor" ("Comforter," KJV), the Holy Spirit, who will live with his disciples forever ([John 14:16](#)) and will help them understand the truth ([John 14:17](#), [26](#)). Obedience is also a key to understanding the truth ([John 14:21](#)), and love is the key to obedience ([John 14:23-24](#)). On the baptism of the Holy Spirit, see exposition on [§1 Cor. 12:12-31](#).

**[John 14:27-31](#)** *His gift of peace.* Jesus promised a peace that transcends earthly circumstances ([John 14:27](#)), and encouraged the troubled disciples to rejoice that he would soon be with his heavenly Father again ([John 14:28-31](#)).

**[John 15:1-8](#)** *Fruit, more fruit, much fruit.* Jesus is the vine, and believers are the branches. For a branch to bear fruit it must have been cleansed by the Father (salvation, [John 15:3](#)) and must then abide in the Son (discipleship, [John 15:4-11](#)). Committed believers will progress from fruit to more fruit to much fruit ([John 15:2](#), [5](#), [8](#)). However, if a branch fails to bear fruit, it is rejected and cast aside ([John 15:2](#), [6](#)). Various scholars suggest that these rejected branches represent Christians who

- lose their salvation; but this would contradict many other Scriptures (see exposition on [§John 10:22-30](#))
- are no longer useful to God because of habitual sin
- commit the "sin that leads to death" mentioned in [1 John 5:16](#), in which case the "burning" ([John 15:6](#)) may refer to the "bema" judgment of believers (see exposition on [§1 Cor. 3:10-17](#))
- are merely professing Christians, who are finally severed from their superficial connection with Christ (as had already happened with Judas)

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 15:9-17](#)** *The fruit of obedience: Love and joy.* If we obey Christ, we will abide in his love and will have true joy ([John 15:9-11](#)). With Christ as our example, and secure in our friendship with him, we are to love each other ([John 15:12-17](#)).

**[John 15:18-16:5](#)** *The promise of persecution.* Those who hate Christians do so because of their hatred for Christ ([John 15:18-25](#)). There is no logical explanation for such hatred, since they have seen ample evidence of Christ's deity ([John 15:22-25](#)). Amid persecution, God will send the Holy Spirit (see [John 14:16-17](#)), who will help believers bear witness to Christ in spite of the persecution ([John 15:26-27](#)). Jesus warned of persecution so that his disciples would be ready for it ([John 16:1-5](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 16:6-11](#)** *The third person's threefold work for the lost.* Noticing his disciples' sorrow ([John 16:6](#)), Jesus spoke again of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. It was necessary for Jesus to go to heaven so that this Counselor could come ([John 16:7](#)). This does not mean that the Holy Spirit had no ministry in the world up to that time but that his ministry would now expand and intensify. The Greek for "Counselor" (KJV, "Comforter") is a legal term for one who defends a case in court.

[John 16:12-15](#) will describe the Spirit's ministry of comforting believers. [John 16:6-11](#), however, describes his role in "discomforting" the unsaved. He shows them their spiritual need in three areas:

- He shows them that they have refused to admit their *sin* and their need for salvation ([John 16:9](#)).
- He reminds them of Christ's perfect *righteousness*. Christ's righteousness constantly bothered the Jewish leaders; when Jesus returned to heaven, the Spirit took over that "bothering ministry" ([John 16:10](#)).
- The Spirit shows the absolute necessity of God's *judgment* on sin. The best example of this is how Satan (the "prince of this world") has been defeated through Christ's death and resurrection ([John 16:11](#)).

**[John 16:12-15](#)** *The third person's threefold work for the saved.* The "comforting" ministry of the Spirit is for believers:

- He teaches the truth ([John 16:13](#)). At first this probably came through prophecies, but then through the written Scriptures that still guide believers today. These truths are from the Father ([John 16:15](#)). See exposition on <sup>s</sup>[Romans 8:5-17](#).
- He reveals the future ([John 16:13](#)).
- He glorifies Jesus ([John 16:14](#)). He does not glorify himself, as some current teachings might suggest.

**[John 16:16-33](#)** *First the pain, then the prize.* Jesus told his disciples about all the suffering that he (and they) would go through in the days ahead, before his final triumph at the Second Coming. He compared it to a woman going through labor ([John 16:21](#)), with her intense pain followed by great joy when the child is born.

**[John 17:1-5](#)** *Jesus prays for himself.* Jesus ended the Passover evening by praying for himself ([John 17:1-5](#)), his apostles ([John 17:6-19](#)), and his church ([John 17:20-26](#)). Praying for himself, he told God the Father that he had completed his mission on earth, and asked to be restored to his former glory.

[John 17:1-26](#) has been called Christ's "High Priestly Prayer." It might also be more accurate to call this prayer, rather than [Matthew 6:9-13](#), the "Lord's" Prayer.

Christ refers to God repeatedly as "Father" ([John 17:1](#), [5](#), [11](#), [21](#), [24-25](#)), a title rare in the OT. The prayer also contains two expansions of that title found nowhere else in Scripture ([John 17:11](#), [25](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 17:6-19](#)** *Jesus prays for the 11.* Jesus told the Father what he had done in relation to his apostles. He had

- told them about the Father ([John 17:6](#))

- conveyed the Father's Word to them ([John 17:8](#), [14](#))
- kept them from spiritual apostasy ([John 17:12](#))
- sent them into the world ([John 17:18](#))
- set an example of holiness for them ([John 17:19](#))

On behalf of the apostles, he asked God to

- protect them in a world hostile to God ([John 17:11](#), [15](#))
- unify them ([John 17:11](#)). They would have enough enemies in the world, without fighting each other!
- fill them with joy ([John 17:13](#))
- sanctify them: setting them apart *for* special use to God and setting them apart *from* the sinful world. The primary means of sanctification is the truth of God's Word ([John 17:17](#); see exposition on [§Hebrews 10:1-18](#)).

As in all his prayers, Jesus knew God would answer him (see [John 11:42](#)). Jesus constantly prayed for his apostles. He prayed for them before he chose them (see [Luke 6:12-13](#)); during his earthly ministry (see [Matthew 14:23](#)); here at the end of his earthly ministry; and in heaven today (see [Romans 8:34](#); [Hebrews 7:25](#)).

**[John 17:20-26](#)** *Jesus prays for his church.* For those who would become believers after the Ascension ([John 17:20](#)), Jesus prayed

- that they might have spiritual unity ([John 17:21-22](#))
- that they might be spiritually mature ([John 17:23](#)). Maturity and unity go hand in hand.
- that they might behold his glory ([John 17:24](#))

These prayers will ultimately be answered at Christ's second coming, when the church will become all it was intended to be.

**[John 18:1-11](#)** *"Whom are you seeking? . . . I am he!"* Jesus and the disciples went from Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane, where he prayed in agony ([John 18:1](#); see exposition on [§Matthew 26:36-46](#)). Judas, knowing where they were, took a band of soldiers to get Jesus. Perhaps Jesus saw the torches and the group of men coming from Jerusalem as he prayed. In any case, he had foreknowledge of the coming events and actually went out to meet the soldiers ([John 18:4](#)). He didn't hesitate to identify himself, since he knew his time had come ([John 18:4-9](#)).

In an effort to defend Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest ([John 18:10-11](#)). Jesus reproved Peter for his lack of spiritual understanding. [[Matthew 26:36-56](#); [Mark 14:32-52](#); [§Luke 22:39-53](#)]

That John knew Malchus's name suggests that John was acquainted with the high priest's household; thus, the "other disciple" ([John 18:15](#)) may have been John himself (compare [John 13:23](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Final Days of Christ's Ministry, The](#)

**[John 18:12-14](#), [19-24](#)** *The sinless High Priest before a sinful high priest.* Jesus was arrested and taken to Annas, father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas. Apparently Annas interrogated him ([John 18:13](#), [19-23](#)) before he was taken to Caiaphas ([John 18:24](#)). (The synoptic Gospels do not record the

questioning by Annas, but do record a trial before the entire Sanhedrin, which John omits—see [Luke 22:66-23:1](#). None of the Gospels give much detail about the trial before Caiaphas.)

Christ's trials, both religious and civil ([John 18:12-19:16](#)), were all clandestine, with no due process, violating the spirit of both Jewish and Roman law.

Note that both Annas and Caiaphas are called "high priest" ([John 18:13](#), [19](#), [24](#)). Although high priests generally held their position for life, Rome had interfered with that tradition. Annas, the former high priest, still had power, albeit without Roman recognition. [[Matthew 26:57-68](#); [Mark 14:53-65](#); [Luke 22:63-71](#)]

**[John 18:15-18](#), [25-27](#)** *He warms himself, then wrongs his Savior.* As Jesus was being questioned by the high priests, Peter denied his association with him ([John 18:15-18](#)). Later, while warming himself at a fire, Peter's attack on Malchus came back to haunt him as one of Malchus's relatives recognized him. Again Peter denied knowing Christ, and just then the rooster crowed. [[Matthew 26:69-75](#); [Mark 14:66-72](#); [Luke 22:54-62](#)]

It is unclear whether John, who apparently was with Peter ([John 18:15](#); see exposition on <sup>s</sup>[John 18:1-11](#)), was also accused of following Jesus. The young woman keeping the door knew John and let Peter in with him ([John 18:16](#)). In any event, John's loyalty to the Lord is shown by his presence at the cross ([John 19:26-27](#)).

**[John 18:28-38](#)** *A Jewish king and a Roman governor.* The Jewish leaders took Jesus to Pilate and accused him of being a "criminal" ([John 18:30](#)). Reluctantly, Pilate began interrogating him. In answer to Pilate's direct question ([John 18:33](#)), Jesus identified himself as King of the Jews ([John 18:37](#)) but made Pilate think about his own understanding of what that meant ([John 18:34-36](#)). Jesus said his Kingdom was "not of this world" ([John 18:36](#)), so Pilate should not have felt threatened by it. [[Matthew 27:2](#), [11-14](#); [Mark 15:1-5](#); [Luke 23:1-7](#), [13-15](#)]

When Jesus claimed to represent the truth, Pilate wondered aloud, "What is truth?" ([John 18:37-38](#)). The question remained unanswered as Pilate left, though Jesus had already answered it ([John 18:37](#)). Rejection of the possibility of absolute truth means rejection of Jesus, who claimed to embody the truth (see [John 14:6](#)).

**[John 18:39-40](#)** *"Kill the Messiah! Release the murderer!"* After Pilate had sent Jesus to Herod, and Herod had sent him back to Pilate (see exposition on <sup>s</sup>[Luke 23:6-12](#)), according to a Passover custom Pilate offered to release a Jewish prisoner. The crowd chose Barabbas, a thief and murderer, instead of Jesus. [[Matthew 27:15-21](#); [Mark 15:6-15](#); [Luke 23:13-25](#)]

**[John 19:1-3](#)** *Mocked by the military.* The Roman soldiers mocked Christ with a crown of thorns and a purple robe, shouting in jest, "Hail, King of the Jews!" while they beat him ([John 19:2-3](#)). All of this followed the formal scourging, a beating with a leather whip with small pieces of rocks, glass, and metal to produce more suffering ([John 19:1](#)). [[Matthew 27:27-30](#); [Mark 15:16-18](#)]

**[John 19:4-7](#)** *"Death to the pseudo Son of God!"* Pilate presented Jesus to the crowd arrayed in the mock royal attire, but pronounced him innocent. The chief priests responded with shouts to crucify him, using their concern for the law as the excuse for his murder. [[Matthew 27:22-26](#); [Mark 15:12-15](#); [Luke 23:20-25](#)]

**John 19:8-11** *Final efforts to release him.* Having been warned by his wife that there was something special about Jesus (see [Matthew 27:19](#)), and having now heard of his claim of deity ([John 19:7](#)), Pilate became afraid and told Jesus he wanted to release him ([John 19:8-10](#)). When Jesus refused to answer Pilate's questions, Pilate reminded him of his authority to kill him, but Jesus responded that all authority is in God's control. He said that the Jewish leaders, more than Pilate, were to blame for his impending death.

**John 19:12-16** *"We have no king but Caesar!"* Pilate tried again to release Jesus, but the Jewish leaders successfully pitted loyalty to Jesus against loyalty to Caesar, even themselves claiming to be Caesar's loyal subjects. Pilate finally gave in to them, and they led Jesus away to be crucified.

How ironic that the Jews, who for both cultural and religious reasons stubbornly refused to worship Caesar, now called him their king—in the presence of their own true King!

Pilate's de facto condemnation of Jesus was just one more violation of Roman law (see exposition on [§John 18:12-14, 19-24](#)), since he had declared him innocent (see [John 18:38](#); [John 19:4, 6](#)).

**John 19:17-18** *The Savior on the cross.* Jesus was taken to the place of execution and crucified as a common criminal. [[Matthew 27:32-50](#); [Mark 15:21-41](#); [Luke 23:26-46](#)]

**John 19:19-22** *The sign above the cross.* Pilate placed a sign on the cross above Jesus, stating that he was the King of the Jews. Though he had seen the political necessity of condemning Jesus, in making this sign Pilate was mocking the Jewish leaders, who were understandably upset by it ([John 19:21](#)). Meanwhile, the thousands who were in Jerusalem for the Passover were able to read the truth about Jesus, whether they understood it or not! ([John 19:20](#)).

**John 19:23-24** *The soldiers beneath the cross.* As was often the case in executions, the soldiers divided Christ's clothes among themselves. His outer coat could not be divided, so they cast lots for it, fulfilling [Psalm 22:18](#).

**John 19:25** *The women near the cross.* Three women, all named Mary, stood by the cross as Jesus was crucified: his mother; her sister, also named Mary; and Mary Magdalene.

**John 19:26-27** *His concern from the cross.* Also at the cross was the apostle John. Jesus told John to look after his mother and told her to regard John as her son.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Crucifixion of Christ, The](#)

**John 19:28-30** *"It is finished!"* As death neared, Jesus was given sour wine to drink, fulfilling the prophecy of [Psalm 69:21](#). As he died, he cried out, "It is finished," marking the completion of his atoning work for the sins of the world. In the original the words mean, "It is forever done."

» **See also:** [Illustration: Crucifixion of Christ, The](#)

**John 19:31-37** *A pierced side, but no broken bones.* Because the next day was a Sabbath, the Jews wanted to remove Jesus and the two thieves from the cross before sundown. Usually the soldiers would break the legs of the dying men to hasten the end. But Jesus was already dead, so this was not done. A Roman soldier did pierce his side, and both water and blood came out. This may indicate that Jesus literally suffered a broken heart on the cross. It certainly shows that he was actually dead. Both the piercing of Christ's side and the decision not to break his bones fulfilled prophecy (see [Psalm 34:20](#); [Zech. 12:10](#)).

**John 19:38-42** *Secret saints on a mission of mercy.* Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus, wrapped it for burial, and placed it in a nearby tomb. [[Matthew 27:57-61](#); [Mark 15:42-47](#); [Luke 23:50-56](#)] On Nicodemus, see exposition on [§John 3:1-21](#).

**John 20:1-10** *The sprint to the sepulcher.* On Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and, seeing that the stone had been rolled away, concluded that someone had stolen Christ's body. She told Peter and John, and they ran to the tomb and saw that it was empty. All they saw were the linen wrappings lying there as if a body had been inside. The Resurrection had occurred without the grave clothes even being unwound!

After making this amazing discovery, the disciples returned home, having not yet connected it with any prophecies of Christ's resurrection ([John 20:9-10](#)).

**John 20:11-18** *She is the first.* Apparently, after Peter and John went home Mary Magdalene remained weeping outside the empty tomb. Jesus appeared to her (making her the first to see him after the Resurrection), but she did not recognize him—probably due to her crying, the dimness of the early morning light, and the fact that she was not expecting to see him. However, when Jesus said her name ([John 20:16](#)), she knew it was he. Jesus then told her not to "cling" to him (the Greek indicates she was draped around his feet) but rather to go and tell the disciples that he was risen—which she promptly did.

Matthew's account seems to indicate that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene and another Mary at the same time (see [Matthew 28:1, 9](#)). However, Mark indicates that there was a third woman, Salome, at the tomb (see [Mark 16:1](#)). Evidently, when the other Mary and Salome (as well as Peter and John) left the tomb (see [Matthew 28:8](#)), Mary Magdalene lingered behind just long enough to catch the first glimpse of Jesus.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Ten Resurrection Appearances of Christ, The](#)

**John 20:19-23** *He shows them his hands and side.* In what was probably his fifth appearance after the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to the apostles in the upper room on Sunday evening. The only one of the 11 not there was Thomas. Jesus showed them his hands and side, apparently with the crucifixion markings still there, to prove his identity. He gave them instructions to go out just as the Father had sent him, to preach and minister. He imparted the Holy Spirit to them ([John 20:22](#)) in preparation for the fullness of the Spirit's coming on Pentecost (see [Acts 2](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Ten Resurrection Appearances of Christ, The](#)

**John 20:24-29** *Why we call him "Doubting Thomas."* When the 10 apostles who had seen Jesus told Thomas, he refused to believe unless he could see Jesus for himself ([John 20:24-25](#)). The next Sunday



evening Jesus appeared to all 11, including Thomas. Jesus asked Thomas to touch the nail prints in his hand and the wound from the spear in his side. Apparently God had left these in Jesus' resurrection body as proof of his identity. Thomas responded by acknowledging Jesus as God in the flesh ([John 20:28](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Ten Resurrection Appearances of Christ, The](#)

**[John 20:30-31](#)** *The background and basis for John's book.* John stated his reason for writing: to record the miraculous signs Jesus did in order to help his readers believe that Jesus is the Messiah and thereby receive eternal life through him. He noted, however, that Jesus did many other miracles as well.

**[John 21:1-14](#)** *The very first Christian businessmen's breakfast.* In a comfortable setting by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus made a special postresurrection appearance to seven of the 11 apostles. Having returned to their former trade of fishing, the apostles had fished all night in vain (compare [Luke 5:1-6](#)). At dawn's first light, they saw Jesus on the shore but didn't recognize him. When Jesus told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat, they brought in a large haul of fish. The spiritually perceptive John recognized that the stranger was Jesus. The impetuous Peter immediately swam to shore to be with him. Jesus then fixed breakfast for them as they enjoyed fellowship together.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Ten Resurrection Appearances of Christ, The](#)

**[John 21:15-19](#)** *"Of course, I love you! What more can I say?"* Jesus singled out Peter for a special leadership assignment ([John 21:15-17](#)). In asking Peter if he loved him, Jesus used the word *agape*, sacrificial love, while Peter's response was only *phileo*, or brotherly love. This was perhaps humility on Peter's part, as he bitterly recalled having denied the Lord. The third time Jesus asked Peter if he loved him, he too used *phileo*, graciously meeting Peter at his level of ability to respond. The seriousness of his charge to Peter, however, did not change. In fact, Jesus told Peter that he would mature to self-sacrificing love and would one day give his life for his Lord ([John 21:18](#)). He then repeated the very first command he had ever given Peter: "Follow me" ([Matthew 4:19](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Ten Resurrection Appearances of Christ, The](#)

**[John 21:20-23](#)** *"But what about John?"* Having been told he would be martyred, Peter naturally wondered what would happen to John. Jesus said that was not for him to know: He should concern himself only with God's will for *his* life. Jesus hinted that John would not die a martyr's death, which started a rumor that John would never die at all. Tradition says John was the last living apostle and died of old age.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Ten Resurrection Appearances of Christ, The](#)

*"There's too much to ever tell!"* In closing, John affirmed the truth of his account and commented once again on the impossibility of adequately recording everything Jesus did in his earthly ministry (compare [John 20:30](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Ten Resurrection Appearances of Christ, The](#)

## People to remember from John

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- [Martha](#)
- [Mary Magdalene](#)
- [Mary \(Sister of Martha and Lazarus\)](#)
- [Nicodemus](#)
- [Philip \(The Apostle\)](#)
- [Thomas](#)

### MARTHA

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM JOHN)

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**Key Facts:** Sister of Lazarus and Mary, worked while Mary worshiped

**Total Bible References:** 12

**Key References:** [John 11:1-44](#); [Luke 10:38-42](#)

#### *Martha Speaks*

It's still difficult to take it all in! One day Lazarus was lying in a grave, and the next day he was enjoying himself at supper alongside our honored guest. ([John 11:17](#); [John 12:1-2](#))

"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again." That's what Jesus said to me in the hour of my grief. I assured him that I did believe in him. But oh, how weak my faith was back then. In fact, I actually protested his command to remove the gravestone. Well, my reluctance soon turned to rejoicing when my dead and supposedly decaying brother walked out of his grave! ([John 11:25](#), [27](#), [39](#), [44](#))

How well I recall that other time when my sister and I entertained the Savior. To my shame, I was so intent in preparing the best possible meal that I left him sitting in the next room! Well, he gently but firmly brought this fact to my attention. So now, on this unforgettable day, after serving in the kitchen for him, I'm determined to spend some quality time with him! ([John 12:1-2](#); [Luke 10:38-42](#))

#### *Spiritual Lessons from Martha*

- As Martha learned, Christ must first minister *to us* if we are to effectively minister *for him* ([Luke 10:38-42](#)).
- The greatest truths about Christ are often revealed during times of suffering ([John 11:21-27](#)).
- The most comforting words one believer can say to another grieving believer are those whispered by Martha to Mary: "The Teacher is here and wants to see you" ([John 11:28](#)).
- If we want to see the glory of God ([John 11:40](#)), we must believe and obey the God of glory ([John 11:38-39](#)).

### *Key Verses*

"But the Lord said to her, 'My dear Martha, you are so upset over all these details! There is really only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it—and I won't take it away from her' " ([Luke 10:41-42](#)).

## MARY MAGDALENE

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM JOHN)

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**Key Facts:** Former demoniac, first to see the resurrected Christ ([Mark 16:9](#))

**Total Bible References:** 15

**Key References:** [John 19:25](#); [John 20:11-18](#); [Matthew 27:55-56](#); [Luke 8:2](#); [Luke 24:1-12](#)

### *Mary Magdalene Speaks*

He's gone! Disappearing as quickly and mysteriously as he appeared! But no matter, he's alive! Both my head and heart are still spinning. It's not easy to go from the depths of sorrow to the heights of joy in the span of a breath! He simply said my name, but that was enough. ([John 20:11-18](#))

My happiness, however, is tempered by just a taint of shame. Why didn't we believe him when he spoke of his suffering and death and resurrection? I especially have no excuse, for did he not free me from seven wicked spirits? ([Matthew 20:17-19](#); [Luke 8:2](#); [Luke 24:1-12](#))

Perhaps my faith would have been stronger had I not seen him die. But I don't think so. Love and loyalty drew me there. But again, no matter—he has defeated death! I must hurry and report all this to the others, as he has commanded! ([John 19:25](#); [John 20:17](#); [Luke 24:10](#))

### *Spiritual Lessons from Mary Magdalene*

- You can give without loving (see [Matthew 6:1-2](#)), but you cannot love without giving (compare [John 20:11-18](#) with [Luke 8:1-3](#)). "Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be" ([Matthew 6:21](#)).
- Unable to believe (or perhaps even understand) Christ's prophecies about his resurrection ([Matthew 16:21](#); [Matthew 17:22-23](#)), a brokenhearted Mary lingered by the empty tomb, weeping ([John 20:11](#)). Sometimes love is stronger even than great faith ([1 Cor. 13:13](#)).

### *Key Verse*

"It was early on Sunday morning when Jesus rose from the dead, and the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene, the woman from whom he had cast out seven demons" ([Mark 16:9](#)).

## MARY (SISTER OF MARTHA AND LAZARUS)

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM JOHN)

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**Key Facts:** Listened to Christ's teachings ([Luke 10:38-42](#)), anointed him with precious oil ([John 12:1-8](#))

**Total Bible References:** 11

**Key References:** [John 11:1-12:8](#); [Luke 10:38-42](#)

### *Mary Speaks*

I only meant it as an act of love! Certainly the last thing I had in mind was to minimize the plight of the poor. Admittedly though, their criticism hurt me, especially the bitter and sarcastic words of Judas. ([John 12:3-5](#))

But the Master approved, and that's all that really matters. He said that my act of devotion would be remembered whenever and wherever the gospel is preached. He also said it would serve as a preparation for his burial. How it grieves me that he may soon be taken from us, but after all, I suppose that's what the gospel is all about. ([John 12:7](#); [Matthew 26:13](#); [Luke 10:39](#))

### *Spiritual Lessons from Mary*

- We learn from both Mary and Martha that we should never let the "if only's" of our past ([John 11:21](#), [32](#)) blind us to the blessings God has planned for our future ([John 11:25](#), [44](#)).
- Like King David, Mary refused to offer her Savior anything that was not of great value ([John 12:3](#); see [1 Chron. 21:24](#)).

### *Key Verses*

"But the Lord said to her, 'My dear Martha, you are so upset over all these details! There is really only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it—and I won't take it away from her' " ([Luke 10:41-42](#)).

## NICODEMUS

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM JOHN)

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**Key Facts:** Came to Christ by night, discussed the new birth ([John 3:1-21](#))

**Occupation:** Religious leader ([John 3:1](#))

**Total Bible References:** 5

**Key References:** [John 3:1-21](#); [John 7:50-51](#); [John 19:38-42](#)

### *Nicodemus Speaks*

Had only our faith been stronger, Joseph and I might not have invested in 100 pounds of expensive burial ointment! After all, he did repeatedly say his tomb would be needed only temporarily! You would think a well-known Bible teacher should have known this. But to my shame, back then I was even confused about the new birth experience. ([John 2:19](#); [John 3:4, 10](#); [John 19:39](#))

Now, I understand his strange words to me on that dark night—about his being lifted up as was the serpent by Moses. He was indeed lifted up—by a cross! But then he rose from the dead, and now his disciples tell me he has ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives. ([John 3:2, 14](#); [Acts 1:9-12](#))

And the purpose for all this? I think his words during that midnight conversation say it best: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." ([John 3:16](#))

### *Spiritual Lessons from Nicodemus*

- Even though Nicodemus at first had honest doubts (see [John 3:9](#)), he was nevertheless a sincere seeker of truth ([John 3:1-2](#)), unlike others whom Jesus rightly perceived to be insincere ([John 2:23-25](#)). While sincerity alone cannot save, it is the first step toward salvation (compare [Mark 12:34](#)).
- However one might fault Nicodemus for coming to Christ by night ([John 3:1](#)) instead of more boldly in broad daylight, the important thing is that he came.
- Few people show more misunderstanding about concepts such as grace and the new birth than do religious people ([John 3:1, 10](#)).
- Nicodemus confused spiritual birth with natural birth ([John 3:4](#)). Being born in a Christian home does not make one a Christian. God has many children ([John 1:12](#)) but no grandchildren ([John 3:3](#)).
- Unlike other Jewish religious leaders, Nicodemus did not allow the scorn of his peers to keep him from following Christ (compare [John 12:42](#) with [John 7:50-51](#); [John 19:38-39](#)).

### *Key Verses*

" 'What do you mean?' exclaimed Nicodemus. 'How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?' Jesus replied, 'The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit' " ([John 3:4-5](#)).

## **PHILIP (THE APOSTLE)**

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM JOHN)

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**Key Facts:** Apostle, brought Nathanael to Christ ([John 1:45-46](#))

**Total Bible References:** 16

**Key References:** [John 1:43-46](#); [John 6:5-7](#); [John 12:20-22](#); [John 14:8-9](#); [Acts 1:13](#)

### *Philip Speaks*

I'll never forget that day when I asked him to "show us the Father." I knew immediately from the look on his face that my request was misguided. Probably I was so fascinated by hearing that voice from

heaven that I actually wanted to see him. I still blush with shame, however, when recalling the Savior's sad response: "Philip, don't you even yet know who I am, even after all the time I have been with you? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!" ([John 12:20-21](#), [28](#); [John 14:8-9](#))

What a wonderful Messiah we have, who could miraculously supply food for thousands—even if certain of his disciples doubted his ability to do so! Now that he has ascended, I know that he will keep his promise to fill our spiritual hunger as well. ([John 6:7](#), [35](#))

### *Spiritual Lessons from Philip*

- "Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out!" ([Psalm 107:2](#)). Upon his conversion, Philip immediately began telling others about Jesus ([John 1:43-45](#)).
- "Taste and see that the LORD is good" ([Psalm 34:8](#)). Instead of arguing the subject of salvation, Philip wisely advised a skeptical Nathanael to "come and see" ([John 1:46](#)).
- Is Christ an all-sufficient or an insufficient Savior? Sometimes when we are nearly overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of a problem, we are tempted to wonder, as did Philip ([John 6:5-7](#)). But our God is able (see [Ephes. 3:20](#); [Phil. 4:19](#)).
- "Sir, we want to meet Jesus" ([John 12:20-22](#)). This request, addressed to Philip by some Greek Gentiles, indicates that they knew he had a special relationship with the Savior. Can this be said of us? See [Matthew 5:13-16](#); [Acts 6:15](#); [2 Cor. 3:17-18](#).

### *Key Verses*

"Philip went off to look for Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.' 'Nazareth!' exclaimed Nathanael. 'Can anything good come from there?' 'Just come and see for yourself,' Philip said" ([John 1:45-46](#)).

## THOMAS

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM JOHN)

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**Key Facts:** Apostle, doubted resurrection till he saw the risen Christ ([John 20:24-29](#))

**Brother:** Unnamed ([John 20:24](#))

**Total Bible References:** 15

**Key References:** [John 11:16](#); [John 14:1-5](#); [John 20:24-29](#)

### *Thomas Speaks*

Hopefully this time I'm in the right place doing the right thing. I mean, he did say he would meet us here sometime after he rose from the dead. . . . ([John 21:1-2](#); [Matthew 26:32](#); [Matthew 28:7](#))

Admittedly, I've been totally confused concerning this very idea of resurrection. I think it all began when the Master announced his intention to raise Lazarus from the dead. My response to him still embarrasses me. With regrettable sarcasm, I said, "Let's go, too—and die with Jesus." I didn't just question his power to raise Lazarus—I even doubted his ability to protect us from all the hostile people around Bethany. ([John 11:1-16](#))

Then there was that event in the upper room prior to his death, when he talked about heaven and I once again displayed my ignorance. ([John 14:1-5](#))

Of course the final shame occurred due to my absence in the upper room following his resurrection, when he appeared to the others. When they told me they had seen him, I refused to believe it unless I could see living proof, in the flesh. ([John 20:19-25](#))

Well, I certainly got my living proof! And my response that time was something I will never be ashamed of: I fell at his feet in worship! ([John 20:28](#))

Such memories fill my mind as we sit here in our boats, hoping our nets will yield some fish. He said he'd meet us here . . . Could that be him, standing on the shore? I can hardly see through this early morning mist. . . . ([John 21:1-5](#))

### *Spiritual Lessons from Thomas*

- Thomas, like many believers today, apparently had just enough faith to make him miserable ([John 11:16](#)). We can avoid such misery by praying regularly ([Jude 1:20-21](#)), studying God's Word ([Romans 10:17](#)), and faithfully putting into practice the things we learn from Jesus ([2 Peter 1:5-8](#)).
- Some Christians are frustrated because they have not had the remarkable spiritual experiences that others have had or claim to have had. Jesus pronounced a special blessing on all who remain faithful to Jesus even when there seems to be little tangible proof of his presence (see [John 20:29](#)).

### *Key Verse*

"Then Jesus told [Thomas], 'You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who haven't seen me and believe anyway' " ([John 20:29](#)).