

the story of **Jesus**

*as told by his friend John*

*Biblical Training Press*

PO 28428  
Spokane, WA 99228

[www.BiblicalTraining.org](http://www.BiblicalTraining.org)

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Cover design by Fouressence  
Typeset by Teknia Software  
Printed in the USA

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[www.theStoryofJesus.org](http://www.theStoryofJesus.org)

[www.BiblicalTraining.org](http://www.BiblicalTraining.org)

At the second site you will find a short class designed specifically for new believers, helping you to understand more fully what it is to be a follower of Jesus.

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## Introduction

John was one of Jesus' best friends. Before meeting Jesus, he and his brother James worked for their father, Zebedee, in the fishing business. One day Jesus came by and called John to follow him. John left his nets and for the next three and a half years listened to all that Jesus taught. He soon became convinced that Jesus was far more than just another man, that he was God himself. He wrote this true story so that you and I would come to believe the same.

As the story begins you will meet another John, not the author. This is John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way for Jesus.

John the disciple stayed with Jesus to the very end. When his master hung dying on the cross John was there. In that poignant moment it was John to whom Jesus assigned the care of his mother.

John lived a long and full life. Toward the end of his life he ran into trouble for preaching the message of his good friend Jesus. The authorities banished him to Patmos, an island in the Aegean Sea, and it was there that he wrote Revelation, the last book in the New Testament. Along with the Story of Jesus (which in the Bible is called the Gospel of John) and his three letters (called 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John), these writings provide a unique insight into not only the story of Jesus but also God's eternal plan for the human race.

Let your imagination take you back to the first-century world where the man Jesus, an apparently simple Galilean carpenter, moves into the religious setting of his day, teaches the way of love, challenges the practices of the religious leaders and is met with such hostility that before long he is put to death as a blasphemer and rebel. But the story does not end there. Three days later Jesus rose from the dead. But let John be your narrator. He was there when it all happened and will tell you the story in his own words.

The original story was written in the Greek language. What you are about to read is the same story, but put into contemporary English and told as a first-person account. Where John uses the pronoun "we/us/our" he is referring to himself and the other disciples.

Before each new section there is a short introduction to the story that follows. These comments are in italics and are not part of the Bible. References, such as "(3:1-15)" refer to the chapter (3) and verses (1-15) of this passage in the Bible.

There is a short glossary at [www.theStoryofJesus.org](http://www.theStoryofJesus.org) that explains some of the unusual terms.

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## Chapter One

*Jesus existed before anything was created. When he was born into the human race, his own people rejected him. John the Baptist declares him to be the light of the world (1:1-18). This is a difficult section to understand; if you find it confusing, move on to the next section.*

Before anything else existed, Jesus, the “Word,” already was. The Word was in fellowship with God; in fact, the Word was God. He was there from the very beginning. It was through him that God brought everything into existence. Not a single thing was created apart from him. He was the source of all life, and that life has provided light for the human race. The light keeps on shining in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to put it out.

Onto the stage of history came a man whose name was John the Baptist. He was sent by God to tell people about the light so that they might come to believe through him. John himself was not that light, but the one who was to tell others about the light.

The real light, the one destined to enlighten everyone, was about to come into the world. When Jesus, the “Word,” did enter the world, the world failed to recognize him even though it had been created by him. The Word came to his own creation but his own people would not receive him. However, to as many as did receive him—to those who believe that he really is who he claims to be—he gave the privilege of becoming sons and daughters of God. This birth was not by natural means, the result of a physical desire, or a father’s decision; it was a birth that came from God.

The Word became a human being and lived among us. We gazed on his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, sent from the Father.

John the Baptist told everyone about the Word. He exclaimed, “This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘There is a man yet to come who is greater than I because he existed even before I was born.’”

From his perfection we have all received one gracious gift after another. While it was through Moses that the law was given, it is through Jesus Christ that grace and truth have come. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who himself is God and dwells in the presence of the Father, he has told us about him.

*John the Baptist says that he himself is not the Messiah but has come to prepare the way for the Messiah. John recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah by the descent of the Spirit as a dove (1:19-34).*

The religious authorities in Jerusalem sent some priests and Levites to John the Baptist in order to find out who he was. In answer to their question he admitted with all candor, “I am not the Messiah.”

“Then who are you?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?”

“I am not,” he answered.

“Are you by any chance the prophet we have been waiting for?”

“No,” he replied.

“Well then, who are you? Tell us, so we can take an answer back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

John responded by quoting Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.’”

Now some of those who had been sent to question John were Pharisees, so they asked, “Why are you baptizing since you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet we have been waiting for?”

“I baptize only with water,” answered John. “And although you do not recognize him, the one who is to come after me is right here among you. I am not worthy even to unloose the strap of his sandal.”

This exchange took place in the town of Bethany, east of the Jordan river where John was baptizing.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. “Look!” he said, “the Lamb of God, the one who will take away the sin of the world! He is the one of whom I said, ‘There is a man yet to come who is greater than I because he existed even before I was born.’ I didn’t know that he was the Coming One; but I have been baptizing with water so that God might reveal him to the people of Israel.”

“I saw the Spirit,” said John, “coming down from heaven like a dove and coming to rest on him. I would not have known him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said, ‘The one on whom you will see the Spirit descending and coming to rest is the very one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I saw this myself and therefore declare that this man is the Son of God.”

*The first disciples of Jesus (1:35-42).*

The next day as John the Baptist was standing there with two of us (we had become his followers), Jesus walked by. “Look!” exclaimed John, “here comes the Lamb of God!” When we heard him say that, we left John and began to follow Jesus.

Jesus turned around and saw us following him. He asked, “What is it that you want?”

“Rabbi,” we said (the word means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

He said, “Come along and you will see.” So we went with him and saw where he was staying. Since it was about four in the afternoon, we stayed with him for the rest of the day.

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was the other one who had heard what John said and had gone with Jesus. The first thing he did was to find his brother Simon. “We have found the Messiah!” he told him (the word means “Christ,” that is, “the anointed one”).

Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him intently and said, “You are Simon, the son of John; you are to be called Cephas” (the word means “Peter”).

*The next day Philip and Nathanael become disciples of Jesus (1:43-51).*

The following day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He met Philip and said to him, “Come along with me.” Philip was from Bethsaida, the same town where Andrew and Peter lived.

Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one that Moses wrote about in the Law, the one the prophets foretold. He is Jesus, the son of Joseph, and comes from the town of Nazareth.”

“Nazareth!” exclaimed Nathanael, “Can anything good come from that place?”

Philip answered, “Come and see for yourself.”

Jesus saw Nathanael approaching and said of him, “Here comes a true Israelite! A man in whom there is no deceit!”

“How do you know me?” asked Nathaniel.

Jesus answered, “I saw you when you were sitting under the fig tree, before Philip spoke to you.”

“Rabbi,” exclaimed Nathaniel, “you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

“Is it because I told you that I saw you sitting under the fig tree that you believe?” asked Jesus. “You will see greater things than that.” Then Jesus said to him, “The truth is that you will see heaven standing wide open and the angels of God coming down on the Son of Man, and going up from him.”

## Chapter Two

*Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee (2:1-12).*

Two days later, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was at a wedding in the Galilean town of Cana. Jesus had been invited to the wedding and we were there as well.

When the party ran out of wine, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They don’t have any more wine.”

“I do not share your concern,” said Jesus. “My time has not yet come.”

So his mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Nearby were six stone water jars, each of which held some twenty to thirty gallons. The water was used for the Jewish custom of ceremonial cleansing. Jesus told the servants, “Fill up those six jars with water.” So they filled them to the brim. “Now,” said Jesus, “dip some out and take it to the master of the feast.” And so they did.

The master of the feast did not know where the water that had been turned into wine had come from (but of course the servants knew). He called the bridegroom aside and said to him, “People normally serve their best wine first. Then when the guests have had a bit too much to drink, they bring out the less expensive wine. But you have saved the best until last.”

This miracle, performed in Cana of Galilee, was the first of Jesus’ miraculous signs. It revealed his divine nature and deepened our faith in him. After the wedding, Jesus went to the town of Capernaum for a few days with his mother and his brothers. We also went with them.

*Jesus goes to the temple in Jerusalem and drives out the money-changers. He teaches that if they tear down the temple (by which he means his body) he will rebuild it in three days (a reference to his resurrection) (2:13-22).*

It was almost time for the Jewish Festival of Passover, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. There in the courts of the temple he saw people selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifice. Others were sitting at their tables exchanging money. So Jesus made a whip out of some pieces of cord and used it to drive them all out of the temple, along with their sheep and cattle. He overturned the tables of the money-changers, scattering their coins in every direction.

To those who were selling doves he said, “Get them out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a marketplace!”

Then we remembered what was prophesied in Scripture, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

At this point the Jewish authorities demanded of Jesus, “Show us some miraculous sign that will prove you have the authority to do this.”

“Tear down this temple,” said Jesus, “and in three days I will build it up again.”

“What!” they exclaimed. “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years. What makes you think you could restore it in three days?”

Of course the temple to which Jesus referred was his own body. Later, when Jesus had risen from the dead, we remembered that he had said this. We believed the Scripture and the words Jesus had spoken.

*Jesus knows human nature and will not entrust himself to the enthusiasm of the crowd (2:23-25).*

When Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Festival of Passover, many people saw the miraculous signs he was performing and became convinced that he was in fact the promised Messiah. But Jesus did not entrust himself to them, because he knew what people were like. He did not need any one to tell him about human nature because he fully understood what was in a person’s heart.

### Chapter Three

*Jesus tells Nicodemus that a person must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus misses the point because his thinking is on a material level (3:1-15).*

There was a man by the name of Nicodemus who was a leader among the Jewish people. He belonged to the religious sect of the Pharisees. One night he came to Jesus and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform the miracles that you are doing unless God were with him.”

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, unless a person is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus asked, “How is it possible for a person to be born when he is old? Obviously you can’t enter your mother’s womb and be born all over again.”

“I tell you the truth,” said Jesus, “a person cannot enter God’s kingdom unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Physical birth results in a physical being; spiritual birth, in a spiritual being. You should not be surprised when I say that all of you must be born again. The Spirit is like the wind, which blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the sound it makes, and there is no way to know where it comes from or where it is going. Spiritual birth is like that.”

“How could all this be?” replied Nicodemus.

Jesus answered, “How is it that you, a highly respected Jewish teacher, don’t understand these things? I tell you the truth, we know that what we talk about is true because we saw it ourselves. Yet you people will not accept what we say. If I speak of things of the earth and you don’t believe me, how will you believe me when I talk of things of heaven?”

“No one has ever gone up into heaven, but the Son of Man has come from there. As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, so also must the Son of Man be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

*Jesus goes on to teach that the love of God is seen in the fact that the Son was sent into the world, not to condemn but to save (3:16-21).*

“This is how God loved the world: he gave his one and only Son so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life and not really die. God did not send his Son into the world to pass judgment on it, but that it might be saved through him. Whoever believes in the Son is not condemned. However, the person who does not believe stands condemned already, because he has refused to put his faith in God’s one and only Son.

“Light came into the world, but rather than loving that light, people chose the cover of darkness because what they were doing was evil. People who do evil things hate the light. They won’t come near it for fear it will make clear to others what they are doing. On the other hand, those who live by the truth come willingly to the light. That way everyone can see that what they are doing is done in partnership with God.”

*John the Baptist does not envy the growing impact of Jesus’ ministry. Using the analogy of a Jewish wedding he acknowledges that he is merely the friend of the bridegroom (3:22-30).*

After his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus and we went out into the Judean countryside, where we stayed for a time baptizing believers.

John the Baptist had not yet been put in prison but was at Aenon, near Salim. There was plenty of water there, and John was baptizing the steady flow of people who were coming to him.

Some of John’s followers got into an argument with a Jewish man about the practice of ceremonial cleansing. They came to John and asked, “Rabbi, the man you spoke about when you were east of the Jordan—the man you said was the Lamb of God—he is now baptizing, and people are flocking to him.”

John replied, "A person plays no role in the eternal plan unless it has been assigned to him by God. You yourselves heard me say, 'I am not the Messiah,' but rather, 'I have been sent as his forerunner.'

"In a wedding it is the bridegroom who takes the bride. The role of the bridegroom's friend is to wait and listen for his coming. When he hears the voice of the bridegroom he is overcome with joy. My joy is like that; it is absolutely complete. Jesus must become increasingly important, but I must fade away."

*Jesus is from above and speaks the words of the Father; those who believe have eternal life (3:31-36).*

"The one who comes from above is above all others. The one who belongs to the earth speaks only of things of the earth. The one from heaven is above all others. He speaks of what he has actually seen and heard, yet none of you accept what he says. But whoever does accept his message has demonstrated his own conviction that God is truthful. The one sent by God speaks the words of God, for God gives his own Spirit to him without measure.

"The Father loves the Son and has placed everything under his control. Everyone who puts his faith in the Son has eternal life. But no one who disobeys the Son will share in that life, but will remain subject to the wrath of God."

## Chapter Four

*Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink of water and then explains that he is the one who gives living water to all. Those who drink it will never again become thirsty (4:1-42).*

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more converts than John (although it was the other disciples and I who were doing the baptizing). When Jesus learned about this he left Judea and started back to Galilee. His route took him through Samaria, and before long he came to a town called Sychar. It was located not far from the plot of land that our ancestor Jacob had given to his son Joseph. That was where Jacob had dug a well. About noon, Jesus was tired from his journey, and sat down beside the well. A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

"Please give me a drink of water," said Jesus to the woman. (We had gone into town to buy some food.)

The woman exclaimed, "But you're a Jew! How come you're asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink of water?" (No Jew would ever drink from a cup used by a Samaritan).

Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift of God and who it is that is asking you for a drink of water, you would be the one asking me, and I would give you living\* water."

The woman replied, "But sir, you don't have a bucket and the well is deep. Where will you get this living water? Surely you are not greater than our father Jacob, are you? He is the one who gave us this well. He drank from it himself, and so did his sons and his flocks."

Jesus replied, "Everyone who drinks of this water will get thirsty again, but once a person drinks the water that I will give, he will never be thirsty again. In fact, it will become in him a perpetual spring of water welling up to eternal life.

"Please, sir," the woman exclaimed, "give me some of that water. That way I'll never get thirsty again and won't have to keep coming way out here to draw water."

Jesus said, "Go, call your husband first, then come back again."

"I don't have a husband," the woman replied.

"That's right," said Jesus, "you don't have a husband. Already you have had five, and the one you are now living with is not your husband. You told the truth."

The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet! I have a question for you: Should we worship on this mountain where our ancestors worshiped, or should we worship, as you, a Jew, would say, in Jerusalem?"

"Believe me," said Jesus, "the time is coming when the place where one worships—here on this mountain or in Jerusalem—will no longer matter. You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship; but we Jews know all about him, because salvation comes through our race. A time is coming—in fact, it is here already—when true worshipers will be led by the Spirit to worship the Father as he really is. And the Father is looking for people who will worship him like that. God is spirit, and those who worship him must be led by the Spirit to worship him as he really is."

The woman said, "I know that the Messiah (who is called 'Christ') will come, and when he comes, he will explain everything to us."

\* "Living water" is a pun. It can mean "flowing water," as in "fresh water," or it has a spiritual meaning, which is what Jesus intends.



"I am the Messiah," said Jesus, "the very one who is speaking to you now."

Just then we returned from the town. We were surprised to find Jesus talking with a woman. However, none of us asked her what she wanted or questioned Jesus as to why he was talking with her. At that point the woman put down her water jar and hurried off to town, where she told everyone, "Come and meet the man who told me everything I have ever done! Could this man really be the Messiah?" The people left what they were doing and went out to meet Jesus.

Meanwhile we kept urging Jesus to take some food and eat.

"I have a source of nourishment you know nothing about," he answered. We asked one another, "Could someone have brought him food to eat?"

Jesus said, "My food is to do what God desires. He is the one who sent me and I must finish the work he gave me to do. You say, 'There are four months between sowing and harvest'; but I say, 'Open your eyes and look around! The fields are already ripe for harvest.'

"Already the reaper is drawing his pay for having gathered a crop destined for eternal life. Sowers and reapers are rejoicing together. The saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I am sending you to harvest a crop in a field where others have done all the hard work. You are about to reap the benefits of what they have done."

A number of people in that Samaritan village came to believe in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I had ever done!" They came to him with the urgent request that he remain with them in their town for a time. So for the next two days he stayed there, and many others came to believe when they heard Jesus for themselves. To the woman they said, "We no longer believe just because you told us about him. Now that we have heard him for ourselves, we are convinced that he is the Savior of the world."

*Jesus heals the son of a government official (4:43-54).*

Two days later Jesus left Samaria and continued on his way to Galilee. (Previously he had noted that a prophet is held in honor everywhere except in his own country!) When he arrived in Galilee he was welcomed by the people, because they too had been at the festival in Jerusalem and seen everything he had done.

Traveling through Galilee, Jesus came once again to the village of Cana, where he had turned water into wine. In nearby Capernaum there was an official of the imperial government whose son was ill. When he learned

that Jesus had come back from Judea and was in Galilee, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, for his son was about to die.

"Unless you people see miracles and wonders," said Jesus, "you will never believe!"

"Please, sir," begged the official. "Come before my son dies."

"Your son is alive and well," replied Jesus. "Go back to him." The official believed what Jesus said and set off for home.

While he was still on the way home, his servants came to meet him with the good news that his son had recovered. He asked them what time this had taken place, and they said, "One o'clock yesterday afternoon the fever suddenly disappeared."

The father remembered that it was at that very hour when Jesus had said, "Your son is alive and well." So the official and everyone in his family became believers.

Jesus did this second miracle after leaving Judea and arriving in Galilee.

## Chapter Five

*Jesus goes to Jerusalem where he heals a crippled man. The Jewish authorities become angry because Jesus did this on the Sabbath (5:1-18).*

Some time later Jesus went up to Jerusalem to take part in one of the Jewish festivals. In the city, near the Sheep Gate, is a pool that in Aramaic is called Bethesda. It has five covered porches where a number of invalids used to lie—the blind, the lame and those withered by disease.

One man beside the pool had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been in that condition for such a long time, he said to the man, "Would you like to get well?"

"Sir," the man replied, "I don't have anyone to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up. So while I am trying to get to the pool, someone else always gets there before me."

Jesus said, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!" Right then and there the man was healed. He picked up his mat and started to walk around.

This happened on a Sabbath day, so the Jewish authorities said to the man who had just been healed, "You can't do that! It's against the law for a person to carry his mat on the Sabbath."

"But the man who made me well told me to pick up my mat and walk," he replied.

“Who told you that?” they asked. “Who said to you, ‘Pick up your mat and walk?’” The man did not know who had healed him, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd.

Later on, Jesus found the man in the temple and said to him, “Now that you are well again, don’t go on sinning or something worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jewish authorities that it was Jesus who had healed him.

Because Jesus kept doing things like this on the Sabbath, the Jewish authorities began to persecute him. So Jesus said to them, “Since my Father continues to do his work, I am free to do my work as well.” That made the Jewish authorities try all the harder to kill him. Not only did he continue to break the Sabbath laws, but by referring to God as his Father, he was claiming to be equal with God.

*Jesus is given authority by the Father to judge (5:19-30).*

“I tell you the truth,” said Jesus, “the Son can do nothing on his own initiative. He can do only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son does. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show the Son, so that you may be filled with wonder. Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also does the Son give life to the ones he chooses.

“The Father himself passes judgment on no one but has made the Son the judge of all, so that everyone should honor the Son as much as they honor him. To withhold honor from the Son is to dishonor the Father who sent him. I tell you the truth, the one who listens to my message and believes the one who sent me, that person has eternal life already. He is no longer headed toward judgment but has moved from the realm of death into life.

“I tell you the truth, the time will come—in fact, it is already here—when those who are spiritually dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and if they pay attention to it, they will live. The Father himself is the source of all life and has allowed the Son the same privilege of being a source of life. He has given the Son the authority to act as judge because he is the Son of Man.

“Don’t be surprised at this, because the time is coming when all the dead will hear his voice and come out of their graves. Those who have done what is right will rise to life eternal, but those who have done evil will rise to face judgment.

“I can do nothing on my own initiative. I judge only as God tells me, and this judgment is fair because I am seeking the will of the one who sent me, not trying to please myself.”

*There are five witnesses to Jesus: God his Father, John the Baptist, Jesus’ own miraculous deeds, Scripture, and Moses. The Jewish people who reject him will stand accused by Moses, the very one on whom they have set their hope (5:31-47).*

“If I testify on my own behalf, you have no way of knowing if it is true. There is, however, someone who speaks on my behalf, and I know that what he says about me is true. You sent messengers to John the Baptist, and what he said about me is true. Of course, I don’t need someone else to validate my claims, but I say these things so that you may be saved. John was a lamp, shining and giving light. And for a time you were willing to rejoice in his light.

“But I have greater evidence than the words of John the Baptist—specifically, the miraculous deeds I am now doing. They were assigned to me by the Father, and they prove conclusively that the Father has sent me.

“Beyond that, the Father himself, the one who sent me, continues to speak on my behalf. However, you never listen to his voice or are aware of his presence. His word falls upon deaf ears because you refuse to believe in me, the one whom he sent.

“You keep on searching the Scriptures because you think that in them you will find eternal life. These same Scriptures speak about me, but you refuse to come to me in order to have life.

“I am not looking for your praise, but I know that you have no love for God in your hearts. I have come as a representative of my Father and you won’t accept me. But when others come as their own spokesmen, you will accept them. How can you ever believe if it is the praise of one another that you are seeking rather than the praise that comes from God?

“Do not think that I will be the one to accuse you before the Father. Moses will be your accuser, the very one on whom you have set your hope. If you really believed Moses, you would believe me, because it was about me that he wrote. But if you don’t believe what he wrote about me, how can you believe the claims I make?”

## Chapter Six

*Jesus feeds over five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish. When the left over fragments are picked up they fill twelve baskets (6:1-15).*

After this Jesus went across to the other side of Lake Galilee (sometimes called Lake Tiberias). A large crowd of people followed him because they had seen the miraculous power of God at work through him when he healed the sick. Jesus went up into the hill country and sat there with us, his disciples, gathered around him. It was shortly before the Jewish Festival of Passover.

When Jesus looked around and saw the large crowd that was gathering, he turned to Philip and asked, "Where can we buy enough food to feed all these people?" (Jesus knew what he intended to do, but he said this to test Philip.)

Philip answered, "It would take more than six months' wages to buy enough food for everyone; and even then, each person would get only a little."

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said to Jesus, "There is a boy here who has five loaves of barley bread and two fish, but what good would that be for so many?"

"Tell the people to sit down," said Jesus. There was plenty of grass there.

So the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus took the loaves and gave thanks to God for them. Then he passed the loaves to those who were sitting there. He did the same with the fish, until everyone had as much to eat as they wanted.

When the people had finished eating, Jesus said to us, "Now gather up the leftovers, so that nothing will go to waste." We gathered up the pieces of barley bread and filled twelve baskets with what was left over from the five loaves.

When the people saw this miracle that Jesus had done, they began to say, "This must be the prophet we've been waiting for!" Jesus realized that they were about to take him by force and make him their king, so he withdrew to the hill country to be alone.

*Jesus appears to his disciples walking on Lake Galilee. Although terrified at first, they want him in the boat when he tells them who is (6:16-21).*

When evening came, we went down to the lake, got into a boat, and started across to Capernaum. The sun had already gone down and Jesus had not yet joined us. Soon a strong wind started to blow and the lake became very rough.

When we had rowed some three or four miles, we saw Jesus walking on the water. As he kept coming closer to the boat we became terrified. "It is I, Jesus," he said. "There's no reason to be afraid." Then we were eager

to take him aboard, and in no time at all the boat reached the shore where we were headed.

*In a fairly lengthy discussion Jesus explains to the crowds that have followed him to Capernaum that he is the bread of life. The bread (i.e., the manna) that their ancestors had eaten in the desert did not keep them from dying, but the true bread (Jesus' own life) gives eternal life to those who will eat it. Like much of Jesus' teaching, this is to be understood on two levels—the figures are material but the meaning is spiritual (6:22-59).*

The next morning, back across the lake, the crowds discovered that Jesus was no longer with them. They knew that he had not gone with us in the one boat that had been there. Fortunately, some boats from Tiberias had landed ashore, near the place where they had eaten bread after the Lord had given thanks for it. They got into these boats and went across the lake to Capernaum looking for Jesus. When they found us there on the other side of the lake, they asked Jesus, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

"I tell you the truth," replied Jesus, "you've been trying to find me, not because you saw the miracles I did, but because I gave you all you wanted to eat. Do not work for the food that is here today and gone tomorrow, but for the food that produces eternal life. The Son of Man will give you this food, because he is the one authorized by God the Father."

"What should we be doing," they asked, "in order to do what God requires?"

Jesus answered, "What God requires is that you believe in me, the one he has sent."

They asked, "What miraculous sign are you going to do so that when we see it we will believe in you? What will it be? For example, our ancestors were given manna to eat in the desert. As Scripture says, 'Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

"I tell you the truth," said Jesus, "it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven; it is my Father who is giving you the true bread from heaven. The bread of God is the one who came down from heaven and gives life to the world."

The people said, "Sir, give us this bread now and never stop!"

"I am the bread of life," said Jesus. "No one who comes to me will ever be hungry. No one who believes in me will ever be thirsty. As I told you before, although you have seen me, you still do not believe. Everyone the Father has given me will come to me, and I won't reject any of them.

"I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of the one who sent me. His will is that not a single one of those he gave me will

be lost, but that on the last day every one of them will be raised to eternal life. He wants everyone who looks to the Son to believe in him and have eternal life. Then on the last day I will raise them up."

Then the crowd began to grumble because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They asked, "But isn't this Jesus, one of Joseph's sons? Don't we know his father and mother? So how can he say that he came down from heaven?"

Jesus replied, "Stop grumbling among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father draws him. And whoever does come, I will raise to eternal life on the last day. One of the prophets wrote, 'They will all be taught by God.' So everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him will come to me.

"Of course, the only one who has seen the Father is the one who came from his presence. He alone has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, everyone who believes in me has eternal life.

"I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, yet in time they all died. But now the true bread has come down from heaven, and whoever eats it will never die. I am the living bread, come down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh that I give to bring life to the world."

These words led to a heated argument among the crowd. "How is it possible for this man to give us his flesh to eat?" they asked.

"I tell you the truth," said Jesus, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have eternal life. But if you do eat my flesh and drink my blood you will have eternal life, and I will raise you up on the last day. My flesh is the real food and my blood is the real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood sustains a personal relationship with me, and I with him.

"The Father of life sent me and I have life because of him. In the same way, the one who eats my body will have life because of me. The bread that came down from heaven is not like that which your ancestors ate. They died, but whoever eats this bread will live forever."

Jesus taught all these things in the synagogue at Capernaum.

*Many of Jesus' followers turn their backs on him because his teaching offends them. Peter acknowledges that Jesus is the Holy One of God (6:60-71).*

Many of his followers who had been listening said, "This teaching is offensive; who can accept it?"

Jesus knew that these people were grumbling about it, so he said, "Does this shock you? Then what would you think if you were to see me, the Son

of Man, return to heaven where I came from? It is the Spirit who gives life; human nature is of no help. The words that I have spoken to you are from that life-giving Spirit. But some of you do not believe." (From the beginning Jesus knew who would not believe in him. He also knew who would betray him.)

Jesus added, "That is the reason I told you, 'No one can come to me unless the Father draws him.'"

As a result, many of Jesus' followers turned their backs on him and no longer followed him. So Jesus turned to us, his twelve disciples, and asked, "You aren't going to leave me like the others, are you?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You are the one whose words give eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Jesus replied, "Did I not choose all twelve of you? Yet one of you is a devil." He was talking about Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Although Judas was one of the Twelve, before long he would betray Jesus.

## Chapter Seven

*Jesus' brothers urge him to go up to Jerusalem for the Festival of Shelters (7:1-9).*

After this Jesus continued to go about in Galilee. He chose not to go into Judea because the Jewish authorities there were determined to kill him. It was almost time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, so his brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea. That way your followers will be able to see the miraculous things you are doing. No one acts in secret if he wants to become well known. Since you can do such miraculous things, let the whole world know about it." (Even his own brothers did not believe in him.)

Jesus replied, "It is not yet the right time for me, but for you one day is as good as the next. People hate me because I tell them that what they are doing is evil, but you give them no reason to hate you. Go on up to the Festival. I won't be going there right now because the right time for me has not yet come." So he stayed in Galilee.

*Jesus eventually goes up to Jerusalem and teaches in the temple. He defends his teaching as coming from God and arouses hostility by claiming the right to heal on the Sabbath (7:10-31).*

However, after his brothers left for the Festival, Jesus did go up to Jerusalem, not with others but by himself.

The Jewish leaders were expecting him at the Festival. They kept asking, “Has anyone seen that man?” There was a lot of guarded discussion about him among the crowds. While some held him to be an honorable man, others said that he was deceiving the common people. But since the people were afraid of their leaders, no one spoke openly about Jesus.

About midway through the festival, Jesus went into the temple and began to teach. The Jewish leaders were astonished when they heard him. They asked, “How does this man know so much when he hasn’t studied in our schools?”

“What you hear me teaching is not something I made up,” said Jesus. “It comes from the one who sent me. If a person chooses to obey God, he will know that what I am teaching comes from God. I am not speaking on my own. Whoever speaks on his own authority wants to bring honor to himself. But the one who desires to bring honor to the one who sent him is a person of integrity—there is nothing false about him. It was Moses, was it not, who gave you the Law? But none of you are keeping it. Otherwise you wouldn’t be trying to kill me.”

The crowd shot back, “A demon has driven you mad! What makes you think someone is trying to kill you?”

Jesus answered, “I performed a miracle on the Sabbath, and you were all offended by it. Moses ordered you to circumcise your sons (actually the practice began with the patriarchs, not Moses), so you go ahead and circumcise even if the required time falls on the Sabbath. If you can circumcise on the Sabbath without breaking the law of Moses, why are you upset with me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Stop judging on such a superficial level. Get to the heart of the matter.”

Then some who lived in Jerusalem said, “Isn’t this the man they want to kill? Yet here he is, speaking in public, and no one has said a word to stop him! You don’t suppose the authorities have found out that he really is the Messiah? But that couldn’t be! No one knows where the Messiah will come from, but everyone knows that Jesus is from Nazareth.”

As Jesus was teaching in the temple he raised his voice and said, “So you think you know me and where I came from, do you? I didn’t come on my own initiative but God was the one who sent me. You don’t know him, but I know him because I came from him, and he was the one who sent me.”

Some of the people wanted to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him because his time had not yet come. However, many in the crowd believed in him. They reasoned, “When the Messiah comes, surely he won’t do more miracles than this man has done?”

*The religious authorities send temple guards to arrest Jesus (7:32-36).*

When the Pharisees learned that the crowd was considering the possibility that Jesus could be the Messiah, they got together with the chief priests and sent temple guards to arrest Jesus. Jesus told the people, “I will be with you a little while longer, and then I will return to the one who sent me. You will look for me but you won’t find me. Where I am, you cannot come.”

The Jewish authorities said to one another, “Where does he think he can go that we can’t find him? He can’t possibly think that by going to some foreign country and continuing his teaching among the Greeks, that he will escape us! What did he mean when he said, ‘You will look for me but you won’t find me,’ and ‘Where I am you cannot come?’”

*Jesus invites the thirsty to come to him for living water. At dawn during the Festival of Shelters the high priest would lead a procession to the Pool of Siloam and return with a golden flagon of water that was poured out before the Lord (7:37-44).*

On the last (and the most important) day of the Festival, Jesus stood and called out, “If you are thirsty, come to me and drink. If you believe in me, rivers of living water will flow out from deep within you, just as the Scripture says.” (Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit, who would be given to every believer. The Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been raised to glory.)

When the people heard these words, some in the crowd said, “Without doubt this man is the prophet!” Others said, “No, he is the Messiah.” But others argued, “That can’t be, because the Messiah doesn’t come from Galilee. Scripture says that the Messiah will be a descendant of King David and be born in Bethlehem, the village where David lived.” So the people were of a divided mind as to what should be done with Jesus. Some wanted to arrest him right then and there, but no one laid a hand on him.

*The religious authorities are upset because Jesus was not apprehended. Nicodemus counsels a fair hearing for Jesus (7:45-52).*

When the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, they were asked, “Why didn’t you bring Jesus with you?”

“No one has even spoken like that man!” declared the guards.

“Don’t tell me that you too have been fooled,” said the Pharisees. “Note that none of the chief priests or Pharisees have fallen for him. As for this mob that knows nothing of the law—they are bound for hell anyway!”

Nicodemus (who had met with Jesus at an earlier time) was one of this group. He posed the question, "Is it not true that our law will not condemn a man without first listening to what he has to say?"

In an attempt to ridicule Nicodemus they asked, "Are you from Galilee as well?" Search the Scriptures and see for yourself that no prophet ever comes from Galilee."

## Chapter Eight

*Religious leaders bring to Jesus a woman caught in adultery. He points out their hypocrisy by challenging the one without sin to cast the first stone (7:53-8:11).*

Everyone else went home, but Jesus walked out to the Mount of Olives. Early the following morning he returned to the temple courts. The people soon gathered, so he sat down (as rabbis do) and began to teach them.

The legal experts and the Pharisees brought a woman to him who had been caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand where everyone could see her, and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. The law of Moses tells us to put a woman like this to death by stoning. What do you say?" (The question was posed as a trap. They intended to use his answer as a basis for bringing charges against him.)

Instead of answering, Jesus bent over and started writing on the ground with his finger.

So they kept posing the question about the woman. Finally he straightened up and said, "Go ahead and stone her; but let's have the man who has never sinned throw the first stone." Then once again he bent over and wrote on the ground. When they heard this, they began to slip away one by one, beginning with the oldest. Finally Jesus and the woman were there alone.

"Woman," asked Jesus, "where did they all go? Is there no one left to accuse you?"

"No one, sir," she replied.

Then Jesus said, "I am not going to accuse you either. You may leave, but from now on you must stop sinning."

*Jesus declares himself to be the light of the world but the Pharisees reject his claim on the superficial basis that he is testifying on his own behalf (8:12-20).*

Once again Jesus spoke to the Pharisees. He declared, "I am the light of the world. Follow me and you won't stumble along in the dark. You will have the light that leads to life."

"You are testifying on your own behalf," the Pharisees protested, "so whatever you say about yourself is not valid."

Jesus answered, "Even if I do testify on my own behalf, what I say is valid because I know where I came from and where I am going. You haven't the slightest idea about my origin or my destiny. Your judgment is superficial, but I pass judgment on no one. However if I did pass judgment, my verdict would be trustworthy, because I am not alone when I judge; the Father who sent me is with me. According to your own law there must be two witnesses before something is accepted as fact. I am one of the witnesses and my Father who sent me is the other!"

"And where is this 'Father' of yours?" they asked.

Jesus replied, "You haven't the slightest idea as to who I am, or who my Father is! If you knew me you would know my Father as well."

Jesus said these things while he was still in the temple precincts, near the place where the offerings were collected. But no one arrested him because his time had not yet come.

*The hostility of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus increases as they resort to mockery and derision. Although at the present time they do not know who he is, they will after his crucifixion and resurrection (8:21-30).*

Jesus went on to tell them, "I am going away, and where I am going you are not able to go. You will try to find me, but you will die in your sin."

The Jewish leaders mocked, "Perhaps he intends to kill himself and end up in Hades. That would explain why we can't go where he is going!"

"You are from below," replied Jesus; "I am from above. You belong to this world, but I do not. That is why I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am who I say I am, you will die with your sins unforgiven."

Caustically they responded, "Just who do you think you are?"

"I am what I told you from the very beginning," said Jesus. "There is a lot more that I could say to condemn you, but the Father who sent me is reliable and I say nothing but what I have heard from him." (Jesus was implying that God was his Father, but they didn't catch on.)

Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will know that I am who I say I am. I do nothing on my own, and speak only those things the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him."

Many who heard him say these things came to believe in him.

*Jesus teaches that his truth sets a person free, and, unlike a slave who has no permanent status, the true son (the believing Christian) remains forever (8:31-38).*

To those who claimed to believe in him, Jesus said, "If you let what I say control your every action, you will show that you really are my disciples. You will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

"But we are descendants of Abraham," they boasted. "We have never been in bondage to anyone! How can you say, 'You will be set free'?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, everyone who keeps on sinning is a slave to sin. A slave does not remain permanently in the home, but a son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

"I know that you belong to the lineage of Abraham. But you are trying to kill me. My teaching has not changed your heart. I am telling you the things my Father has shown me, just as you are doing what your father has taught you."

*The Jewish leaders taunt Jesus by questioning whether or not he is legitimate. Jesus boldly declares to his adversaries that their father is the devil, who has been a liar from the beginning (8:39-47).*

"Abraham is our father!" they claimed in anger.

Jesus calmly asserted, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be conducting yourselves as Abraham did. Instead you are bent on killing me for telling you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham would never have done anything like that! You are doing what your father does."

"We were not born out of wedlock!" they jeered. "We have one Father, and he is God!"

"If God were your Father," said Jesus, "you would love me, because I came from God to be with you. He is the one who sent me. I didn't come on my own."

"Why can't you understand what I am saying?" Jesus asked. "The answer is that even before you hear me you are convinced that I am wrong. Your father is the devil, and you like to please him. From the very beginning he has been a murderer and a liar. There is nothing truthful about him. He tells lies because he is by nature a liar. In fact, he is the father of all lies."

"For this very reason, when I speak the truth, you do not believe me. Can anyone of you prove me guilty of sin? If not, then I must be speaking the truth. So why don't you believe me? The children of God listen to the words of their Father. Since you don't listen, you must not be his children."

*The Jewish authorities lash out at Jesus, claiming that he doesn't even belong to their race. They say that he is demon-possessed. Jesus responds by pointing out that before Abraham existed, he was the eternal "I AM," the name of God who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3 (8:48-59).*

The Jewish people around Jesus snapped back, "We have been right all along. You are not one of us. You are a Samaritan, and what's more, you are demon-possessed."

"I am not demon-possessed," answered Jesus. "By my words and actions I honor my Father, but you dishonor me. I am not seeking praise for myself. There is one who wants me to receive praise, and he is also the one who judges. I tell you the truth, if a person obeys my teaching, he will never die."

At this the people exclaimed, "Now we know you have a demon. You say that if a person obeys your teaching he will never die, yet Abraham and the prophets died. Apparently you think that you are greater than Abraham, because he died. So also did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

Jesus replied, "If I honor myself, that honor is self-serving and worthless. My Father is the one who honors me. You say that he is your God, although you do not know him at all. I am the one who knows him. If I said otherwise, I would be a liar just like you. But I know him and I do what he says. Unlike you, your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and was glad."

The people replied, "How could you have seen Abraham? You're not even fifty years old!"

"I tell you the truth," said Jesus, "before there was an Abraham, I AM." At this they picked up stones to kill him, but Jesus slipped away into the crowd and left the temple.

## Chapter Nine

*Jesus heals a man who was blind from birth (9:1-12).*

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind since birth. "Rabbi," we asked him, "was it the sins of his parents, or his own, that caused him to be born blind?"

Jesus said to us, "His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or those of his parents. He was born blind so that you might see God at work in him. As long as it is day we must do the works of him who sent me. Night

is at hand when no one can work. As long as I am here in the world, I am the light of the world."

Having said this, he spat on the ground and made some mud with the saliva. Then he daubed it on the eyes of the blind man and said, "Now go and wash your face in the pool of Siloam (the name means 'Sent')." So the blind man went away and washed in Siloam. When he returned he could see.

The blind man's neighbors and others who used to see him sitting and begging, wondered whether this could be the same man. Some said, "Yes, he's the one." Others said, "No, but he certainly looks like the beggar." But he kept telling them, "Look, I am that man!"

"But how is it possible that you are now able to see?" they asked.

The blind man answered, "A man named Jesus made some mud, daubed it on my eyes, and said, 'Go to Siloam and wash your face.' When I went there and washed, suddenly I was able to see."

"Where is that man?" they asked.

"I don't know," he answered.

*Since Jesus has performed the healing on a Sabbath, the Pharisees conclude that Jesus cannot be, as he claims, from God. We see the power of a personal testimony and people's refusal to believe the obvious when it doesn't agree with their beliefs (9:13-41).*

The day on which Jesus had made mud and cured the blind man was a Sabbath. So the people brought the man to the Pharisees, who asked him how he had been cured of his blindness. He answered, "A man named Jesus put mud on my eyes. He told me to go and wash in Siloam, and when I did I was able to see."

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man Jesus can't be from God or he would not have broken the Sabbath laws."

But others said, "How could a man who is a sinner perform such a miracle?"

They turned to the blind man and asked, "What do you say about him? After all, it was your eyes that he opened."

"I consider him a prophet," answered the man.

But the Jewish authorities still did not believe that the man who could now see had once been blind. So they sent for his parents and asked, "Is this your son? Are you sure that he was born blind, and if so, how is it that now he can see?"

"Of course he is our son," his parents answered, "and we know that he was born blind. But why he now can see or who it was that restored his

sight, we do not know. Why don't you ask him? After all, he is of age and able to speak for himself."

The man's parents answered in this way because they were afraid of the religious authorities. It had already been decided that anyone who believed Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That is why his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."

So once again they called for the man who had been born blind. "Own up and tell the truth," they said. "This man Jesus is a sinner!"

The man replied, "I don't know if he is a sinner or not. But one thing I do know: once I was blind, and now I see."

"What did he do to you?" they asked. "How did he cure your blindness?"

The man said, "I told you once and you paid no attention. Why do you want to hear it again? Could it be that you want to become his disciples?"

"No!" they responded in anger. "You may be his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! We know that God gave the law to Moses. But as for this Jesus, we don't have even the faintest idea where he came from."

"This is truly amazing," said the man. "I was blind and he restored my sight, yet you don't know where he came from. Everyone knows that God doesn't hear the prayers of sinners, but only the prayers of those who respect and obey him. Never in the history of the world have we heard of anyone able to heal the eyes of a person blind from birth. Jesus could have done nothing if he were not from God."

The Pharisees, hot with anger, blurted out, "You have been steeped in sin from birth. How dare you lecture us!" So they drove him out.

When Jesus heard what they had done, he found the man and asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

"Who is he, sir?" the man replied. "Let me know so I can believe in him."

"You have already met him," said Jesus. "What's more, he is the one talking with you right now."

The man said, "Lord, I believe," and bowed in reverence before Jesus.

Then Jesus told him, "By coming into the world I have brought judgment. As a result, those who are blind will see but those who see will become blind."

When some of the Pharisees standing by heard this, they asked, "Surely you're not implying that we are blind!"

Jesus answered, "If you were blind you would not be guilty, but as it is, you claim to see, so your guilt continues."



## Chapter Ten

*Jesus explains that sheep recognize the voice of the true shepherd and will follow him on the way to pasture (10:1-6).*

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but sneaks in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The true shepherd enters through the gate. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him and the sheep recognize his voice. He calls them by name and they follow him out.

"When all his sheep are out of the fold, the shepherd walks ahead of the sheep on the way to pasture. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but will run away, because they do not recognize his voice."

Jesus told the people this parable, but they did not understand what he meant.

*Jesus explains the parable. He is the gate that leads to the abundant life. He is also the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (10:7-21).*

Jesus explained what he had said as follows: "I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. All who enter the sheepfold through me will be saved. They will come in and go out and find pasture—safety and nourishment will be theirs.

"The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy the flock. I have come that you may have life in all its fullness.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not like the shepherd who owns the sheep. When the hired hand sees a wolf coming he runs for his life, leaving the sheep at risk. So the wolf attacks and scatters the flock. The hired hand works for wages; he doesn't really care about the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep, and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me. I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. They too will recognize my voice and I will bring them in. There is to be but one flock, with one shepherd.

"The Father loves me for laying down my life—and I will take it back again. No one takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own free will. The authority to lay it down and take it back is mine. It was given to me by my Father."

Once again the words of Jesus caused a sharp division among the people. Many said, "He is demon-possessed, raving mad. Don't listen to a man like that!"

But others said, "How could anyone possessed by a demon say what he has been saying? Surely, demons can't open the eyes of a blind man!"

*In the face of opposition, Jesus tells the Jewish leaders they are not his sheep, that God protects Jesus' sheep, and then claims to be one with God (10:22-30).*

It was winter and Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Festival of Dedication. He was walking around in the section of the temple known as Solomon's Porch when the Jewish leaders cornered him and asked, "How much longer do you intend to provoke us like this? If you are the Messiah, tell us so straight out."

Jesus answered, "I did tell you, and you refused to believe me. The works that I do by my Father's authority make it plain who I am. But you do not believe in me because you are not part of my flock. My sheep recognize my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish, for no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them to me, is more powerful than all, so they are absolutely safe in his hands. I and the Father are one."

*Jewish hostility toward Jesus increases while Jesus again insists that he is God (10:31-42).*

Again the Jewish leaders picked up stones intending to kill Jesus. But he said to them, "You have seen me do many gracious and good deeds made possible by the Father. For which one of them are you about to stone me?"

They answered, "It is not for some gracious and good deed that we are going to stone you. It is because you, a mere man, are claiming to be God. That is blasphemy, and for that you must die!"

Jesus answered, "In your Scriptures doesn't God say, 'You are gods'? We know that Scripture cannot be in error, so if God called those people 'gods', why do you say that I am guilty of blaspheming for saying, 'I am the Son of God'? After all, it was God who set me apart for this role and sent me into the world.

If I am not doing what my Father does, then you should not believe me. But if I am, you should believe me for that reason, even though you do not believe me for who I claim to be. Then you will come to know for certain that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

Once again they tried to arrest Jesus, but he escaped out of their grasp and crossed the Jordan River to the place where John used to baptize. There he remained for a while. People flocked to him, saying that although John was not a miracle-worker, everything he said about Jesus was true! A considerable number of those people came to believe in Jesus.

## Chapter Eleven

*Jesus learns that his good friend Lazarus has fallen ill but waits until he has died so that God's glory can be displayed (11:1-16).*

A man by the name of Lazarus lay sick in the village of Bethany. His two sisters, Mary and Martha, lived with him there. (This was the same Mary who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume and wiped his feet with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was sick.) So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, your good friend is ill."

When Jesus heard this, he said, "This illness won't end in death. Its purpose is to bring glory to God, so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

Jesus loved Martha, her sister Mary, and Lazarus. So after hearing that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was for two more days. Then he said to us, his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

"But Rabbi," we protested, "just a short time ago those people were trying to stone you! Why would you go there now?"

Jesus said to us, "There are twelve hours of daylight in every day. If you walk during the day, you have the light of the sun to keep you from stumbling. But if you walk at night you will stumble because the sun has gone down. Then he added, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, and I am going to Bethany to wake him up."

Jesus' words left us confused. "But Lord," we said, "if he has simply fallen asleep, he will get better." (We thought Jesus was talking about normal sleep, but he meant that Lazarus had in fact died.)

So Jesus told us plainly, "Lazarus is dead! And for your sake I am glad that I was not there with him. This way your faith will have a chance to grow. Come, let's go to him."

Thomas (the disciple called the Twin), said to the rest of us, "Let's go so we can die with him."

*Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead to show that he alone is the source of resurrection and true life, and that those who believe in him will live forever (11:17-44).*

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, so many of Mary and Martha's friends had come from the city to comfort the two sisters over the loss of their brother.

When Martha got word that Jesus had arrived, she hurried out to meet him. Mary, however, remained in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will do for you whatever you ask."

"Your brother Lazarus will live again," said Jesus to Martha.

She answered, "I know that he will be raised to life on the last day, when all the dead are raised."

"I am the resurrection and the life," declared Jesus. "All who believe in me will live, even though they die. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she replied. "I am convinced that you are the Messiah, the Son of God. You are the one who was to come into the world."

After saying this, Martha went back to Mary and quietly told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went out to Jesus. He was outside the village, in the place where he had met and talked with Martha. The people from Jerusalem who had come to comfort Mary were still in the house. But when they saw her get up quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking she was going to the tomb to weep.

Mary hurried out to where Jesus was. When she saw him, she fell at his feet and cried out, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw that Mary and her friends were weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and visibly distressed. "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord" they answered.

Jesus burst into tears.

So the Jewish people who had come to mourn said, "See how much he loved him!" Some of them said, "This man cured the eyes of the blind man. Why couldn't he have done something to keep Lazarus from dying?"

Jesus continued to be deeply moved. He went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone across the entrance.

"Roll away the stone," he commanded.

But Martha, the sister of the dead man, objected, saying, "Lord, by now the body will smell. It has been in the tomb for four days."

Jesus said, “Didn’t I tell you that if you’d believe you would see the glory of God?”

So they rolled away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, “Thank you, Father, for hearing my prayer. I know that you always answer my prayers, but I say this so all these people will believe that you sent me.”

When he had finished his prayer, he called out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out of there!” Right away the man who had died came out of the tomb, wrapped hand and foot with grave clothes, with a cloth around his face.

*Without knowing it, the high priest prophesies through the power of God’s Spirit that Jesus will die for the sake of the people (11:45-57).*

Many who had followed Mary from the house and had seen the miracle Jesus performed, believed in him. But others went to the Pharisees to report what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees called the Council into session. “We haven’t accomplished much so far, have we?” they said. “This man is still performing miracles. If we let him get away with this, everyone will begin to believe in him. Then the Romans will get involved and that could affect our prestige, to say nothing of putting the whole nation in jeopardy.”

The high priest that year was a man by the name of Caiaphas. At this point he spoke up, saying, “You gentlemen have failed to think this matter through. Don’t you realize that it would be better to have one man die for the people than for the entire nation to be destroyed?” Caiaphas didn’t say this on his own, but as high priest that year he was prophesying that Jesus was about to die for the Jewish nation—and not for that nation only, but also for the children of God scattered abroad, to bring them together and make them one. So from that day on the Council started planning how to put Jesus to death.

As a result, Jesus no longer went about openly in Jerusalem. Instead he went to the desert town of Ephraim where we stayed with him.

It was almost time for the Jewish Festival of Passover. Many people from the rural areas throughout the country had gone up to Jerusalem to purify themselves in preparation for the Passover. They were on the lookout for Jesus. Standing around in the temple area, they said to one another, “What do you think? You don’t suppose he’s decided against coming to the Festival, do you?”

The chief priests and Pharisees had issued an order that if anyone saw Jesus they should report it immediately to the religious authorities. That way Jesus could be taken into custody.

## Chapter Twelve

*Mary anoints Jesus, which Jesus portrays as symbolic of his coming burial (12:1-11).*

Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to the home of Lazarus in the town of Bethany. (It was at Bethany that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead). A meal had been prepared for him, and Martha was serving. Lazarus, along with others, was seated at the table with Jesus.

Mary took a good-sized jar of expensive perfume (about a pint) and poured it out on Jesus’ feet. Then she wiped his feet with her hair. The entire house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

Judas Iscariot (the disciple who later betrayed Jesus) complained, “That perfume was worth a year’s wages! Why wasn’t it sold and the money given to the poor?” He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He had been entrusted with the money bag, and would often help himself to whatever he wanted.

“Don’t bother her,” said Jesus. “The reason she didn’t sell the perfume was so she could keep it for my burial. The poor you’ll always have with you, but you won’t always have me.”

A number of people in Jerusalem learned that Jesus was at Bethany. So they went there, not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. Because of Lazarus, many were abandoning the Jewish faith and beginning to believe in Jesus. As a result, the chief priests were making plans to kill Lazarus as well.

*Jesus enters Jerusalem and the crowds welcome him as the coming Messiah. The religious authorities are perplexed about how to stop what they interpret as a fraudulent messianic movement (12:12-19).*

The next day Jerusalem was crowded with people who had come to celebrate Passover. When they heard that Jesus was on his way to the city, they took palm branches and rushed out to greet him. They kept shouting,

“Praise God!

God bless the one who comes

in the name of the Lord!

God bless the long-awaited Messiah!”

Jesus found a young donkey and mounted it, just as Scripture says,

“Fear not, people of Israel!

Here comes your king,

riding on a young donkey!”

At this time, we did not grasp the significance of what was taking place. However, after Jesus was exalted we came to understand that these events were in fulfillment of prophetic Scripture.

The people who were with Jesus when he called Lazarus out of the tomb were telling everyone how Jesus had brought a dead man back to life. A great number of people went to meet Jesus because they heard he had performed this miraculous sign. Exasperated, the Pharisees said to one another, “You see, this is getting us nowhere. The whole world has gone after him.”

*Jesus knows that the time of his exaltation is at hand; he knows that the cross awaits (12:20-36).*

Among those who had come to Jerusalem for Passover were some Greeks. They approached Philip (of Bethsaida in Galilee) and asked, “Sir, we would like to meet Jesus.” Philip told Andrew, and the two of them went and told Jesus.

Jesus said, “The hour has now come for the Son of Man to be exalted. I tell you the truth, for a grain of wheat to become more than a single grain it must fall into the ground and die. Only if it dies will it produce more grain. If you hold on to your life you will lose it. If you let it go in this world, you will keep it forever. If you want to serve me, you must follow me. That way we will both be living in obedience to the will of God. If you serve me, my Father will honor you.

“Now is my heart deeply troubled. And what am I to say? ‘Father, deliver me from this hour?’ But for this very purpose I have come to this hour! Father, bring honor to your name.”

Then from heaven came a voice: “I have already brought honor to my name, and I will do it again.”

When the crowd that was standing there heard the voice, some thought it was thunder. Others said, “No, it was an angel speaking to Jesus.”

Jesus told the crowd, “That voice was not for my benefit but for yours. The time for judging the people of this world has come. The prince of this world is about to be banished. When I am lifted up on the cross, I will draw everyone to myself.” (Jesus spoke of being “lifted up” so people would know what kind of death he would die.)

The crowd spoke up, “Our law says that the Messiah will live forever. How then can you say that the Son of Man must be ‘lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

Jesus replied, “The light will be with you for only a little longer, so keep walking while you still have light. When darkness overtakes a traveler, he has no idea where he is going. Have faith in the light while it is still with you, and you will become children of light.”

*The refusal of people to put their faith in Jesus fulfills the prophecies of Isaiah (12:36b-43).*

When Jesus had finished saying these things he withdrew from the center of attention. He had performed many miraculous signs in the presence of the people, but they still would not believe in him. Their unwillingness to believe fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, who said,

“Lord, is there anyone

who has believed our message?

Has your miraculous power

awakened faith in anyone?”

The people could not believe because elsewhere Isaiah said,

“The Lord has blinded their eyes

and hardened their hearts,

so they cannot see with their eyes

or understand with their mind.

If they did, they would turn to the Lord

and be healed.”

Isaiah said this because he saw the glory of Christ and spoke of him.

Many of the Jewish leaders believed Jesus to be the Christ, but because of the Pharisees, they would not confess it openly. They were afraid of being put out of the synagogue. They loved the adulation of people more than the praise that comes from God.

*Jesus teaches that he has come to save the world, not condemn it. The people of the world will, however, be judged by the very words that Jesus has spoken (12:44-50).*

Jesus spoke out in a loud voice: “To believe in me is to believe not only in me, but also in the one who sent me. And whoever sees me, is seeing the one who sent me. I am the light that has come into the world, so that those who believe in me should no longer have to walk in darkness.

“I am not the one who will pass judgment on those who hear my words but refuse to accept them. My purpose in coming is to save people, not to

condemn them. But those who reject me and refuse to accept my teachings do have a judge. On the last day they will be judged by the very words I have spoken. I have not spoken on my own authority. I have said only what the Father who sent me has commanded me to say. And I know that his command leads to eternal life. That is why I tell you exactly what the Father has told me to say.”

### Chapter Thirteen

*Jesus teaches humility by washing the feet of his disciples (13:1-20).*

It was just before the Passover Festival, and Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and return to his Father. Throughout his ministry he had always loved his own, but now he was about to show us the full extent of his love.

Even before the evening meal had gotten underway, the devil had already convinced Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, that he should betray Jesus.

Jesus knew that God had placed everything under his control. He knew that he had come from God and that he was soon to return to him. So he rose from the table and removed his robe. Taking a towel, he tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a washbasin and began to wash our feet, drying them with the towel around his waist.

But when Jesus came to Simon Peter, he asked in astonishment, “Lord, could it possibly be that you intend to wash my feet?”

Jesus answered, “What I am doing right now you won’t fully understand, but in time you will grasp what it means.”

“You’ll never wash my feet!” insisted Peter.

“If I do not wash you,” replied Jesus, “you will no longer be one of mine.”

“In that case, Lord,” exclaimed Peter, “don’t stop at washing my feet; pour water all over me!”

Jesus responded, “If a person has had a complete bath there is no need to wash except for the feet. And all of you, except one, are clean.” Jesus knew who was about to betray him, and that was why he said that we were all clean, “except one.”

When Jesus had finished washing our feet, he put on his robe and returned to his place. He asked, “Do you understand what I have just done to you? You call me your teacher and Lord, and you are right to do so, because that is what I am. Since I, your teacher and Lord, have just washed your feet, you should do the same for one another. I have given you an example, so that you will do for each other what I have done for you. I tell

you the truth, a servant is not superior in rank to his master—a messenger is not greater than the one who sends him. Now that you know these things, God will bless you if you do them.

“I am not talking about all of you; I know those I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled that says,

‘The one who has shared my table  
has lashed out against me.’

“I am telling you this before it happens. That way, when it does happen you will believe that I am the one I claim to be. I tell you the truth, whoever accepts one of my messengers, accepts me. And whoever accepts me, accepts the one who sent me.”

*Jesus foretells his betrayal by Judas Iscariot (13:21-30).*

After saying this, Jesus became profoundly disturbed in spirit and said to us, “I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.” We were stunned! We looked around at one another at a loss to know which of us he meant.

I was commonly known as “the one Jesus loved,” and I was sitting next to him at the table. Simon Peter motioned to me to find out who Jesus meant. So I leaned back against Jesus and asked, “Lord, who will it be?”

Jesus replied, “I am going to dip this piece of bread in the sauce and give it to the one who will betray me.”

Then he dipped the bread and gave it to Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son. As soon as Judas had accepted the bread, Satan took complete possession of him.

“Don’t wait to do what you intend to do,” said Jesus. No one at the table understood what Jesus meant by this. Since Judas was in charge of the money bag, some thought he had been told to buy whatever was needed for the Festival. Others thought that perhaps he was to give some money to the poor. Judas took the piece of bread and left the room without delay.

It was night.

*Jesus’ followers are to be known for their love for one another (13:31-35).*

After Judas had left, Jesus said to us, “Now at last the Son of Man is to enter into his glory, and he will bring glory to God. After God receives glory because of him, God will bring glory to him, and God will do it soon.

“My dear friends, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, but as I told the Jewish authorities, ‘You cannot go where I am going.’ Now I am giving you a new commandment: Love one another! You

are to love one another just as I have loved you. Your love for one another will demonstrate to everyone that you are my disciples."

*Peter is rebuffed for his overly confident assertion that he is willing to die for Jesus (13:36-38).*

"Lord, where are you going?" asked Simon Peter.

Jesus replied, "You cannot go with me now, but one day you will."

Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I go with you now? I'm willing to die for you!"

"Willing to die for me?" questioned Jesus. "Not so. I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows you will have denied three times that you know me."

## Chapter Fourteen

*Jesus prepares his disciples for his soon departure by promising that he will return, and teaches that he and the Father are one (14:1-14).*

"Don't worry about my leaving you. I know you trust in God; so put your trust in me as well. There is plenty of room for everyone in my Father's house. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And once that place is ready, you may be sure that I will come back and take you to be with me. That way, we will always be together. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Somewhat confused, Thomas said, "Lord, we aren't sure where you are going, so how can we know the way that will take us there?"

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," declared Jesus. No one can get to the Father without going through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and you have seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, please show us the Father, and then we will be satisfied."

Jesus replied, "Philip, we've been together for a long time. Don't you know by now who I really am? To see me is to see the Father! So how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I and the Father are one? I do not speak to you on my own authority. The Father who lives in me is the one who carries out the miraculous deeds you see.

"Believe me when I say that I and the Father are one. Or believe it to be true on the basis of the miracles you see me do. I tell you the truth, if you believe in me you will do the same things that I am doing. In fact, you will do even greater things, because I am going away to the Father. And I will

do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it."

*Jesus teaches that he will not abandon them when he leaves, but the Father will send the Holy Spirit to take his place and be a constant helper (14:15-31).*

"If you love me, you will do what I tell you to do, and I will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to you to help you and to remain with you forever. He is the one who reveals the truth about God. The people of the world reject the Spirit because they neither see him nor know him. But you know him because even now he lives with you, and soon will be in your hearts.

"When I go, I will not leave you unprotected, on your own. But, as I promised, I will come back. In a little while the world won't be able to see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you too will live. Then it will be clear to you that the Father and I are one. Furthermore, you will be one with me and I with you. To know what I have taught, and to obey my instructions, is to prove that you love me. If you love me, you will be loved by my Father. I too will love you and reveal myself to you."

The other Judas (not Judas Iscariot) spoke up and asked, "Lord, I don't understand why you are going to reveal yourself to us, but not to others."

Jesus replied, "Those who love me will do what I say. Then my Father will love them, and he and I will come and make our home with them. Those who do not love me will not do what I say. What I am telling you is not something I thought up, but it comes from the Father who sent me.

"I have told you these things while I have been with you. But when I am gone, the Father will send the Holy Spirit to take my place. He will help you remember all that I have said to you, and teach you even more.

"The gift I leave with you is peace, the very peace I myself enjoy. It's not the kind of peace the world gives. So don't let your heart be troubled. Don't lose courage.

"Remember what I told you: I am going away, but I will be back. If you really loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to my Father, because he is greater than I.

"I have told you this ahead of time, so when it happens your faith will not fail. I can't talk with you much longer because the ruler of this world is on his way. But he has no basis for an accusation against me. I am doing exactly what the Father has told me. Thus everyone in the world will know that I love the Father.

"It's time to leave; let's be on our way."

## Chapter Fifteen

*Jesus teaches the disciples that they must maintain a vital connection with him in order to bear spiritual fruit (15:1-17).*

“I am the real vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He trims every branch that bears fruit, so it will produce even more; but every branch that bears no fruit, he cuts off. You have already been trimmed by the words I have spoken to you.

“It is crucial that you remain in me and I in you. No branch can bear fruit if it is cut off from the vine. It’s the same with you—you can bear no fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine and you are the branches. Only if you remain in me and I in you, will you be able to bear much fruit. If you do not remain in me, you can accomplish nothing. If you do not remain in me, you will be thrown aside like a withered branch. Branches like that are good for nothing but firewood.

“If you remain in me and reflect on what I have taught you, then whatever you ask for in prayer will be done for you. Would you like to bring honor to my Father? Then bear much fruit and show that you are my disciples.

“My love for you has been the same as the love my Father has for me. Remain true to that love. If you obey my commands, you will remain true to my love, just as I obey my Father’s commands and remain true to his love.

“I have told you these things so that you may experience the joy that is mine. I want you to be filled with joy.

“My commandment is that you love one another just as I have loved you. The ultimate proof of a person’s love is his willingness to sacrifice his life for a friend. You will prove your love for me if you do what I command. No longer will I call you servants, because a servant is in the dark about what his master is doing. Rather, I will call you friends, because I have shared with you everything my Father has told me.

“It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you. I appointed you to go and bear fruit, the kind of fruit that lasts. The Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

I give you these commands so that you may love one another.”

*The disciples will face persecution in the world because they belong to Jesus and will therefore endure the same kind of hatred as their master did (15:18-27).*

“When you experience the hatred of the world, keep in mind that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you like one of their own. But you don’t belong to the world. I chose you out of the world, and that is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not superior to his master.’ Since they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. They will respond to your teaching in the same way they responded to mine.

“The people of this world will treat you like this because you belong to me, because they do not know the one who sent me. They would not be guilty of sin if I had not come and spoken to them. As it is, they have no excuse for their sin.

“To hate me is to hate my Father as well. If I had not performed miraculous deeds that no one else had ever done, they would not be guilty. But they were right there watching and chose to hate both me and my Father. All this happened so as to fulfill what was written in their Scriptures, ‘They hated me for no reason.’

“I will send you a Helper, the Spirit of truth, who will come from the Father. When he arrives he will speak on my behalf. You too must speak on my behalf, because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.”

## Chapter Sixteen

“I have told you these things so that nothing will upset your faith. You will be kicked out of the synagogues. In fact, the time is coming when some people will think that by killing you they are doing God a favor. They will do things like this because they have no true knowledge of the Father or of me. I have told you these things so that when that time does come, you will remember what I said would happen.”

*When the Holy Spirit comes he will help the disciples understand all that Jesus has taught them (16:5-15).*

“Up till now there has been no reason for me to tell you these things, because I have been with you. Now I am going back to the one who sent me, yet not one of you has asked, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I told you what was going to happen, sorrow has filled your hearts. I tell the truth: It is to your advantage that I am going away. Unless I return to the Father, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

“When the Spirit comes, he will convince the world that they are wrong in their views about sin, righteousness, and judgment. He will convince them that not to believe in me is sin. He will convince them that my going to the Father and no longer being in view is proof of my righteousness. He will convince them that judgment is certain, because God has already judged the prince of this world.

“I have much more to tell you, but right now it would place too great a burden on you. But when the Spirit comes, he will guide you into a fuller understanding of the truth you have received. He will not speak on his own accord, but will pass on to you only what he hears. He will tell you about things yet to come. The Spirit will honor me by taking what I say and explaining it to you. All that the Father has belongs to me as well. That’s why I said the Spirit will take what I say and explain it to you.”

*Jesus tells his disciples that in a little while he will be leaving them but that before long he will be back (in three days, after the resurrection), and the grief they experience will be turned into joy (16:16-33).*

Jesus said, “You won’t see me for a little while; then after a little while you will see me once again.”

Turning to one another, we asked, “What did he mean when he said, ‘You won’t see me for a little while; then after a little while you will see me again,’ and ‘I am going to the Father’?” We kept asking, “What is this ‘little while’ he keeps talking about? We haven’t the faintest idea what he means.”

Jesus knew that we wanted to question him, so he said, “Are you wondering what I meant when I said that for a little while you wouldn’t see me; then after a little while you would see me again? I tell you the truth, you will weep and lament like mourners at a funeral, while the world will rejoice. You will be filled with sorrow, but suddenly your sorrow will be transformed into joy.

“When a woman is about to give birth she is in great pain. But as soon as the child is born, she forgets all about the pain and is filled with joy because she has brought a baby into the world. In the same way, for a time you will be in distress. But later I will see you, and your heart will respond with such joy that no one will ever be able to take it from you. When that day comes, you won’t be asking me for anything! I tell you the truth, it will be the Father who will grant every request made in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in this way. So now, ask the Father for anything in my name, and you will receive it so that your joy may overflow.

“I have been using figures of speech in talking with you. But the time is coming when what I say will no longer seem obscure. I will be able to explain with clarity about the Father. Then you will ask the Father in my name. I won’t have to ask him on your behalf because the Father himself loves you. God loves you because you love me and believe that I came from him. When I came into the world I left the Father; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”

“Now you are speaking plainly,” we told him, “and not using figures of speech that are difficult to understand! Now we understand that you know all things, and we do not need to question you any more. For this reason we believe that you truly have come from God.”

Jesus replied, “Do you really believe? The time is coming—it’s already here—when you will be scattered. Each of you will go to his own home and I will be left alone. Yet I won’t be alone, because my Father will be with me. I have told you these things so that in me you may have all that makes for true happiness. As long as you are in the world you will have trouble and sorrow. But be courageous! I have overcome the world.”

## Chapter Seventeen

*Jesus prays for himself, that he will be glorified (17:1-5).*

When he had finished telling us these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has now come. Bring glory to your Son, so that I can bring glory to you. You have made me sovereign over all mankind, so I can give eternal life to everyone you have given to me. Eternal life is learning to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent. I’ve brought glory to you here on earth by completing all you gave me to do. So Father, glorify me now in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

*Jesus prays for his disciples, that they will remain loyal to the truth (17:6-19).*

“I have revealed what you are really like to those you took out of the world and gave to me. They were yours, but you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that you are the source of everything that has come to me. I passed on to them the words you gave me, and they accepted them. They know for sure that I came from you, and they believe that you are the one who sent me. I am not praying for those who belong to this world but for the ones you gave to me. I am praying for them because they belong to you. Everything I have is yours, and everything you have is mine; and glory comes to me through them.



“I am on my way to you, Holy Father. I will no longer remain in this world, but they are still here. Keep them loyal to you (as you have revealed yourself through me) so that they may be one with each other just as you and I are one. When I was with them, I kept them loyal to what you showed them of yourself through me. Not one of them was lost, except the one destined to be lost, so that what the Scriptures said would happen would come true.

“But now I am on my way to you. I have been teaching these things while still in the world, so that my followers might experience my joy in all its fullness. I have given them your word, and the world has come to hate them. The reason is obvious: They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to it.

“My prayer is not that you would remove them from the world, but that you protect them from the evil designs of Satan. They do not belong to this world, just as I do not belong to it.

Your word is the truth. Set them apart to yourself by means of the truth. I am sending them into the world just as you sent me. For their sake I consecrate myself to you, that they too may be consecrated by the truth.”

*Jesus prays for all who will come to believe in him, that their unity will serve to convince others that Jesus was sent from the Father (17:20-26).*

“I am not praying for them alone, but also for all who will come to believe through what they say about me. I am praying that they may all be one, just as you and I, Father, are one. I pray that they may be one with us, so that the people of this world will believe that you sent me.

“I have given them the same glory that you gave to me, so that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me. I pray that they may be completely one so the people of this world may know that you sent me, and that you love them even as you love me.

“Father, I pray that everyone you have given me may be with me wherever I am, so that they will see the glory that you have given me; for you loved me before the world began. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you. And those who believe in me know that you have sent me. I made it clear to them who you really are, and I will continue to do so. Then the love you have for me will be in them, and I myself will be in them.”

## Chapter Eighteen

*Jesus is betrayed by Judas, arrested and taken to Annas (18:1-14).*

After offering this prayer, Jesus went across the Kidron ravine to an olive grove. We went with him.

Judas knew about the grove because Jesus had often met there with us. So he led a squad of Roman soldiers and some temple guards (supplied by the Jewish authorities) to the grove. They arrived on the scene carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons. Although Jesus already knew what was going to happen, he stepped forward and asked, “Who are you looking for?”

“We are looking for Jesus the Nazarene,” they answered.

“I am he,” said Jesus.

Judas, the betrayer, was standing there with the soldiers. When Jesus said “I am he,” they all shrank back and fell to the ground.

Again Jesus asked, “Who are you looking for?”

“Jesus the Nazarene,” they answered.

“I have already told you that I am Jesus. Since I am the one you’re looking for, let these men go.” Jesus said this so the words of his prayer—“Father, I have not lost a single one of those you gave me”—might come true.

Simon Peter had brought along a sword. He drew the sword and swung it at Malchus, the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. “Put your sword back where it belongs!” commanded Jesus. “Shall I not drink the cup of suffering the Father has given me?”

The Roman soldiers, along with their commanding officer and the temple guards, arrested Jesus and tied him up. Then they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. (It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jewish authorities that it would be better to have one man die for the people.)

*Peter denies that he is a follower of Jesus (18:15-18).*

Simon Peter and I followed the soldiers as they took Jesus to Annas. Since I was well known by the high priest, they allowed me to enter the courtyard with Jesus, but Peter had to stay outside near the gate. So I went back out and spoke to the servant girl on duty at the gate. She let Peter come in, but asked him, “Aren’t you also a disciple of that man Jesus?”

“No, I am not,” answered Peter.

Since it was cold, the servants and temple guards had made a charcoal fire and were standing around the fire warming themselves. Peter went over and joined them.

*Jesus is questioned by Annas (18:19-24).*

Meanwhile, inside the house the high priest was questioning Jesus about us and about what he had been teaching. Jesus told him, "I have always taught openly where all could hear—in synagogues and in the courts of the temple where people are free to meet. I have said nothing in secret. So, why are you questioning me? The people who have listened to me know what I have been teaching. Why don't you ask them?"

When Jesus said this, one of the guards reached out and slapped him in the face. "How dare you speak to the high priest like that!" he demanded.

Jesus replied, "If I've said something that is not true, produce the evidence. If not, why did you strike me?" So Annas sent him, still in chains, to Caiaphas the high priest.

*Peter denies Jesus two more times (18:25-27).*

Out in the courtyard, Simon Peter was still standing by the fire warming himself. "Aren't you one of Jesus' disciples?" they asked.

Again Peter denied it, saying, "I am not!"

One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, spoke up. "Did I not see you in the olive grove with that man Jesus?"

"Absolutely not!" denied Peter. Right then a rooster began to crow.

*Jesus is tried before Pilate, who finds no basis for a charge against him. His attempt to release Jesus according to Jewish custom backfires when the crowd demands Barabbas rather than Jesus (18:28-40).*

It was early in the morning when Jesus was taken from the house of Caiaphas to the headquarters of the Roman military governor. The Jewish authorities did not enter the Roman garrison because it was considered ceremonially unclean and would disqualify them from eating the Passover meal.

So Pilate came out to them. "What charges do you bring against this man?" he asked.

"If this man were not a criminal," they said, "we would not be bringing him here to you."

"Take him away and try him according to your own law," Pilate told them.

"We can't do that," said the Jewish authorities. "We aren't permitted to put anyone to death." This took place in order to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he would die.

So Pilate went back inside his headquarters, called Jesus over, and asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus answered, "Is that something you want to know, or did others ask it about me?"

"Do you take me for a Jew?" said Pilate. "It was your own chief priests and people who brought you here to me. You must have done something wrong."

Jesus answered, "My kingdom doesn't belong to this world. If it did, my followers would have fought against the temple guards when they came to arrest me. No, my kingdom is not a political kingdom."

"Aha! So you are a king after all!" exclaimed Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are the one calling me a king. My purpose for coming into the world was to declare the truth. Everyone who is on the side of the truth pays attention to what I say."

Pilate dismissed the issue with a curt, "And what is truth?" Then he went back outside to the Jewish authorities and reported, "I find no basis for a charge against him. But you have the custom of setting a prisoner free during Passover, so shall I release for you the king of the Jews?"

The accusers shouted back, "No, not that man! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

## Chapter Nineteen

*Jesus is sentenced to be crucified (19:1-16).*

Then Pilate gave orders to have Jesus severely whipped. The soldiers twisted some thorny branches into a crown and thrust it on his head. Draping a purple robe around his shoulders, they kept coming up to him as if he were royalty, mocking him, saying, "Hail! King of the Jews!" But then they would strike him in the face.

Once again Pilate went out before the crowd. "Listen!" he said, "I will have Jesus brought out to you, but I want you to know that I find no basis for a charge against him."

Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. "Look! Here is the man!" declared Pilate.

When the chief priests and their temple guards saw him, they yelled out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"No," said Pilate, "you take him and crucify him! I find no basis for a charge against him."

The Jewish authorities answered back, "We have a law that carries the penalty of death and he broke it. He claimed to be the Son of God."

This gave Pilate yet another reason to be afraid. So he went back inside and said to Jesus, "Tell me, where did you come from?" Jesus gave him no answer.

"Why won't you answer my question?" said Pilate. "Don't you know that I have the authority to set you free or to crucify you?"

"If God had not given you the authority," answered Jesus, "you would not be able to do anything to me. So the one who handed me over to you is guilty of an even greater sin."

From then on Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish authorities kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of the Emperor! Anyone who claims to be king is guilty of rebellion against the Emperor!"

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out, and took his seat on the judge's bench. The place was called "The Stone Pavement" or, in Aramaic, "Gabbatha." It was about noon on the day before Passover (the day of preparation). "Here is your king!" said Pilate to the mob.

"Away with him! Away with him!" they shouted. "Crucify him!"

"So you want me to crucify your king?" responded Pilate.

"The only king we have is the Emperor!" shouted back the chief priests. Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified, and they took him away.

*The crucifixion and death of Jesus (19:17-30).*

Jesus carried his own cross to the place known as "The Skull," or, in Aramaic, "Golgotha." There they nailed him to a cross. Two others were crucified, one on each side of Jesus.

Pilate had the charge against Jesus written on a board and posted on the cross above Jesus' head. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The words were written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.

Many of the people in Jerusalem read this inscription because the place where Jesus was crucified was just outside the city. So the chief priests went to Pilate and said, "Why did you write, 'The King of the Jews'? You should have written, 'This man claimed to be the King of the Jews.'"

Pilate answered, "What I have written, stays written."

After the soldiers had nailed Jesus to the cross, they took his robe and tore it into four pieces, one piece for each of them. Since his inner garment was seamless, woven from top to bottom, the soldiers said to one another, "Let's not rip it apart, but throw dice to see who will get it." This happened so the Scripture would be fulfilled that said,

"They divided up my robe,

but threw dice for my inner garment."

So that is just what they did.

Jesus' mother was standing near the cross along with her sister Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. So when Jesus saw his mother standing there, and me by her side, he said to her, "Dear woman, John is now your son!" Then he said to me, "She is now your mother!" From that day on I took her to live in my home.

Later on, when Jesus knew that the work he had been sent to do was over, and so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled, he said, "I am thirsty." So they soaked a sponge in a jar of vinegar wine and held it up to his mouth, using the branch of a hyssop plant. When he had taken the wine, Jesus said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and yielded his spirit to God.

*A soldier thrusts a spear into Jesus' side (19:31-37).*

Since it was Friday, the Jewish authorities asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and their bodies taken down. They did not want them on the cross during the Sabbath, especially during Passover. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who had been crucified along with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead. So they did not break his legs.

But one of the soldiers thrust a spear into his side, and at once blood and water flowed out. I know this is true because it was reported by a man who actually saw it happen, and he is totally reliable. So now you too may believe. All this happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled,

"Not one of his bones will be broken,"

and,

"They will look on him in whose side they thrust a spear."

*Jesus is buried in a nearby garden tomb (19:38-42).*

Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus (although he kept it quiet because he was afraid of the Jewish authorities) went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate agreed, so Joseph came and took it down from the cross.

Nicodemus went with Joseph, carrying about seventy-five pounds of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes. This was the same Nicodemus who some time before had visited Jesus at night. The two men wrapped the body in linen cloths with the spices, as required by Jewish burial customs. Near the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden with a tomb

that had never been used. The tomb was close by, and since the time of preparing for the Sabbath had come, they laid the body there.

## Chapter Twenty

*The tomb where Jesus was buried is found to be empty (20:1-19).*

Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran back to Simon Peter and me and told us, "They've taken our Lord out of the tomb! We don't know where they've put him."

So Peter and I ran for the tomb. We left together, but I outran Peter and got there first. Bending down to look inside, I could see the linen cloths lying there, but I didn't go in.

But when Simon Peter came running up, he went straight into the tomb. He, too, saw the linen grave clothes and the burial cloth that had been wound around Jesus' head. (It was not with the other wrappings but folded up and lying by itself.) Then I—the one who had arrived first at the tomb—went inside. When I saw that the tomb was empty, I believed Mary's report. (As yet we did not understand from Scripture that Jesus would rise from the dead.)

*The risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene outside the empty tomb (20:10-18).*

Then we went back to our homes, but Mary remained outside the tomb weeping. Still in tears, she bent down to look inside. There she saw two angels dressed in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at his head and the other at his feet. "Dear woman, why are you weeping?" they asked her.

Mary answered, "They have taken away my Master, and I don't know where they've put him."

She glanced over her shoulder and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't recognize him. Jesus asked, "Dear woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"

Thinking him to be the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you are the one who carried him away, tell me where you put him, so I can go and get him."

Then Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned to him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabbouni!" (The word means "Teacher.")

"You don't need to hold on to me!" said Jesus. "I haven't as yet ascended to my Father. But go to my disciples and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and God, and to your Father and God.'" Mary Magdalene

came to us and exclaimed, "I have seen the Master!" Then she told us everything he had said to her.

*Jesus appears to his disciples (20:19-23).*

On the evening of the same day, Sunday, we had gotten together behind locked doors for fear of the Jewish authorities. Suddenly Jesus was standing right there in our midst. After greeting us in the customary way ("Peace be with you!"), he showed us his hands and his side. We were filled with joy when we realized it was the Lord.

"Peace be with you!" he said again, and added, "I am now sending you, just as the Father sent me." Then he breathed on us and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; but if you do not forgive their sins, they are not forgiven."

*Jesus appears to Thomas (20:24-29).*

Although Thomas (called "The Twin") was one of the Twelve, he was not with us when Jesus had suddenly appeared. We kept telling him, "We have seen the Lord!"

His response was: "Unless I see the wounds where the nails were driven through his hands, and touch them with my own finger, I will never believe it. I would have to put my hand into his side where the spear was thrust."

A week later we were together in a house, and this time Thomas was with us. Again Jesus appeared in our midst, although the doors were closed and securely locked. "Peace be with you," he said. Turning to Thomas, he said, "Put your finger here where the nails were driven through. Put your hand into my side. Stop doubting and learn to trust."

Thomas exclaimed, "It is you! My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said, "Thomas, you believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who will come to believe without ever having seen me."

*Why John wrote his story (20:30-31).*

The other disciples and I watched Jesus perform many other miracles that are not included in this story. But the ones you have read are here so you will come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. By believing that he is who he says he is, you will receive eternal life.

## Chapter Twenty-One

*Jesus appears to seven of his disciples who had gone fishing on Lake Tiberias (also called "Lake Galilee") (21:1-14).*

Later on, Jesus appeared to us along the shore of Lake Tiberias. This is how it happened. Simon Peter, Thomas (the Twin), Nathanael (from Cana in Galilee), my brother James and I (sons of Zebedee), and two other disciples of Jesus were there. Peter announced, "I'm going out fishing."

"We'll go with you," the rest of us said. So we got into a boat and went out to fish, but didn't catch a thing all night long.

Early the following morning, Jesus was standing on the shore, but we didn't recognize him. He called out to us, "Hey there! Did you catch anything?"

"No," we shouted back.

So he told us, "Cast your net to the starboard, and you'll get a catch."

We did what he said and caught so many fish that we were unable to hoist the net into the boat.

Suddenly I realized who the man on shore was. I told Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard this, he wrapped his outer garment around him (he had stripped for work), and plunged into the lake. Since we were not far from land (about a hundred yards), the rest of us followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish.

When we landed, we saw a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it. There was some bread as well.

"Bring me some of the fish you've just caught," Jesus said to us.

So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net onto the sand. It was full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three to be exact. Even though the catch was so large, the net had not ripped apart.

Jesus said to us, "Come, let's have breakfast." Not a one of us ventured to ask, "Who are you?" because we were all sure it was the Lord. Jesus went over and picked up the bread and handed it to us. He did the same with the fish. This was the third time Jesus appeared to us after he was raised from the dead.

*Jesus questions Peter three times about his love for him (to counter his three denials), and charges Peter to take care of his flock (21:15-19).*

When we had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," replied Peter, "you know that I love you."

"Then feed my lambs."

Jesus asked a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord," replied Peter, "you know that I love you."

"Then be a shepherd to my sheep," said Jesus.

Yet a third time Jesus asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was distressed that Jesus had asked him three times if he loved him. "Lord," he said to Jesus, "you know everything; you know that I love you."

Jesus replied, "Then feed my sheep."

"I tell you the truth, when you were a young man you used to dress yourself and go anywhere you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands so someone else can dress you and carry you where you'd rather not go." (Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would bring honor to God.) Then he said to Peter, "Follow me!"

*Jesus speaks of me, the disciple whom he loved (21:20-23).*

When Peter turned around and saw that I (the disciple who leaned back against Jesus during supper and asked, "Lord, who is it that will betray you?") was following them, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what will happen to John?"

Jesus replied, "Even if he should remain alive until I return, what difference would that make to you?" So the rumor spread among the early believers that I would not die. But Jesus did not say that I would not die. He simply said, "Even if he should remain alive until I return, what difference would that make to you?"

*Final words (21:24-25).*

Jesus did many other things. If all of them were written down, I do not think the world itself would be large enough to hold all the books that would have to be written.

I have now told you the story of my friend Jesus. I wrote it all down and you can be sure that I am telling the truth.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Your Next Step

We are glad that you have read through "The Story of Jesus." That tells us that you have an interest in learning more about him and the kind of life he has in store for you.

Jesus talks about being “born again” in chapter three (page 7) where he tells Nicodemus, “This is how God loved the world: he gave us his one and only son so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life and not really die.” Ever since that day some two thousand years ago, countless men, women, and children around the world have accepted this statement as true. They have believed what Jesus taught about himself and what he did on the cross. Their lives have been dramatically changed. In one place Jesus calls it moving “from the realm of death into life” (chapter 5, pages 9-10).

We encourage you to reflect on the amazing fact that you were made to know God and live in relationship with him. As long as you were living the way you wanted to, that relationship was not possible. Sin separated you from God.

Jesus took the first step to heal that breach when on the cross he died for our sins—both yours and mine. The penalty of your sin has been paid. All that remains is for you to repent of your sins, accept God’s forgiveness, acknowledge who Jesus is—God in flesh—and turn your life over to him. You can do that right now. May we suggest that you carefully read through the following prayer, and if it expresses your deepest desire then make it your own. It will be helpful to pray it out loud.

“Dear God, I thank you for the gift of your son and the promise of eternal life through faith in him. I do believe that Jesus is your Son, that he died on the cross for my sins and rose again. I repent of my sins, and take him now as Lord of my life. I thank you for forgiveness and my new life in Christ. Amen.”

If you have prayed this prayer from your heart, you may be certain that right now you have been born again as a child of God. A supernatural change has taken place in your life. Nothing will ever be the same.

Several things need to happen as soon as possible. Becoming a Christian is but the first step in your new life with Christ. It is important that you do not try to walk the path by yourself. You need to find other like-minded believers who will encourage you, and you in turn can encourage. Look for a church that believes and preaches the Bible, so that when you leave a meeting you will know for sure that you have been in God’s presence.

Read the Bible on a regular basis. Now that you have read the story of Jesus as told by his good friend, John, you might like to read the same story as told by another friend of Jesus, a man named “Mark.” You can

also read all about the early church in a book called “Acts.” These books are in the Bible.

Talk to Jesus every day and listen to what he has to say to you. This is called “prayer.”

To help you in your new life we have written a twelve week study on the basic issues facing a new believer. It is available free of cost at [www.BiblicalTraining.org](http://www.BiblicalTraining.org). We are sure you will find it helpful.

Our prayers are with you as you set out on this exciting journey, which ends in heaven with God and Jesus Christ our Savior.