

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Ch. 6

Does God exist? If so, what's He like? Jesus Christ claimed to be God's Son come to earth. If true, by observing Him we can get to know God. That's why John wrote this book. For three years Jesus was teaching, hanging out and doing miracles to back up His radical claims.

Strangely and sadly, millions have opted not to become associated with Jesus. It seems that *hearing* about Him, even *seeing* Him is not enough. Jesus says those who come to a personal faith in Him have been *drawn* by His Father.

We might think that *we* choose Jesus, but He told His followers, "You didn't choose me; I chose you!" The Father *draws* us to Himself. When at last we surrender to Him, we're responding, not initiating!

The Greek word for "draws" means "compels" or "drags along!" Nobody, not even the most genetically pious, would come to Jesus unless God the Father *compels* them. No one comes to faith in Christ because of any human effort or organization. God alone brings people to Himself, giving them the desire, the faith and the will to *believe* in Christ, and to follow Him.

Why This Gospel?

John the disciple, apostle and author of the Gospel of John, was an eyewitness to the God-Man's career spanned a north-south distance of some 80 miles. John's "Gospel" was the last of the Gospels, written A.D. 85-90.

How would you describe God using only words! Since John was closest to Jesus, he had an infinite range of fascinating events and impressions to choose from. In fact, he summed up with "There are so many other things Jesus did. If they were all written down ... I can't imagine a world big enough to hold such a library of books.

So John drilled down to who Jesus *was* more than what He *did*. His purpose behind this best-read part of the world's best-read book was to bring you and me to the point of *truly believing* in Christ.

DISCUSS:

A Picnic of Biblical Proportions

We pick up the story at John ch. 6, a year before Christ's crucifixion. John the Baptist had just been beheaded by King Herod, and the extremist religious power brokers, the Pharisees, had tagged Jesus as being demon-possessed.

This was Jesus' cue to ramp up on teaching his twelve closest disciples, preparing them to carry on His work after what He knew would be His imminent, final showdown with the authorities.

Jesus leaves Jerusalem and travels north 70 miles to Capernaum, a town on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee through which the Jordan flows. Capernaum, home of Andrew, Matthew and Peter, was in the region of Galilee, a mountainous, Roman satellite that covered northern Palestine.

In the 16th century it became the Turkish province of Syria. After WWI it was assigned to Great Britain. In 1947 the U.N. broke up Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, with Galilee in the Jewish sector. The State of Israel came into being in 1948.

Jesus and the Twelve had hoped to hide in Capernaum, but hordes had arrived on foot, awaiting His landing by boat. Jewish religious law urged the faithful to trek to Jerusalem each spring to celebrate Passover. **Let's read John 6:1-71.**

After two years of seeing their Master pull off the impossible, expecting another miracle should've been no biggie for the Twelve. Instead Jesus asks Philip where to buy bread to feed this mob. But forgetting that His Mentor had spoken the universe into existence, Philip can't see past his empty purse.

Andrew had cased the crowd but could only scrounge up five loaves of barley bread and two sardines. As was His style 10 miles away in Cana where He'd morphed water into fine wine at a wedding feast, Jesus takes the lad's lunch, thanks His Father for it, and breaks off chunks, letting the Twelve pass them out to some 10,000 men, women and kids on the hillside.

If you'd been in that sea of bodies, how'd *you* have reacted to this marvel? They thought, "Not only is this Jesus the 'prophet' Moses predicted, He could be our King and run off these Roman ruffians. Yeah, He could feed us too!"

With 12 God-sized doggie bags of leftovers, the Twelve stagger down to the boat to resume their executive retreat with the Man. In the darkness, without their Leader, this weary band rows out across this cool, clear lake which supplies fresh water to the Golan Heights. It's 14 miles long, 8 miles wide, and notorious for its sudden storms.

DISCUSS:

A fierce norther angers the pitch-black lake, blowing the disciples off course. It's after a.m., and the shore is no longer in sight. Suddenly the One who'd created wind and seas is *walking toward the boat.....on the water!* The guys freak, but Jesus calls out, "It's me. Don't be afraid."

In Matthew's account Peter asks Jesus if he can exit the boat and walk toward Him. "Come," was the reply. Would you plant your foot in an angry wave!?! Peter's chutzpa dares to do what only God could do, and he takes a few steps before panic sets

in. As he sinks, Jesus hoists him up, puts him in the boat, and John writes, "...*immediately* the boat arrived at their destination."

When the disciples ask their enigmatic Leader, "What works does God require of us?" they do so thinking of feasts, fasts, sacrifices, rituals, icons, baptisms, etc.

Jesus says, "You got it all wrong. "You want to know what 'work' God wants you to do? He wants you to put your total trust in Me, the One He sent you, the One Moses and all the prophets have been predicting for centuries."

"Invite me, and I'll give you the life that only comes from above. It has nothing to do with money or fame or power or religion. I came straight from my Father in heaven. I'm the only One who's seen Him; I alone can tell you what He's like."

That *really* riled the Jews. After that, great numbers now turn their backs on Him, even hate and conspire to kill Him. Undeterred, the Rabbi sets His face like a flint toward Calvary where He has a date with *your* destiny to be the supreme, the only Sacrifice for your sins and mine -- the Lamb of God, up on the altar for you and me.

DISCUSS:

God wants *everyone* to believe in His Son; He wants *all* of us to have eternal life, the kind only He can give. It's still available to *whosoever* believes in Jesus. With many deserting Him, Jesus asks His men, "Are you outta here too?" "No way," says Peter, "nobody else has the words of eternal life."

Because you, yes, you are part of "whosoever." If you have yet to accept God's amazing grace, you can tell Him now, "God, I know You're speaking to me. You sent Your Son Jesus to die for me so that I can have forgiveness for my sins. I give my life to You now, I humbly receive Your gracious gift of total forgiveness. Make me Yours, Father. I'm all yours as of now. Amen."

His Deal

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