

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Ch. 8

Each time we meet I'm reminded that what we're doing is what **E** really matters during our time on earth. Nothing's more life-giving than hearing God speak through His Word. "Heaven and earth will pass away but," says God, "my Word will never pass away." True wisdom, wrote King Solomon, is found in knowing the Bible: "Nothing you desire can compare with (it)." (**Proverbs 3:15**)

Jerusalem is 33 miles east of the Mediterranean, strategically perched on five hills atop a ridge 2,600' above sea level. 14 miles east is the simmering Dead Sea, 1,312' below sea level, the world's lowest body of water. Israel (old Palestine) is 150 miles long, 75 miles wide, akin to New Jersey, on the same latitude as our southern U.S. This tiny nation will, says the Bible, be center stage at the world's bloody climax.

In Jesus' day it was a jambalaya of Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman cultures. Surely God had this culture stew in mind when John wrote, "God loved *the world (all races)* so much that He sent His only Son" to save those who place their faith in Him.

Now Where Were We?

It's early October, and with faithful Jews far and near, the Woodworker from Nazareth heads up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles to begin teaching. His audience is stunned by His ease with the Torah (Old Testament). "He's just a carpenter; how'd He get so smart?" Jesus explains that He'd learned from His Father while He was in heaven.

Some say He's crazy; others follow Him devotedly. Once He declares, "He who is not with me is against me." A "no" decision is a decision *against* Him. Only one name is on the salvation ballot. His.

Jesus' arrest is repeatedly thwarted because "His time has not yet come." As fiercely as the authorities hated this man who claimed to be their Messiah, and desperately want to kill Him, they are temporarily powerless. Why? Because it isn't yet God's time.

A Jew by birth and training, Saul of Tarsus becomes a radical Christ-follower after a spectacular spiritual change-of-heart. Now called Paul, he's assigned by God to take the Gospel to the Gentile world. Along the way his letters to the young churches he plants along the Mediterranean shoreline are posted with other to form the New Testament.

To 1st century Christians in western Turkey, he writes, "By Christ's death He ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles. His purpose was to make peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in Himself one new person from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of His death, and our hostility toward each other was put to death." (**Ephesians 2:11-16**)

Paul bottom-lines it for believers in Rome: “There’s only one God, and only one way of being accepted by Him. He makes people right with Himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles.” (Romans 3:30)

Let’s read John 8:1-59.

DISCUSS:

Caught In The Act!

This riveting account of the adulteress finds Jesus rebuffing people who judge others based on appearance. These self-righteous prigs want to shaft Jesus, expecting he’ll say Moses’ law is too harsh. Jesus knows He’s being gamed. Her accusers are willing to let the woman be stoned just to trap Him. As He gently forgives her sins, Jesus sees her true repentance. Because of that, He sets her free – pardoned and unpunished. It’s what Christ did for each of us on the cross, paying our debt in full.

Got Light?

Let’s read John 8:12-20

DISCUSS:

The Festival of Tabernacles commemorates the Jews’ exodus from slavery in Egypt, 1,500 years before Christ. A major part of this celebration was lighting the temple’s two, 70-foot high, golden candelabras, or menorahs. The light symbolized how God led the Israelites through the Sinai desert for 40 years, using a cloud by day that turned into a ball of fire at night.

Jesus seizes this moment to announce that He’s “the Light of the world” -- the *whole* world -- Jew *and* Gentile. Light for the afterlife and for today.

The Pharisees were a sect of 6,000 who interpreted the Law and oral traditions, forming the basis for Talmudic Judaism. Imagine their rage at hearing the miracle-worker who was born in a barn who claims to be their Messiah *also* declare He’s come to bring salvation to Gentile mongrels!

That does it! The Pharisees brand Jesus as a liar, demanding to know who His “Father” is. As the late pastor Ray Stedman points out, “They claimed to know God, to study and keep His Word, to teach and lead people in their understanding of God, yet they couldn’t have been further from God.” Like many, they arrogantly reject Jesus because they’re unwilling to examine the evidence. Let’s read John 8:21-30

DISCUSS:

They Just Don’t Get It

Let’s read John 8:30-59

Ignoring His enemies, Jesus turns to the crowd and utters one of His most famous sayings, promising that by sincerely believing in and following Him, they'll get to know the truth and be "set free." But these yahoos are under Rome's heel -- and have been slaves to the Assyrians, Babylonians and Egyptians, and they have the memory-deprived audacity to reply, "We're self-sufficient! We've *never* been *anybody's* slaves! Whaddya mean, 'set free!'" But Jesus was referring to being *spiritually* liberated from the power and penalty of sin -- free to be all they were meant to be.

When they flaunt their pedigree as "children of Abraham," Jesus says, "I was around before Abraham was born. I *know* Abraham, and trust me, you're no Abe's kid! Nope, your father is that murderer, the devil."

Undeterred, Jesus re-offers eternal life if they'll evaluate Him based on His life, His words and the Bible.

But the crowds and their leaders are fresh out of patience with Jesus who'd challenged their spiritual roots, calling Himself "*I Am*," the Hebrew word for the continuous, ultimate character of God! So, having depleted their armory of arguments and insults and choosing not to worship Him, they reach for some rocks. Quickly, mysteriously, Jesus "hides Himself," disappears from sight, and leaves the temple.

DISCUSS:

You Choose

Sin can only be forgiven at the cross where Jesus died in your place and mine. Each of us stands convicted. Paul writes, "No one is seeking God. All have turned from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one." (**Romans 3:10-12**)

The Bible forecasts a time when Jesus will sit in final judgment over all who've ever lived. He'll say to some, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." To others, "Depart from Me; I never knew you." There's no Plan B. (**Matthew 25**) If that were today, would He say to you "Enter" or "Depart?"

You choose where you'll spend eternity? If you fail to choose heaven, you'll be eternally separated from God in a fiery hole the Bible calls hell. Please accept God's free gift of forgiveness. Just pray a prayer like this:

"God, I'm a sinner; I need a Savior. I accept Your total pardon for my sin, paid for by Your Son's death on the cross. Help me, Father, to live a life pleasing to you. I want my life to count for You. In Jesus' name. amen."

His Deal

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