

When you know who Jesus is, You will discover who you were made to be.

Easter Series Devotional  
“The I AM” Part II  
March 11<sup>th</sup> - March 31<sup>st</sup>

## INTRODUCTION TO JOHN PART 2

If you wanted to study the life of Jesus, perhaps no other book of the Bible fully encapsulates Jesus as God *and* man than the book of John. It is different from the other three Gospels (called the Synoptic Gospels) for two reasons: It was written at a later time and the emphasis of John is totally on the deity of Jesus. Aside from the miracles He performed, Jesus (in John alone), claimed to be the I AM. He claimed to be God.

### Welcome to John, Part 2!

Jesus gave four Discourses over the span of His ministry. A discourse is “*spoken or written communication between people, especially serious discussion of a particular subject*”. You might be familiar with them:

- The Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5 – 7
- The Kingdom Parable – Matthew 13
- The Olivet Discourse – Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21
- The Upper Room Discourse – John 13 – 16

It is in the Upper Room Discourse that we will spend our time on over the course of the next three weeks. This Discourse is found only in John and covers mere hours before Jesus was crucified. Unlike the other Discourses, this one is private and intimate. It is also emotional and troubling for everyone, including Jesus. It is during this time that Jesus gave His disciples further instructions and encouragement.

Why is it called the Upper Room Discourse? Mark 14:12 – 15 gives us insight because this is where the disciples gathered for the Passover Meal. It is also important because it is here that Jesus gave His disciples the final, departing words. Though chapters 15 – 17 do not occur in the Upper Room, they are included as part of the Discourse because it is a continuation of chapter 14.

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## PART II

Week 5 – March 11 – 17 – I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14)

Week 6 – March 18 – 24 – I AM the Vine (John 15)

Week 7 – March 25 – 31 – I AM the Resurrection and the Life (John 11)



**I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE  
(THE FINAL HOURS)  
March 11 - 17**

Shhh...You are entering a sacred place, for you are about to witness something that will never happen again. It is an honor that God has bestowed on those who enter this room to observe. Please note that reverence is required...

It had been a busy time as people hustled to get ready for the Feast of Passover. Not so at this moment. Here...here there was just quiet in the dimly lit room. No ESPN blaring. No music. No menu to choose the food from. Just the sweet intimacy of friendship. Little did these friends realize that as they reclined against one another, eating, and enjoying the meal, their world would soon be turned upside down.

## DAY 1

It began with a simple disagreement: “*which of them was considered to be greatest?*” (Luke 22:24 – 30)

Then Jesus did the most confounding thing: “*He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.*” (John 13:4 -5)

No recorded words were spoken – yet. Jesus moved from each of His friends, washing their feet. One can picture this Man bowed low, gently and lovingly going about His task. Culturally, this was a rite usually delegated to the servant or to the youngest child. Remember, there weren’t paved roads. The people wore sandals, though some would choose not to do even that. Their feet would be dirty, even stinky, and so, upon entering a house, feet – those dirty feet – would need to be washed. Perhaps they didn’t talk because they were dumbfounded at what the Teacher was doing. Then Jesus came to Peter, the disciple who had no filter between his brain and his mouth...

Read John 13:6 -10. Briefly summarize the interaction between the two:

After Jesus had finished washing their feet, what challenge did He give them, in vv. 12 -17?

As Jesus continued, the night seemed to spiral downward with more troubling words. Two of His beloved friends, in *this* room, would betray Him? Read John 13:18 – 38. What did you discover?

Look at v. 21: “*Jesus was troubled in spirit*”. The Greek meaning behind the word *troubled* is the same word found in John 11:33. It is defined as “something turbulent and disturbed; to be stirred or agitated”. In other words, Jesus was heartbroken and emotional. What somber words! Who was Jesus talking about with such emotion? “*The disciples started looking at one another – uncertain which one He was speaking about.*”

Peter, however, was going to get to the bottom of this mystery: *“One of His disciples, the one Jesus loved, was reclining close beside Jesus. Simon Peter motioned to him to find out who it was He was talking about.”* What do you discover in John 13:25 – 26?

What happened to Judas after he took the bread Jesus offered Him? (vv. 27 - 30)

Jesus wasn't finished with troubling words for His disciples. What do you find in vv. 31 – 38?

Matt. 26:35 adds a little more detail: *“But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” And **all the other disciples said the same.**”*

*Now* Jesus was going to leave them? When this movement of Jesus was gaining momentum? *After* they had spent the last three years with Him? *After* these men had given up their livelihoods to follow Jesus? *Now* He was leaving to go somewhere they could not? Had everything they believed in been for naught? This was beyond comprehension!

Read John 13:37 - 38. How it must have further amplified the emotions of the evening to hear these words.

We will leave the disciples pondering the events thus far and pick up tomorrow where we have left off today. However, let's pull this chapter together for today:

- Jesus told His two friends that they would betray Him.
- The disciples didn't have a clue as to what was happening. It wasn't until *after* the Resurrection that the events and Jesus' words became clear.
- His command was to love each other, as Jesus had loved them.
- What was the object lesson for His love? Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, something that would have been taboo at the time. He showed them that His love involved serving others.

**Food for Thought:** Jesus washed the feet of the one who would basically lead Him to His death sentence. He also washed the feet of the other disciples, knowing they would all disown Him (Mark 14:50). He set a high standard for believers to follow. Is there someone who has hurt you? Betrayed you? Serve them. Love them. Just as Jesus did.

## DAY 2

As we rejoin the disciples in the upper room, it is important to remember there weren't chapter divisions in the early texts. (Around 1227 AD, Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton created the chapter divisions that are still used today). Therefore, it will be helpful to read John 10:31 – 14:8 as a unit.

When we left the disciples yesterday, Jesus had spoken troubling words: Two of His friends would desert and betray Him. He also told His disciples He was going to be going somewhere they could not follow.

Jesus knew His disciples were upset. What did He tell them in John 14:1a?

Interestingly, these are not glib words of encouragement. In the Greek, "*Do not be troubled*", is in the imperative mood. Ok, you may be asking, "so what"? It is important because it is a *command*. Not a suggestion. **A command**. Jesus was telling His disciples to stop stressing. To not be agitated. Then He reminded them **why** they weren't to stress about what was to come:

1. v. 14b – "*Believe in God; believe also in Me*". What was Jesus reminding His disciples?

John 10:30

Exodus 3:14

2. vv. 2 -3 –

As modern – day believers, we miss the implication found in these verses. The disciples, however, would have totally understood what Jesus was telling them: "*It was a common custom for the bride to join the groom's father's household, rather than the groom and the bride establishing their own household. So, if the bride and groom were of a marriageable age, the groom would return to his father's house after the betrothal to prepare a bridal chamber (and place to live). This process traditionally took a year or more (the length of time being dictated by the groom's father). When the place was complete, the groom would return and fetch his bride. The bride would not know the day or hour of her husband-to-be's return, so the groom's arrival was usually announced with a trumpet call and a shout, so the bride had some forewarning*". Got Questions

Verses 2 and 3 use the term “*monai*, which most literally means “dwelling places”. Translations such as the KJV have rendered this as “mansions.” Many have latched onto this in a very literal way, imagining that Jesus is promising physical palaces for all Christians in heaven. While that’s not entirely impossible, there’s a more important meaning here. Jesus says these *monai* are in His “Father’s House,” using the expression *te oikia*, which can mean a physical house or a family. In this context, it seems to mean something more family related. Christ’s meaning here is more likely a reassurance that in the family of God there is room for all of them, more so than a promise for a fancy house. That’s more in keeping with Jesus’ later comment in this verse that He’s preparing “a place” using a very generic Greek term, *tapon*.” *Bible Ref.com*

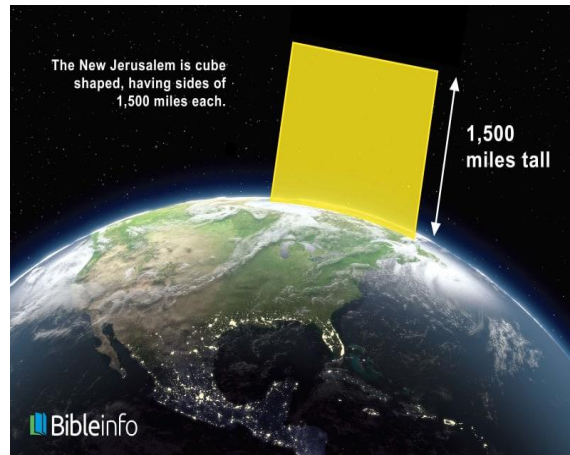
Very important! At this time, the Church had not yet been established! Nor had the revelation that Christ was the bridegroom and the Church, His bride. (Read Eph. 5:22-33). It would be *after* His Resurrection that Jesus’ words would begin to “click”. For now, however, Jesus was speaking troubling and confusing words!

It is hard to say what heaven will be like. Paul wrote that he heard “*inexpressible things*.” John described heaven in Revelation, but his descriptions were limited to what he was familiar with. One day, after the Tribulation and Millennial kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth will appear. There will also be a new city, Jerusalem. It will be something to behold! Read through Rev. 21-22. What are some of the characteristics of this city that amaze you?

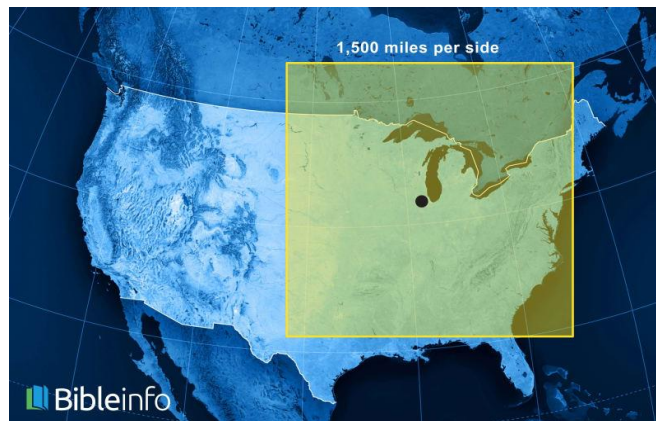
One of the features of this new Jerusalem will be its dimensions! Consider what we do know about this city:

- The city will be a perfect cube (v. 16); depending on the Bible translation, it will be between 1,400 – 1,500 miles cubed
- If it will be 1,400 miles, it will be larger than India!
- For comparison purposes, if the city will be 1,400 miles, and had 12’ stories, there would be 600,000 stories!

- If it is 1,500 miles cubed, the city's height would go out of the earth's atmosphere and into space!



- If the city is 1,500 miles, it would fit into North America like this:



- Henry Morris, a prominent Creationist, stated that a city this size could easily handle 20 billion people, with only 25% designated for dwelling places! It is mind-blowing to think about, isn't it?

These dimensions are mind-blowing, are they not? Heaven currently is, and will be, a place that we cannot understand, this side of death!

3. There is also a third reason the disciples were not to be troubled. Read John 14:3b.

How does 1 Thess. 4:13 – 18 reinforce Jesus' words?



**Food for Thought:** Jesus told His disciples they didn't need to stress about what He had just told them. Why? Because of Whom Jesus was, where they would go one day, and His promise to come back again, just as the bridegroom would return for His bride. So, the next time your spirit is troubled, **stop stressing!** **Remember** Jesus' words. You have all you need in the fullness of your Savior!

## DAY 3



Considering today's political climate, we might chuckle at the sign, which has gained great momentum on t-shirts and billboards. However, as we listen in on Jesus' discussion with His disciples, we find that this sign is a good summary of the conversation these friends were having.

As a review from yesterday, Jesus had told His disciples that He was going away to "prepare a place" for them, much like a groom would do in preparation for his upcoming marriage. And, like the groom, Jesus promised to return for them.

Then Jesus spoke these words, "*You know **the way** to the place I am going.*" Wait a minute. One can only imagine the look of puzzlement on their faces. Finally, Thomas spoke. "*Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know **the way**?*" Valid question, wouldn't you say? How would you summarize Jesus' response in John 14:6?

Jesus told them **He** was "the ticket" to the Father. Just as a person cannot enter an airplane or train (to reach their destination) without a ticket, Jesus was the only way for the disciples to enter His Father's House. In John 10:7, Jesus had told the crowd He was the Door. There is no other religion that claims this truth. Every religion has its roots based in works. *Only Christianity has its foundation based on the work of one person.*

How can we know Jesus is the way to the Father? Because He is also **the truth**.

Have you seen this bumper sticker before? The problem with this mindset is that



they can't coexist *in belief*. Why? None of these faiths believe in the same god, same afterlife or the same *means* to that afterlife. As mentioned earlier, Christianity is the only religion which claims a resurrected Savior.

We now live in what is called a “post truth” culture. In a post truth world, feelings outweigh facts. Your “truth” can be whatever you want it to be. As long as you “live out your truth”, no one should be able to criticize you.

#### **God's truth is not:**

- **Personal but it is a Person:** Read Acts 4:12. How does this verse counter the culture of today that tells us, “As long as you are sincere in your beliefs, you will go to heaven?”
- **A license to sin, but a means to holiness.** What does Romans 6:1, 15 warn us about?
- **Subject to cultural “norms”.** How does Isaiah 5:20 relate to what we see happening in our society today?
- **Changing but rests on God's unchanging character.** What do Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17 tell us about God?

Finally, the Greek meaning behind **life** (In John 14:6) is one we have seen before. It is the kind of abundant life that Jesus promises. We will look at this kind of life next week!

**Food for Thought:** In John 18:37, 38, we find an interesting conversation between Jesus and Pontius Pilate: *“You are a king, then?” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to **the truth**. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” **What is truth?**” Pilate asked.*

Do you see the sad irony in this exchange? **The Truth** was standing before Pilate, and he didn't even recognize it! How about you? Have you accepted the **Way**, do you stand on the **Truth**, and do you enjoy the abundant **Life** that is available to all believers?

## DAY 4

As the disciples were trying to sort out the disturbing words of Jesus, He reminded them that He was the I AM. Because He was the **way** to the Father, He was also the **truth**. Because He was The Word, what He spoke to them was **truth** and offered **life**. Even still, it was a tough pill to swallow. This was so not the way the disciples thought this would end. They were expecting a king who would rescue them from the savage Roman Empire. They weren't listening to a battle strategy to overthrow the government. They were listening to words of doom and gloom!

In fact, they were so skewed in their thinking that they had just been arguing about who was the greatest! And it certainly wasn't the first time this topic had come up! Rather than offering the disciple seats of honor in His kingdom, Jesus offered them something eternal: The hope of the Comforter, or the Counselor, aka the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit was foreign to them. It had been 400 years since they had heard from a prophet of God. The Holy Spirit was a mystery because He only "came upon" individuals for particular missions. How much more mysterious were Jesus' words!

As you read John 14:15 -18, it is important to understand the words *another* and *counselor* in v. 15. The Greek word for *another* is "allos" and means "another of the same kind".

The second word is *Counselor*, *Advocate* or *Comforter*, depending on your Bible translation. The Greek word is *parakletos* and means "one called to the side of another; the purpose of the coming alongside is to support the one who needs it".

Think about it: Jesus had been with the disciples for the last three years, guiding them and teaching them. After shocking His friends with the news of His departure, He was now letting them know He wasn't leaving them alone. He was sending someone Who would be *just like Him!*

Because the Counselor would be like Jesus, what could the disciples know, according to Jesus?

John 14:26

John 14:27

Later in the evening, Jesus began to speak of this Counselor again:

John 15:26

John 16:7

John 16:8

John 16:12 -15

How would you summarize the role of the Counselor, using the verses you have looked up?

How would the Holy Spirit's role help the disciples as they began the church and endured the trials that came with it?

**Food for Thought:** This intimate role of the Holy Spirit would have been a new teaching for the disciples. Yet, in just a little over fifty days, the Spirit would cause a revival in the Jewish and Roman world. The Spirit would do this through this ragtag bunch, equipping them and empowering them to be bold in their message!

## DAY 5

Satan's fingerprints are all over the final hours of Jesus' life. Not because he was more powerful than God, but to fulfill prophecy. Turn to Gen. 3:14 -16. This passage speaks to the judgements God pronounced on Adam and Eve and the serpent. However, it is in v. 15 that we will zero in on today. Gen. 3:15 is known as the *Protoevangelium*. This word is Greek in nature, with the *prot* meaning "first" and the *evangelium* meaning "good news" or "gospel". **It is in this verse that we find the problem for mankind as well as the solution.**

FYI: Scripture can be tricky, especially with prophecy, because the object of the verse – or the fulfilled timing of the verse - can be *dual* in nature. In other words, one verse may speak of two different characters as well as two different timeframes. You will find a couple of examples in Ezekiel 28:11 – 19, Dan. 7:19 - 25 and Rev. 12:1- 5. Interestingly, these examples speak of Satan, the Antichrist, and the different time periods prophesied about. In the case of the Ezekiel passage, the king of Tyre was also a literal king.

In Gen.3:15, we find that God has switched from condemning the serpent to condemning Satan. Note the unitalicized words are to clarify the verse.

*"I will put hostility (**hatred, enmity**) between you (**Satan**) and the woman, and between your offspring (**demonic forces**) and her offspring (**mankind**).*

**Notice how the verse now switches:**

*He (**Jesus**) will crush your (**Satan**) head, and you (**Satan**) will strike His (**Jesus**) heel," (Gen. 3:15)*

Ultimately, this hostility culminates in the events leading up to and including the crucifixion of Jesus. However, Jesus had the power and victory over death, thereby crushing the head of Satan. What do the following verses tell us?

Hebrews 2:14, 15

1 John 3:8b

Let's get some insight into the role Satan played in the final hours of Jesus' life:

- Luke 22:1 – 6

It is at the Last Supper we see two instances where Satan is present or mentioned:

- John 13:27

Don't you wonder what this "Satan entering in" was like? Could Jesus, in His humanity, see this event happen? There is another puzzling passage to look at:

- Luke 22:31 – 32

(BTW, the "you" in v. 31 is plural in the Greek, so even though Jesus was speaking directly to Peter, Satan was wanting all the disciples! Once again, don't you wonder at Satan asking permission to "sift" the guys? Did Satan have this conversation directly with Jesus or did he go before the Father? (See Job 1:6 – 8; 2:1 – 3).

How did Jesus respond to Satan's request in v. 32?

Notice He didn't pray that His friends would be removed from this trial. He prayed "*that your faith may not fail*". And, since Jesus already knew how Peter and the others would respond to the trial (because He was the I AM), He was able to confidently reassure Peter that He *would* return to the Shepherd's fold.

As the men were getting ready to wrap up their time in the Upper Room, Jesus said this: "*I will not speak with you much longer, for the **prince of this world** is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.*" (John 14:30)

Think through the Protoevangelium. The prince of this world is Satan, who has entered Judas. What did Jesus tell His disciples as to Who was really in charge of the upcoming events?

Rather than Satan having control over Jesus, what was Jesus' reason for going to the cross, according to John 14:31?

**Food for Thought:** While Satan is still the "*ruler of the kingdom of the air*" here on earth (Eph. 2:2), he no longer has power over believers in Jesus (Heb. 2:14,15). One day, Satan will be eternally vanquished to the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10). What a promise!



## **DAY 6**

Did you learn anything new this week?

As you reflect on the passages you looked up, what challenged you the most (in your Christian walk)?

What are some practical ways you can respond to what you have learned?

Pray for the worship service tomorrow. Pray for the Spirit to lead the service and teach you the truths you may need to hear.



**I AM THE VINE  
(THE FINAL HOURS)  
March 18 - 24**

The last recorded words in the Upper Room were, “*Come now; let us leave.*” (Remember that chapters 15 -17 are part of the Olivet Discourse, even though they are not in the Upper Room). As this little band of men walked along, Jesus continued His teaching. One wonders if there was other dialogue between the men that isn’t recorded, or if their walk was silent, each man lost in his own thoughts at Jesus’ troubling words...

There is also speculation as to where Jesus and the disciples were at as they walked to their destination. Did they stop at a vineyard so Jesus could take a moment to teach them while he held a grapevine? Or were they walking by the magnificent Temple, where Josephus writes that a large golden vine hung with golden fruit about the large door? Where they were isn’t important. What *is* important are Jesus’ final words. In chapter 14, Jesus instructed them about the role the Holy Spirit would play in their lives after He left them. It is in chapter 15 that we find the *means* for the Holy Spirit to work. As we unfold this passage, we find that the key to an abundant life is as much a challenge for believers today as it was for the disciples.

## DAY 1

As with much of what we have studied, it is always helpful to get a little background before we look at the designated passage, so let's travel through the pages of the Old Testament to get some understanding!

We are introduced to the vineyard in Gen. 9:18 – 23. What happened as a result?

As Israel was about to finally enter the Promised Land, what were the twelve scouts instructed to do? Read Numbers 13:17 – 25.

Throughout the Bible, the vine was also a sign of contentment and peace. What do the following verses tell you?

1 Kings 4:25

Psalm 128:1 -3

Micah 4:4

In the book, Song of Solomon, the Shulaamite woman compared her body to a vineyard (1:6) while Jesus used the example of a vineyard to tell a parable as He rebuked the religious leaders (Matt. 21:33 – 46).

However, there is a deeper meaning behind the vineyard. Turn to Isaiah 5:7a. Who did God claim to be His vineyard?

In Is. 5:1 - 2, we find the lovingkindness show to Israel, God's chosen. However, instead of producing godly fruit, Israel produced "bad fruit" (Is. 5:3, 4). You see this very clearly throughout Israel's history. They were so prone to disobedience and worshiping idols that God eventually brought discipline (through devastation and the scattering of the nation).

How did God let Israel know He would do this, in Isaiah 5:5,6?

It is interesting that In Psalm 80:8 – 19, we find the psalmist crying out to God. Why?

It would be only fitting that God would use grapes, the vine, and the winepress as the final judgments are poured out on earth. Turn to Rev. 14:14 – 20. What do you find?

*A winepress consisted of two parts – the receptacle for the grapes, and the vat for the liquor. Either part, by itself, is sometimes called the press. The grapes were put into the upper part of the winepress and trodden by the feet of men (Judges 9:27). At least two trod together and often seven or more. The treaders usually supported themselves by ropes which hung from a crossbeam over their heads. Manners and Customs of the Bible*



TREADING THE WINE-PRESS.—Isa. lxiii. 3.

**Food for Thought:** Jesus, like God in the Old Testament, used the vineyard to teach very important principles. Jesus spoke of offering an abundant life in John 10:10. The abundant Christian life is promised when we stay attached to the Vine.

## DAY 2

Open your Bible to John 15:1 - 8. Jesus and His disciples have now left the Upper Room and were heading to the Garden of Gethsemane. How did Jesus begin His teaching in John 15:1?

*“I AM the True vine.”* Think through this statement. What did you learn about Israel yesterday?

To contrast Israel with Himself, Jesus used the word “true”. In this case, “true” does not mean the opposite of “false”. Instead, it means that, as the I AM, Jesus is the faithful one (vs. unfaithful Israel). It means that He is the real deal.

In Bible times, vineyards would grow along the ground. The vinedressers would sometimes place rocks under the branches to lift them. Sometimes, they might cut a “Y” out of a stick to support the branches. The idea was to get the grapes off the ground so that disease and mildew would not blemish the fruit.

The vinedresser would carefully inspect his vineyard. For the branches to bear fruit, he would do one of three things:

- Lift the branches in a way so as to not get diseased.
- Prune the good branches so that they would bear more fruit.
- Cut off the dead branches. Grape wood is different from olive wood in that it is soft and only good for kindling. *It is only valuable when it is connected to the vine.* Ezekiel compares Israel to a useless grape vine in Ezekiel 15:1-5.

What is the end goal of the Vinedresser (God)? Read John 15:8.

As we read through chapter 15, Jesus used the vineyard as an analogy in the life of the believer. There is a two-fold process involved: The believer’s responsibility and the response of the Vinedresser to that responsibility. **The whole context of vv. 1- 8 is about how the fruit we bear is directly tied to our intimacy with Christ. This intimacy is called *abiding*, which we will unpack on Day 4.**

Read v. 2:

- “*Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit, He removes...*”

What kind of branch was Jesus teaching about?

What was done to this branch?

- “*And He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit*”. What was Jesus talking about?

Circle the words “*in Me*”. The Greek word for “removes” or “cut off” is *airo*. It means to be “lifted up, to raise from the ground, elevate”. In the Greek, *airo* **never** means “cut off.” We can know this isn’t a loss of salvation because both branches are “in Christ”.

Let’s look again at v. 2a and substitute “lifted up”: “*Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit **He lifts up.***” Any thoughts as to what this means?

In *Secrets of the Vine*, the author writes of a conversation with a viticulturist, which is a vinedresser: “*New branches have a natural tendency to trail down and grow along the ground, but they don’t bear fruit down there. When branches grow along the ground, the leaves get coated in dust. When it rains, they get muddy and mildewed. The branch becomes sick and useless. We go through the vineyard with a bucket of water, looking for those branches. We **lift them up** and wash them off. Then we wrap them around the trellis or tie them up. Pretty soon, they’re thriving.*”

Isn’t that a wonderful picture of our heavenly Vinedresser? When we abide, or stay close to Jesus, the Comforter will help us through our most difficult times. He “lifts us up” so that we, in turn, can testify to the sustaining power of the Lord!

Turn to Psalm 3. Notice this Psalm was written by David as he was trying to stay ahead of his son, Absalom, (who was trying to overthrow his kingdom). You can read about this in 2 Samuel 13 -18. Read the entire Psalm but focus on v. 3. While the Hebrew word is obviously different from the Greek, the idea is the same. God meets us in the darkest of nights. **He is the Comforter.**

- Is your heart heavy and burdened? *You, Lord, are the One Who lifts my head.*

- Are you feeling overwhelmed and tired? *You, LORD, are the One Who lifts my head.*
- Are you lonely? *You, LORD, are the One Who lifts my head.*
- Are you grieving? *You, LORD, are the One Who lifts my head.*

**Food for Thought:** Did the disciples find comfort in Jesus' words as they walked along? Did they connect the idea of the Comforter (Ch. 14) with what they had just heard? Whether the meaning was lost on them at the time isn't important. For the believer today, however, *don't* miss the point! **The Comforter is the One Who comes alongside and lifts our head.**

### DAY 3

We didn't get very far yesterday, did we? It is important to absorb the truths that Jesus spoke of in this chapter, for it is in the John 15 passage that we find the *key* to an abundant life. It is no wonder there are a lot of joyless, negative believers in our churches. They have not learned what is involved in being connected to the Vine. Consequently, they are not bearing eternal fruit; there isn't an abundant life.

Notice in John 15:2b, that we find the second part of an abiding life. It is the pruning process. The Greek word for *prune* means "to cleanse of filth by removing undesirable elements or what is fruitless."

It is the vinedresser who prunes, or cuts away, the dead tissue and even some live tissue because the vinedresser wants to make sure the sap of the vine is concentrated and not going to the dying branches.

*"Pruning is not a punishment for a Christian; it is a reward. God is the vinedresser who prunes the life of everyone who abides in Christ and bears the fruit of Christ. Spiritual pruning enhances spiritual growth by removing whatever inhibits spiritual growth. Unless the deadness is cut out, it will spread like a cancer until the whole tree is consumed. Left unchecked, sin extends its control over every part of a Christian's life. Sin prevents fruitfulness."* uu.edu.

What does the pruning process look like in the life of a believer?

- Jesus told the disciples they were already clean because of the Word. It is the Word that can convict our hearts and thoughts.

What does Hebrews 4:12 -13 tell us?

The idea behind the word *penetrate* is one of filleting a fish. What does this mean, in regards to pruning?

Psalm 12:6

Jeremiah 23:29

James 1:23 -25



2 Timothy 3:16 -17

- Another way that we are “pruned” is through trials. It’s amusing that people are quick to say, “God is good” when things go well, but one hardly hears “God is good” when life is difficult. God’s character hasn’t changed. It remains the same, no matter what trials come our way. Look at what the following verses tell us about our trials:

1 Peter 1:6, 7

Psalm 66:10 -12

Isaiah 48:10

One final verse. Read Psalm 119:67, 71. Do you see how God used His word as well as the Psalmist’s trials to draw him (to Himself)?

**Food for Thought:** The Vinedresser must do what is necessary to produce a fruitful yield. Sometimes it involves gently lifting the branch and washing it, while at other times, it involves more drastic measures like cutting away that which can keep the fruit from being bountiful.

There is a sad commentary found in Jeremiah 6:29, 30. In these verses, Jeremiah told Israel that their refinement was in vain because of their willful disobedience and unrepentant heart. Let God’s Word convict and teach you. Embrace your trials, no matter how difficult. The result will be that you will bear “*much fruit.*”

## DAY 4

Today we will look at the word *abide*. Some Bible translations might have the word *remain*. It is used 10 times in v.v. 1 – 10. It is this word that unlocks the key to a fruitful, abundant life. The meaning of the word *abide* is “to be in a close, constant relationship; in the spiritual realm, it is intimacy with Christ.”

Look at John 15:4a. Do you see the mutual, intimate relationship between Jesus and a believer?

Fill in the rest of John 15:4. The NIV is quoted in this passage: “\_\_\_\_\_ *branch can bear fruit by* \_\_\_\_\_; it **must** \_\_\_\_\_ *in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you* \_\_\_\_\_ *in Me.*”

Summarize the thought of this verse, using “I” and “myself” and write it below:

What do you find in John 15:5?

John 15:7?

It’s important to realize that bearing much fruit is a process. Notice the progression: fruit (v. 4), then much fruit (vv. 5, 8). One only gets to the desired *much fruit* after repeatedly being pruned and lifted up. The theological word is *sanctification*.

An abundant, spiritually healthy believer will bear “*much fruit*”. It is that which is borne naturally to the one who intimately abides. The fruit cannot be self-produced. It cannot be wished for. It only comes through abiding.

What did John the Baptist tell the religious leaders their fruit should be in response to in Matt. 3:8?

In other words, when we are pruned and lifted up, it is only in humble repentance that we can allow the work of the Vinedresser, shedding that which hinders any spiritual growth.

Paul wrote the following in Col. 1:9: “... *we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding...*” Why did he pray this for the Colosse church? Look at v. 10.

Who can forget Galatians 5:22 -23? Notice there are nine qualities of **one fruit**. It is not “fruits”. What are the fruit of the Spirit?

According to John 15, how does this fruit bear fruitfulness?

**When we abide in Christ, the vine, we will show His qualities and His character. When flesh controls one’s thoughts and actions, Christ is not evident.**

Unfortunately, there are and will be, imposters.

What did Jesus teach in Matt. 7:21 -23? (The Greek word used for *knew* in this passage describes intimacy or familiarity).

What do you find in Isaiah 29:13?

Here is the challenge: “*Whoever says he **abides** in Him ought to **walk in the same way in which He walked.***” (1 John 2:6)

*“This is frequently mentioned as John’s ultimate proof for how a person knows he or she is a believer: A believer in Jesus lives like Jesus. True Christians grow to act more and more like Christ. Those who don’t demonstrate a Christ-like lifestyle are – at minimum – failing to provide evidence of their salvation. Still, absence of evidence is not always evidence of absence. In other words, failure to grow or change in one’s life is not an infallible sign of being lost, nor is a continued struggle with sin. **However, anyone who claims to be “in Christ” but fails to live like Him certainly does not have a fellowship relationship with Him.**”* Bible Ref

**Food for Thought:** Fortunately, God knows who His are and who isn’t.

Therefore, it is important to remember that we can never fool the Lord and it is important that each person who professes to know the Lord *really knows* the Lord. How about you? Do you know the Lord in an intimate way? Do you abide in Him? Is your fruitfulness in the Lord increasing? Do people know there is something different about you because you abide?

## DAY 5

Like two other previous “I AM” statements not recognized in the seven statements, we are going to look at one today that is powerful but often overlooked.

The Olivet Discourse was finished. Jesus had been praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. His grief was so intense that He sweat drops of blood. Strengthened by a ministering angel (Luke 22:42 - 44), He was in full submission to the Father’s will.

Turn to John 18:1 - 6. Read through this passage and write down some observations.

Did these events catch Jesus by surprise?      What did Jesus ask the men who approached Him?

How did Jesus answer?      What is “lost in translation” is the *ego eimi*. Jesus didn’t just say, “I am He.” Jesus said, “I AM. *“The repetition of I AM in John 18:6-8, and its stunning effect on the soldiers, implies Jesus’ deity.”* Talbot School of Theology

What was the response of the group?

Jesus declared His deity to them through the power of His name! *“The words, “went backward” depict the soldiers and temple police staggering and stumbling backward, as if some force has hit them.”* renner.org

Oh, how the glory of God must have shown through in those words! One can almost see a little humor in the next event. As the men are trying to regain their footing, Jesus calmly asked them once again Who they were looking for. What did they say in v. 8?

How did Jesus respond to them?

One wonders if Jesus responded as He did (to these soldiers and religious leaders) to show them that they were taking Him as a prisoner **because the I AM was allowing it!**

In John 18:4, we find that *“Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to Him went out...”* There was absolutely nothing that had happened or would happen

over the coming hours which caught Jesus by surprise. Remember back in John 13 when Jesus had told His disciples they would disown Him? What do you find in the following verses?

Luke 22:54 – 62

Matt. 26:56b

**Food for Thought:** One day, “*at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.*” (Phil. 2:10, 11)

Just like the men who came to arrest Jesus, the **very power of the name, Jesus,** will cause all men to bow and confess He is Lord! *To the glory of God!* (v. 11)

## DAY 6

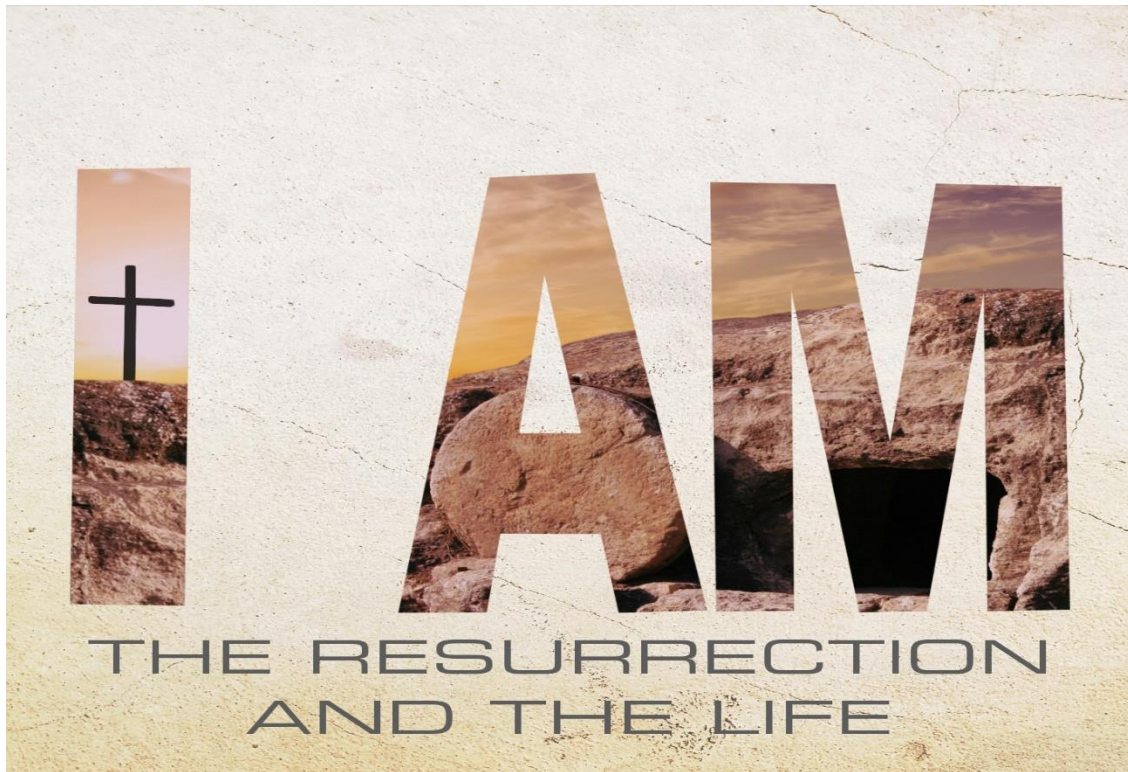
Did you learn anything new this week?

As you reflect on the passages you looked up, what challenged you the most (in your Christian walk)?

Would you say that, overall, you bear fruit or much fruit?

What are some practical ways you can respond to what you have learned?

Pray for the worship service tomorrow. Pray for the Spirit to lead the service and teach you the truths you may need to hear.



### **March 25 - 31**

The Feast of Passover was near. As you have read in Part 1, Jesus had become a lightning rod of controversy: Many loved Him. Many believed in Him. Many also desired to kill Him. However, it is in John 11 that we find the tipping point:

*“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area, they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t He coming to the Feast at all?” But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, He should report it so that they might arrest Him.” (John 11:55 -57)*

What had happened to cause such a disturbance? Something miraculous had occurred which is only written about in John: Lazarus, a dear friend of Jesus, had died. Not one to be deterred by death, Jesus, and in dramatic flair, brought Lazarus back to life! This was the third gospel-recorded time someone had been brought back to life (by Jesus). This time, however, was different. It is in *this* story that we are introduced to the Resurrection and the Life. (Please note that because it is Easter week, there will be six days to the devotional guide).

## DAY 1

Before we unpack John 11, we are going to spend the next three days understanding the background of the Jewish belief about death as well as the eternal hope that Jesus would speak of for those who believe in Him. There isn't a whole lot about the afterlife that we can glean from the Bible; however, Jesus gave us a bit of an insight in Luke 16:19 – 31. (Note that this is probably not the same Lazarus in John 11.)

However, most Bible commentators feel the story of Lazarus accurately reflects life after death BEFORE Jesus rose from the dead.

How is Lazarus described in vv. 19 – 21?

How is the rich man described in vv. 19 -21?

Write out vv. 22 - 23:

Underline what happened when the beggar (Lazarus) died. Now circle what happened when the rich man died. (Note that if your Bible has *hell* in v. 23, it is a poor translation. It should be *hades*.) Sheol, or Hades (Greek) simply means “*the place of the dead*” or “*the place of departed souls and spirits.*”

Notice the difference between Lazarus and the rich man upon their deaths – Lazarus had angels waiting for him to carry him to Abraham's bosom while the rich man simply “died” and didn't have the comfort of the angels to carry him into eternity.

Describe the conversation between the rich man and Abraham, found in vv. 23 – 31.

What separated Lazarus and Abraham from the rich man?

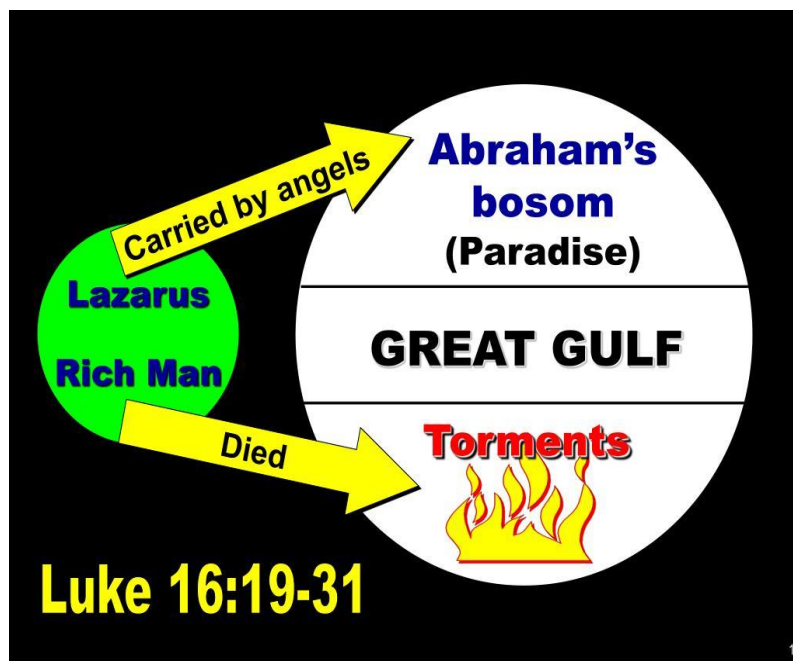
Was there any hope for the rich man?

What does Hebrews 9:27 tell us?



Why did those in the Old Testament who had faith not go directly to heaven?  
(Heb. 10:3, 4, 10)

Perhaps it looked something similar to the diagram below:



Let's piece this together thus far:

In the Old Testament, which was up and until Jesus died, all people went to Sheol, or Hades. Those who had faith went to Paradise, or Abraham's Bosom. This is not purgatory. That is why Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "*Today you will be with me in paradise.*" Jesus had not risen from the dead at this point! (This is also how we can know that Jesus descended into Sheol (Abraham's Bosom)! Some Bible scholars feel that Jesus took the Old Testament souls of the saints to heaven when He ascended. Their bodies will be reunited with their souls at a future time. Another school of thought is that these saints remain in Sheol until a future time. Both groups, however, agree that those who didn't have faith remain in that part of Sheol that is "*a place of torment*"! Interesting!

**Food for Thought:** You don't know the number of your days. No one does, even those who have been given a terminal diagnosis. (Psalm 139:16) Make sure you know Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life!

## DAY 2

Yesterday we looked at Sheol (Hades). As mentioned, this is not “hell” or the “Lake of Fire”. While Sheol is a temporary place (not purgatory), the Lake of Fire is the final place for all unbelievers. In setting up this passage, you need to know that this event is at least 1,007 years away (if the Tribulation started tomorrow). Great catastrophic events will have occurred, and the earth will have been pelted with the judgments of God. Satan will be bound, but one day released from his 1,000 year prison cell to unleash yet another rebellion against God. Of course, it is a futile effort and God will throw the devil into the everlasting Lake of Fire.

What about the people who didn’t believe in Jesus?  
Turn to Rev. 20:11. Whose Presence are we witness to?

Rev. 20:12 - Who is standing before the throne?

Those who are “*dead*” are unbelievers, those who had rejected Christ. Notice God will not show any favoritism to the rich and powerful!

In v. 12, we find that there will be two different books opened. The first one is the Book of \_\_\_\_\_. In v. 15, we find the determining factor to earn a spot in the Lake of Fire. What was it?

There is another book that is opened that seems to judge a person based on what?

**So, let’s think about this:** Your name is written in the Book of Life if you believe in Christ. For those who never accept Jesus as Lord, it is not written down. That is the *first* determining factor of your eternal destiny.

The second book is the “works” book. In other words, it will somehow have your deeds and misdeeds written down. (Some feel that because of this, there will be degrees in the Lake of Fire, but we really don’t know).

Look at v. 14a: “*Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire*”. (Remember Luke 16.) Hmm.. Why will death and Hades be destroyed? Look at v. 14b:

Death and Hades will now longer be needed because the Lake of Fire is the final judgment for mankind. What will follow this final judgment? Read Rev. 21:1 – 4.

**Food for Thought:** Is your name in the Lamb’s Book of Life?

### DAY 3

In the New Testament, the term, “to sleep” is used of a *believer* who has died. (You might also find the term, “*dead in Christ*”).

What do the following verses tell us?

John 11:11

Acts 7:60

Acts 13:36

1 Cor. 15:6

1 Cor. 15:20

1 Thess. 4:13 – 18

This side of the cross, what happens to a believer when he or she “falls asleep”?

Philippians 1:21 – 24

2 Cor. 5:8

**Food for Thought:** There is a hope for all believers! The second we draw our last breath, we are immediately ushered into presence of the Lord. Indeed, what a hope! What a promise!

## DAY 4

Open your Bible to John 11:1 – 16. We are introduced to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. This is unusual as the gospels don't typically mention most of the people Jesus encountered (by name) except for the disciples. It seems these siblings enjoyed a sweet relationship, for in John 11:5, we find these words: "*Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*" They had a special bond. How much more puzzling, then, for Jesus to respond to the news of Lazarus' sickness in the manner we find in v. 6:

Unbeknownst to the sisters, what did Jesus know about the events that were to follow? (v. 4)

Jesus *intentionally* waited for two more days...until Lazarus had died and been buried...

Let's take a little rabbit trail, shall we? What do you find out about Jesus in the following verses?

**John 5:19**

**John 7:6**

Why would Jesus say it was not "*His time*"?

**John 8:27 – 29**

**John 14:31**

**Mark 1:32 – 39**

**Think on this:** Jesus had just performed wonderful miracles the day before and there were still needs right where He was. Yet what did He tell His disciples in Mark 1: 38 – 39?

Why could Jesus confidently leave the unmet needs? Read v. 35.

How do the above "John" verses play into Jesus' response in Mark?

Now back to John 11:

Based on the verses you just looked up, how would Jesus have already known that Lazarus was dead (since no one had told Him this yet)?

What was Jesus telling His disciples in v. 11?

Not understanding, and thinking Lazarus was literally sleeping, the disciples felt the extra sleep would help him get better!

How, then, did Jesus respond to His friends in v. 14?

Four days had passed since Lazarus had died. Jews would usually have a funeral within 24 hours of the time of death, so Lazarus had already been buried and his body sealed in the tomb. The decomposition process had begun. Jewish tradition held that the body is not truly dead until the third day, because the soul would hover around the body for three days *after* death, hoping to re-enter the body. Once the decomposition began, the soul would know that it could never return and finally leave. Though it is unknown if the little family believed in this tradition, Jesus waited for four days. *Lazarus was truly dead, with no hope of living.*

**Food for Thought:** Have you ever noticed that Jesus never seemed frazzled or hurried? Though divine, in His humanness, He **abided** in perfect union with His Father. And because He had this **abiding relationship**, He showed us, by example, how we are to live. Because Jesus **abided** with His Father, He acted according to God's will. God doesn't work on our timeline. God works on His timeline – and He is always on time!

## DAY 5

As Jesus traveled to the house of Lazarus, He was first met by Martha, who questioned why He tarried. How did Jesus respond in John 11:23?

How did Martha respond in v. 24?

Who did Jesus tell Martha He was, in v. 25?

What promise do you find in this verse?

- Martha thought the resurrection was an *event*. Yet Jesus declared that **He** was the **Resurrection and the Life**. How important is this concept to the Christian faith? Read 1 Cor. 15:12 – 19.

Paul wrote (in v. 17) that “*if Christ has not been raised, your faith is \_\_\_\_\_*.” Why would this be the case? “*You are still in your \_\_\_\_\_*”.

“*The resurrection ushers in hope.*” Dr. Michael A. Milton

What is Jesus called in 1 Cor. 15:20 – 22 and why?

(Firstfruits was something, whether grain, wine, oil or animals, given to God. It was always to be the first, or best, of what was offered).

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Three of the seven I AM statements contain the word **Life**. Remember, the Greek word for this is *zoe* and it means “abundance; the absolute fullness of life.”

- I AM the Bread of Life – Whoever comes to Me will never go \_\_\_\_\_ and whoever believes in Me will never be \_\_\_\_\_ (John 6:35).
- I AM the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will \_\_\_\_\_, even though they \_\_\_\_\_ (John 11:25).
- I AM the way, the truth and life. No one comes to the \_\_\_\_\_ except through \_\_\_\_\_ (John 14:6).

If you were to summarize these statements, what kind of **life** was Jesus talking about?

Back to Lazarus. Read John 11:30.

Did Jesus continue on into the village to meet with Mary? Hmm...once again, Jesus only operated in the will of the Father. One wonders at the conversations Mary and Martha had had as they waited for Jesus. At this point, they had spiritual myopia, for they could only see what they experienced: Jesus was fully capable of healing the sick and even raising the dead, as He had done in Luke 7:11 – 17 and Matt. 9:18-26, but their beloved brother was now really, really dead. He had been in the grave for way too long, and, as Martha exclaimed in the KJV, “*He stinketh*”. They couldn’t understand why Jesus waited so long.

It is in v. 33 that we get a glimpse into the humanity of Jesus. Even though He knew Lazarus was going to be brought back from death in a matter of minutes, Jesus became emotional.

How did He respond in v. 33 -35?

What was He responding to in v. 33a?

Have you ever been to a funeral, and as you talked with the family, their grief was overwhelming? Even though you might try to “reign in your emotions”, the sadness was so great that you began to weep with the family as well? That is our Savior. Some commentators feel that Jesus’ grief and agitation was over the end result of sin, which is death. Nonetheless, He wept with His friends.

**Food for Thought:** If you are doing this study guide according to schedule, it is now Friday. Just a few days after raising Lazarus, there would be another crowd gathered. Grief, anguish, disbelief and tears would be on display as His friends and family gathered around the cross. They had watched Jesus endure a brutal torture that left Him unrecognizable (Isaiah 52:14). They had watched Him struggle with each breath, as crucifixion was designed to do. They had watched Him be mocked. Their grief was palpable. With His last breath, and utterance of “*It is finished*”, Jesus died. And, like Mary and Martha, those in the crowd didn’t understand that Jesus was The Resurrection and the Life.



## DAY 6

As we return to Lazarus, we find that Jesus reminded Martha and the others that *“if you believed, you would see the glory of God.”* He then asked that the stone to the tomb be removed. Amazingly, *“they took away the stone.”* There wasn’t any further arguing. Was the crowd’s curiosity piqued? How many actually believed Him at this point?

Jesus then publicly prayed to the Father, reminding those who heard that what He was about to do was in response to the Father’s will.

Jesus called in a loud voice, *“Lazarus, come out!”* The \_\_\_\_\_ came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth over his face.” Wouldn’t you have loved to have seen the reaction of those who witnessed this event? Don’t you wonder what Lazarus was thinking as he walked out of the dark tomb? Can you imagine the questions he must have had? Lazarus didn’t go on a speaking tour or write a book about this experience, so we will have to wait until heaven to get the “full scoop”!

The response of the crowd was mixed. Look at vv. 45 - 46. What do you find?

As you read through vv. 47 – 57, we discover that this was the final straw for the religious leaders. Not only did they want Jesus killed, they also made plans to kill Lazarus (John 12:9 -11).

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It would only be a few days later that another man had been in the tomb for three days. However, this Man’s body would never see decay. Read Acts 13:34 – 37.

Turn to John 20:1 - 9. What do you find?

Look at v. 9: *“They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus **had** to rise from the dead.”* The Greek for *had* means Jesus **must** rise from the dead because it was inevitable. Why? **Because Jesus was the I AM!**

Tomorrow, as you celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, rejoice!

- Christianity is the only faith which has a resurrected Savior. No other faith has this. Muhammed is dead. Buddha is dead. Joseph Smith is dead. Jesus is **not** dead.
- The Resurrection allows us access to God, through Jesus. Sins are totally and completely forgiven. 1 Cor. 15:17 reminds us that *“if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”*
- Though mankind still faces the first death, which is physical, death no longer has an eternal grip on humanity (Heb. 2:15). One day, even creation will be liberated (Romans 8:20 -21).
- It is because of the Resurrection we can have the Comforter, Who will guide us through this life.
- It is because of the Resurrection that we can have an abundant, fulfilling life through abiding with the Savior.
- It is because of the Resurrection that we have the hope of heaven and eternity. Can I get an “amen”?