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DISCOVERING JESUS

An Introduction to the Savior

LESSON 3 BIBLE STUDY

*John's Gospel:
"The Lamb of God"*

This Bible Study Series Provided By

Herald of Truth

PART 1 HEART TUNING

Because you are reading these words, we can make this claim with confidence: You are a living, breathing human being. But are you alive, *really alive*? In other words, are you living life to the fullest? Are you enjoying an abundant, spiritually-fulfilling life? Ah, that is a different matter. Having a pulse rate and a heart beat do not qualify as "real life" according to the Bible. The Apostle Paul writes:

To you, who were spiritually dead all the time that you drifted along on the stream of this world's ideas of living, and obeyed its unseen ruler (who is still operating in those who do not respond to the truth of God), to you Christ has given life!... Even when we were dead in our sins God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, gave us life together with Christ - it is, remember, by grace and not achievement that you are saved - and has lifted us right out of the old life to take our place with him in Christ Jesus in the Heavens (Ephesians 2:1-6). *Phillips Translation*

John's Gospel makes the same point. John presents a "life" (the life of Jesus Christ) in order to give us eternal life. Jesus says concerning his disciples: "I came to bring them life, far more life than before" (John 10:11). At the end of the book, John declares his life-affirming purpose for writing:

Jesus gave a great many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is Christ, the Son of God, and that in that faith you may have life as his disciples (John 20:30-31). *Phillips Translation*

Are you ready for a better life? Do you know that a secular life style is a dead end? Do you know that living for oneself ultimately leads to hopelessness and despair? If you do, then you are ready to receive John's Gospel. Like one of the seekers in John's Gospel, Nicodemus, you are ready to come to Jesus and to receive the surprising news - that to live, really live, you must be born again. "Believe me," Jesus tells Nicodemus, "a man cannot even see the kingdom of God without being born again" (John 3:3). "I assure you," Jesus adds, "that unless a man is born from water and from spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). John's Gospel is a lively story. It is full of life for those who are ready to meet the Son of God.

Because I am a sinner, I must say, "I did." And yet, there is grace and forgiveness. He forgives me if I repent.

Because a holy day was approaching - it was Friday afternoon, and the Sabbath observance began at 6:00 pm - the religious authorities wanted the bodies of Jesus and the other two victims buried quickly. Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent Jewish leader who followed Jesus, got permission to bury Jesus' body in a nearby tomb. Three days later (Sunday morning), the glorious news becomes known. Christ was risen from the dead. Several resurrection appearances are reported in the New Testament, in addition to these in the Gospel of John. The resurrected Jesus was seen by many people over several weeks on several different occasions. Literally hundreds of people saw the resurrected Lord. Paul summarizes many of these appearances in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

But what about us? Those who are not privileged to see the resurrected Lord with our physical eyes? Thomas' story is written for all of us who live this side of the empty tomb. Thomas represents the skeptical voice in all of us. We don't want to be taken in by "old wives' tales." Resurrections are not a part of normal, everyday experience. Thomas' words ring true with many practical men and women: "Unless I see in his own hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe!" For Thomas, only "seeing is believing." Thomas gets his wish one week later. The following Sunday, the disciples are gathered and Jesus appears to Thomas.

Jesus does not condemn Thomas, we should note. But Jesus pays special honor to all those millions who believe the sign of the cross and the empty tomb, even though they are not physically present at the resurrection: "Happy are those who have never seen me and yet have believed!" our Lord says. Jesus reminds us that our physical eyesight can only take us so far. It can only reveal *physical* objects, of course. What all of us need is the "eye of faith" that recognizes who Jesus is ("My Lord and my God!"), even without the organ of physical vision. We don't need 20/20 vision. We need hearts of faith.

One authority on John's Gospel summarizes the point for us: "The blessedness of belief is thus really to those who believe, not to those who see. This is the universal beatitude with which John closes his gospel."¹

¹ John Marsh, The Gospel of St. John (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968) pp. 647-48.

the meaning of this sign of the cross:

Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - "Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.... And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself (John 12:27,32).
New Revised Standard Version

While Jesus appears powerless and passive to Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and the angry mob, he is actually performing a heroic act to save humanity - by his choice. It is his choice to suffer this trial for our sake:

I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again (John 10:17-18). *New Revised Standard Version*

For John, the cross is not the defeat that it appears to the world. The cross itself is a kind of glorious victory in itself. Yes, the cross is a great humiliation, but *there is a surprising victory in the humiliation*. This is the greatest miracle and sign of the Gospel of John. A humiliating defeat God turns into a rout of all evil-the glorification of the Son of God.

A difficult issue needs attention here. For centuries, people have debated the question, "*Who is responsible for the death of Jesus?*" The issue is important, because a great deal of anti-Semitism has been encouraged by a faulty answer to this question. While Jesus willingly offers his life for our sins, the people who carry out this cruel act are no less guilty for their crime. Judas, for example, is specifically blamed (John 13:2). Certainly Pilate, Annas, Caiaphas, and the Roman soldiers had specific involvement in the execution. But is a whole race or class of people responsible? Some people have mistakenly assumed that the whole Jewish nation is uniquely or solely guilty of Jesus' death. This view is not a teaching of the New Testament. When John's Gospel says that "the Jews" call for the execution of Jesus, he does not mean the Jewish nation in general. After all, the apostles and the disciples, numbering in the hundreds if not thousands, were Jewish, and they were desperate to save Jesus. When John uses the phrase "the Jews," he means *a specific group of powerful, religious authorities*. In John 19:6, the writer specifies who he's talking about: "the chief priests and the officers." John, himself a Jew, is certainly not condemning all Jews.

Ultimately, the New Testament teaches that every sinner contributed to the death of Jesus - not a particular nation, race, or ethnic group. Jesus is the lamb who takes away the sins of *the world*. That includes Jew and Gentile, white and black, male and female. Each of us must respond to the horror of the crucifixion with a personal response of repentance. Who killed Jesus?

PART 2 LISTENING TO JESUS' SERMON

John's account of the life of Jesus is one of the most popular and easy-to-read books in the Bible. It contains the most famous verse in the Bible - a verse you may have learned as a small child - John 3:16. The book is simple enough that a grade-schooler can read it, yet it is so profound and thought-provoking that it has held the attention of the world's greatest theologians.

While the other gospels begin with Jesus' birth or with the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, John goes back much further - back to Creation, and even before. Just as the Bible begins with "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), so John begins:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1).

From the beginning, John wants us to know that everything that exists, does so by the power of this "Word":

All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all the people (John 1:3-4). *New Revised Standard Version*

Since this Word is light and life, we must know this Word in order to live, really live. To what is John referring when he uses "Word"? In verse 14, it becomes clear that this "Word" is none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God:

The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only son who came from the father, full of grace and truth.

Throughout the gospel, Jesus reveals himself as the living Word of God, the personal expression of God himself. He does this through a series of "signs." Signs are extremely important in John's Gospel. The word usually refers to something experienced by the senses (something that can be seen or heard or felt) that points to the existence of a divine power or divine presence. Sometimes these signs are miracles or wonders (healings and raising the dead), but sometimes these signs look very ordinary (Jesus washing the disciples' feet, for instance). Whether they appear miraculous or not, they reveal or point out the divine truth about Jesus and his heavenly origins and destiny. John's Gospel presents several major "signs." We encourage you to read each of these on your own:

- The water turned to wine (*John 2:1-11*)
- Healing of the official's son (*John 4:46-54*)
- Healing of the lame man at Bethsaida (*John 5:1-47*)
- Feeding the five thousand (*John 6:1-71*)
- The festival of booths or tabernacles (*John 7:2-52*)
- Healing of the man born blind (*John 9:1-4*)
- Raising of Lazarus from the dead (*John 11:1-53*)
- The towel, the cross, and resurrection (*John 13:1-20:31*)

This lesson focuses on the last of these great "signs" - the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. *The towel, the wash basin, the cross, and the empty tomb - these are the greatest signs of Jesus Christ.* If we "read" these signs properly, we will be transformed into believers. We will want to be born again.

Long before the crucifixion occurred, Jesus knew he would have to face the cross. He explained to Nicodemus early in the gospel:

No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven - the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (*John 3:13-16*).

To understand the sign of being "lifted up" we must take a quick excursion into the Old Testament. In the book of Numbers, the children of Israel were rebellious. For punishment, poisonous snakes were sent among the people. The people repented and asked for relief from the snakes. God instructed Moses to construct a sign - a brass serpent raised on a pole. When the people looked at this sign, they were healed of their snake bites and lived (*Numbers 21:4-9*). Jesus' point is clear in the light of *Numbers 19*. The Son of God will be raised up on a cross in order to bring spiritual healing to all who look to him in faith.

Jesus is not only "raised" up on a cross. He also is the divine King who "descends" to a life of lowliness. The eternal "Word of God" who existed with God the Father in heaven "in the beginning" (*John 1:1*) chose to come down to the human level. Not only that, he *chose* to live the life of the lowest servant. This is a "sign" of humility that many people cannot understand. Even the closest disciples, such as Peter, had great difficulty with it, as we shall see.

when Jesus, the Messiah and the King of Kings, takes the basin and the towel and begins to wash the Apostles' feet! Peter's objection is truly understandable: "You must never wash my feet!" he says.

Yet Jesus replies, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later on you will understand." The sign is not clear, but it will become clear in time. Probably, Jesus intended at least two different points.

First, and most obviously, Jesus was teaching a lesson in humility:

"You call me Teacher and Lord and you are right.... If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you may do as I have done."

Here is a clear lesson in what is often called the "imitation of Christ." Disciples are supposed to *act like and be like their masters*. We have been called to acts of service. Christianity is not about control, but relinquishment. The gospel is not about power, but the strength that comes through weakness, and the glory of living and dying for others.

A second meaning in the foot washing scene concerns *the cleansing or purification that Jesus brings to his disciples*. The foot washing foreshadows the death on the cross which brings the washing away of all our sins. As John said at the beginning of the gospel:

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Jesus' washing the disciples' feet is an amazing picture of what he does for everyone who believes on him.

John 18, 19, 20—Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion, Resurrection

John, the eyewitness, apostle and beloved friend of Jesus, tells the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection with great detail. This is one of the most deeply moving stories in human history. It is a story that should be carefully meditated on, and not just read for the bare facts. The old American spiritual expresses the proper spirit of how to approach these events:

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

The events are tragically moving. To see the Son of God humiliated, cursed, abused, and tortured is deeply shocking and affecting. But through it all, we must see that this is a story of incredible hope. This is a story of life and redemption. Just days before the crucifixion Jesus prepared his friends for

comes to reading spiritual signs - indicators of the presence of God in our world - many people are "illiterate". They need "tutoring" in order to read the signs right.

Jesus is asked by the hard of heart and the merely curious: "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" (John 2:18) Jesus replies with the naming of a sign (his coming death and resurrection) that they will probably not recognize:

"Destroy this temple," Jesus retorted, "and I will rebuild it again in three days!" To which the Jews replied, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and are you going to rebuild it in three days?" He was in fact, speaking about the temple of his own body, and when he was raised from the dead the disciples remembered what he had said to them and that made them believe both the scripture and what Jesus had said (John 2:19-22). *Phillips Translation*

In this little scene we get a brief picture of what happens throughout John's Gospel. Jesus presents a "sign," but the insincere and the hard-hearted misread it. Only people of faith get the point of the sign. Only people willing to turn to God can read the code of divine love which will be written broadly and clearly in all directions.

Early in the gospel, John the Baptist says, "Look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) In John's Gospel, many people look, but not everyone can see. If we look with the eyes of faith, we will confess with the Apostle Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" Apparently for the benefit of all of us who could not be present at the resurrection, Jesus talks about seeing and believing:

Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. (John 20:29)

John 13:1-17—The Sign of Humility and Cleansing

The scene in John 13:1-17 is reported only in John's Gospel. It is a deeply touching scene for it transpires only hours before Jesus is arrested and executed, and he knows it. This occasion is his last chance before the grueling ordeal to explain to his beloved disciples what it means to be a true disciple. Rather than use words, Jesus decides to dramatize his lesson in an unforgettable way.

In the Roman culture, which practiced slavery, the task of washing feet was carried out by slaves. It was considered a very lowly duty - so undignified that even Jewish servants were exempt from such a task. (Only "pagan" slaves would undertake such a menial task!) Imagine the surprise and consternation

In this lesson we have selected two of Jesus' signs which are closely connected. Both passages come from Jesus' last days on earth. One occurs during a supper with the disciples just before Passover. The other is the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus.

TEXT:

John 13:1-17, 18-20 (New International Version)

John 13:1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

2 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 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.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

John 18:1 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.

2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. 3 So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.

4 Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

5 "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) 6 When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

7 Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8 "I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." 9 This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

10 Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Maichus.)

11 Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

12 Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him 13 and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. 14 Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people.

15 Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, 16 but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

17 "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter,

He replied, "I am not."

18 It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

19 Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

20 "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. 21 Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

22 When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

23 "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" 24 Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.

25 As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, "You are not one of his disciples, are you?"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?"

27 Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

PART 3

BACKGROUND AND COMMENTARY

Theme Verse:

"Blessed are those who have not seen
and yet have believed."

The Gospel According to John - the 'Fourth Gospel' as it is sometimes called since it is the last one to be written and it appears last among the four gospels in the New Testament - is quite different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. While it agrees with the other gospels in all the main points, it chooses to tell some different episodes from the life of Jesus. John also chooses to organize and present the events in Jesus' life in an original way. For example, much of Jesus' life is built around a set of "signs" in Jesus' life.

We understand what signs are. They are pictures, symbols, or gestures that "signify". We live in a world of signs: a red light at an intersection, golden arches at the highway exit, a skull and crossbones on a bottle of chemicals, a kiss. We are pretty good at reading these "signs". But when it

disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

10 Then the disciples went back to their homes, 11 but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive

28 Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. 29 So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

30 "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

31 Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. 32 This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

33 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

34 "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

36 Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

37 "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."

38 "What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. 39 But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

40 They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

John 19:1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe 3 and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face.

4 Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." 5 When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

6 As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

7 The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

8 When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, 9 and he went back in-side the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. 10 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

11 Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.

12 From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

13 When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). 14 It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.

'Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

15 But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

16 Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. 17 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). 18 Here they crucified him, and with him two others - one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. 21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

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

23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

24 "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it."

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did.

25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

28 Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. 32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. 33 But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. 35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. 36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," 37 and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

38 Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. 39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. 40 Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. 41 At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. 42 Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

John 20:1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other