

IN THE
BEGINNING
WAS THE...

WORD

A STUDY THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

LESSON 13 – The Word is...THE BASIS OF SALVATION

FACILITATOR'S Note

MAIN POINTS THIS WEEK:

1. It is by Jesus' death that God brings His people salvation.
 - a. 1:29; 3:14–15; 6:51–58; 10:15; 11:50–52; 12:24; 15:13
2. God is sovereign in salvation.
 - a. 3:21; 5:21; 6:37–45, 64–65; 10:16, 26–30; 15:16; 17:2, 6, 9

The following lesson is designed to help class participants understand that God chose to bring about salvation for people through the death of His Son, and that God is sovereign in this manner of salvation. By God's will, all those who put their faith/trust in the crucified Jesus receive eternal life. And as God foreknew all those who would accept His gift of grace through faith in Jesus, God is sovereign throughout. It is difficult to grasp/reconcile the free will of man with the sovereignty of God. The thread of predestination runs throughout much of Scripture, especially in the verses from John's Gospel that are covered in today's lesson. Spend time today helping your class participants understand these concepts.

Remember, this semester we hope to provide material that will provide knowledge (HEAD); then ask questions that will bring us understanding (HEART); and then motivate participants to go and live the Word in the world and demonstrate Godly wisdom (HANDS). Help them with that today.

HEAD → HEART → HANDS

As always, we would encourage you to begin preparing for each lesson by digging into the Word and specifically the text for each of the weeks. **This week the texts are: 1:29; 3:14–15; 3:21; 5:21; 6:37–45, 51–58, 64–65; 10:15-16, 26–30; 11:50–52; 12:24; 15:13, 16; 17:2, 6, 9.** As you move through the Word, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is then that you should approach this lesson plan and use it (and others) only as a guide for the weeks to come. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

PRAYER

Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word.

FOCUS

- Understand that per God's decision, Jesus' death was necessary to bring salvation to people.
- Understand that by God's will, salvation (eternal life) is received by those who put their faith/trust in the crucified Christ.
- Understand that those who put their faith in Jesus, whom God foreknew would do so, belong to God and He gives them to Jesus that He may give them eternal life.

DISCUSSION STARTERS (OPTIONAL)

- What is salvation?
- Can we receive salvation in any other way than Jesus? Explain.
- Don't all religions basically lead to the same place?

KNOWLEDGE HEAD

From the Gospel of John

a) It is by Jesus' death that God brings His people salvation

- 1:29

- Key Points

- This verse occurs within John 1:29-34 which recounts the baptism of Jesus, at which John the Baptist recognized and testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.
- The term Lamb of God is special; it was not used in the ancient world but came into being as part of Christian vocabulary. It is not found elsewhere in the NT though Jesus is called The Lamb in Revelation.
- There is clear symbolism between Jesus, the "Lamb of God", and the "Passover Lamb" used in the Passover meal, as seen in Exodus 12:1-7; 12-13; 43, 46.
 - (12:1-7) ¹ *The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt,* ² *"This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb^[a] for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.*
 - (12:12-13) ¹² *On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.*
 - (12:43, 46) ⁴³ *The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover meal: ... ⁴⁶ "It must be eaten inside the house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones.*
- There is also clear identification of the "Lamb of God" with the lamb in Isaiah 53:
 - V. 7: *"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."*
 - The verses prior to this clearly show that the lamb was led to the slaughter to pay for our sins, vv. 4-6: *⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are*

healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- In these passages, John the Baptist tells us Jesus is the Lamb of God and the OT passages cited above clearly show that God brings salvation to people through the death of the lamb, namely Jesus.
- Contemporary Application
 - At the Passover event, death passed over only those people who had applied the blood of the lamb/goat to the top and sides of their home's door and were inside their home. How can we help people today understand that Jesus' death does not save them unless they have applied His blood to the door of their heart?
- 3:14-15
 - Key Points
 - These verses are taken from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus: ¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.
 - Jesus says that He must be raised up, speaking of His death by crucifixion, for the same reason that God had Moses mount the bronze snake on the pole: so that people, by belief, could be saved.
 - (Num. 21:6-9) ⁶Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." ⁹So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.
 - The raised bronze snake was an historical event, with a first and literal meaning, which symbolized another event with a second higher meaning.
 - The first and literal meaning was that to be spared from physical death, an afflicted person (one bitten) had to believe God's promise and simply look at the raised snake. If they did, they lived, and otherwise, they died.
 - The second higher meaning is that to be spared from eternal death, an afflicted person (a sinner) has to believe God's promise and look to (trust in) the crucified Christ. If they do, they live eternally, and otherwise, they die eternally.
 - Contemporary Application
 - Why do you think the Father required the Son to die by such horrendous means, being beaten so severely and then crucified? Why not a more merciful death? (see Isaiah 52:13-15)
- 6:51-58
 - Key Points
 - These passages occur within John's account of Jesus' interaction with people from the crowd of more than 5000 that He had earlier fed, and include His teaching, which most found too difficult to embrace, that He is the Bread of Life on which they must feed in order to receive salvation, otherwise, they would perish.

resurrection of Lazarus and during which they discussed how to get rid of (kill) Jesus: ⁴⁹Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." ⁵¹He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵²and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

- Caiaphas' prophecy
 - Like the others there, Caiaphas is likely concerned not with doing what is right but with saving the powers that he and his cohorts enjoy as members of the privileged Jewish class. His utterance, from his own point of view, likely means: Better that one man, no matter how innocent, should die than disruption in the status quo occur.
 - The second and higher/deeper meaning of his statement, from God's point of view, is that Jesus must die for the children of God, believers scattered throughout the world, to bring them together and make them members of one family. And if Jesus doesn't die, then all will perish eternally.

- 12:24

- Key Points

- This passage is part of a discussion with Jesus and the crowd, which included Jews and Greek proselytes and His disciples, during the Passover festival (His last one) following His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
- Referring to His approaching death: ²³Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.
- Jesus says that His death is necessary to bring forth life (eternal) for many.
 - The analogy of His life as a seed is clear: the seed falls to the ground and dies, taking root to spring up as a plant which will in turn drop more seeds, each of which in turn spring to life, and so the cycle continues with the ever-increasing production of life. On the other hand, if that initial seed doesn't die, then the potential growth cycle never occurs.
 - Through His death, eternal life will come to those who embrace Him, and through His work in each of their lives, others also will come to know Him, and so the ever-increasing cycle of the call/birth of believers in Christ continues.

- Contemporary Application

- True or False? When a person becomes a Christian, they (as a seed) also undergo a death by which life may come to many other seeds. Discuss.

- 15:13

- Key Points

- This passage occurs within the allegory of the Vine and the Branches in which Jesus compares Himself to the source vine from which every disciple/believer grows as a branch, and apart from which the disciple (branch) will certainly not grow and finally die.
- Jesus tells his disciples indirectly that He is going to give His life for them: ¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

- He is clearly referring to Himself, and His impending death is a certainty.
- While one can argue that laying down one's life for an enemy (which Jesus did) is an even greater act of love than that of laying down one's life for a friend, the argument is academic. Jesus is talking to His friends here and so makes the point that there is no greater demonstration of His love for them than to die for them.
- This passage does not clearly state that salvation comes via His death but that is understood from what is recorded in the chapters prior to Chapters 13-17 where His final conversations with His disciples, including the passage in view, are recounted.
- Contemporary Application
 - There have been many men and women who have sacrificed their lives for others. Is Jesus' sacrifice any greater than theirs? Discuss why or why not.

b) God is sovereign in salvation

- 3:21
 - Key Points
 - This verse is taken from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus: *²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.*
 - Jesus does not mean here that there are some people who by nature do what is right while others do not; salvation does not come by works or by nature.
 - Jesus already said to Nicodemus earlier that the only way to God is by rebirth; a new nature is needed, one from God, because the sinful nature is dead and cannot be changed (see vv. 5-6; 16-20).
 - The person Jesus has in mind in v. 21, then, is one who responds to the gospel and receives life in Christ. This person is one whom God has touched by His grace, and their good works are the clear result of God's gracious work in them.
 - Contemporary Application
 - How does a person's life show that they are someone who has come into the light?
- 5:21
 - Key Points
 - This passage is part of vv. 16-30, where Jesus discusses with the Jewish leaders, His relationship with the Father and the authority He was given by the Father to do the works in which He was engaged (e.g. healing on the Sabbath): *²¹For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.*
 - Jesus gives life to whom He is pleased to give it, i.e. to those whom He chooses, and He does this because that's what the Father does.
 - Jesus had already said earlier, in v. 19, that He does only/exactly what He sees the Father doing. As the Father, per His sovereignty, raises the dead and imparts life to those whom He is pleased to choose, so Jesus also does the same.

- Contemporary Application
 - There is a sense of predestination in the statements Jesus makes. Did God determine, prior to creation, who would be redeemed by faith in Jesus and who wouldn't? Does a person have a choice in the matter of accepting or rejecting Jesus? Discuss.
- 6:37-45, 64-65
 - Key Points
 - These passages occur within John's account of Jesus' interaction with the crowd of 5000-plus people that He had earlier fed, and include His teaching that He is the Bread of Life on which they must feed in order to receive eternal life, a teaching most found too difficult to embrace
 - In vv. 37-40, Jesus makes it clear that all those who come to Him, that is, who turn to Him in belief/faith, are those whom the Father, by His sovereignty, has given to Jesus. And for these, it is the Father's will that Jesus turn none of them away, that they be granted eternal life, and that Jesus raise them up (from physical death) at the last day.
 - In vv. 41-45, Jesus makes it clear that no one can come to Him unless the Father draws them.
 - It doesn't depend on just our own initiative; we are so dead in sin that we need the Father's help to hear His call to faith and come out of sin (e.g. Acts 16:14, Rom. 9:14-18).
 - It is part of the Father's will that He teach us Himself in our hearts (the exact passage that Jesus quotes – perhaps Isaiah 54:13 or Jer. 31:34 -- is unclear). The point is that those who hear the Father and accept His teaching do come to Jesus.
 - In vv. 64-65, Jesus indicates that some of His disciples – many were grumbling about His difficult teaching – did not believe, and the reason, He says, is simply that the Father has not enabled them.
 - This provides an explanation to the disciples (and us) for why some do not believe, even though they hear and see the same things as others who do believe.
 - It is impossible for a person to come to Christ without the Father granting them the grace to do so. A sinner, left to himself, prefers to remain in sin.
 - Contemporary Application
 - Do you think that there are people who want to believe but can't because the Father doesn't enable them to do so? Discuss.
- 10:16, 26-30
 - Key Points
 - Verse 16 is one of Jesus' statements within the allegory of the good shepherd which he told to some Pharisees: *¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*
 - The other sheep are a reference to Gentiles. In spite of the fact that most Jews thought they were God's only chosen and the Gentiles were entirely rejected, Jesus indicates that this is not true.

- Some sheep are Jews, some are Gentiles, and all are characterized by their desire to listen to Jesus and He will lead them all, as equal members of one family (see Eph .2:11-18).
 - It is the Father's sovereign choice to grant salvation to any person, Jew or Gentile, who puts their faith/trust in Jesus.
 - Verses 26-30 are found within Jesus' response to the Jews in Jerusalem during Hanukkah, who asked Him to state plainly whether or not He was the Messiah: *²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I given them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.*
 - Jesus says that these Jews who doubted/rejected Him, did so, in spite of all the evidence they'd already seen, because they are not His sheep.
 - Jesus' sheep are those who the Father, by His sovereign will, gives to Jesus, and these listen to Jesus and follow Him, and He gives them eternal life and protects/preserves them.
 - Those who are not Jesus' sheep, will not listen and will not believe (as discussed above in 6:37-45, 64-65).
 - Contemporary Application
 - If you are one of Jesus' sheep, He says no one can snatch you from His hand or His Father's hand. Is your salvation, then, guaranteed, i.e., is there anyway that you can lose the eternal life you've been promised? Discuss.
- 15:16
 - Key Points
 - This passage occurs within the allegory of the Vine and the Branches, discussed in part above, in which Jesus compares Himself to the source vine from which every disciple grows as a branch, and apart from which the disciple cannot live or grow: *¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.*
 - In spite of the fact that the disciples may think that they came to Christ on their own initiative, it is not true. He chose them. The choice was His; He is sovereign.
 - He not only *chose* them, He also *appointed* them their task to perform – to go and bear fruit that will last.
 - This fruit can mean personal growth but also certainly includes service/outreach leading to the conversion of others to Christ (hence the "to go and bear..."). He commanded this; it is not a choice (Matt 28:19-20).
 - The Spirit chooses the gift(s) we receive; it is His choice per His sovereignty, not ours (1 Cor. 12:7-11, esp. 11).

- Contemporary Application
 - Do you think Jesus' statement to the apostles that He chose them applies only to them, or do you think it is a general statement that applies to all believers today? Discuss
- 17:2, 6, 9
 - Key Points
 - These verses occur within Jesus' prayer that He offers when He is with His disciples, after Judas Iscariot had left to effect the betrayal following Jesus' final Passover meal.
 - In verse 2, Jesus says that the Father gave Him authority over all people so that Jesus would give eternal life to all those whom the Father gave to Him; i.e., eternal life is granted to those whom the Father, by His sovereignty, gives to Jesus.
 - In verse 6, Jesus, in praying for His disciples, emphasizes that they belong to the Father and the Father gave them to Jesus so that Jesus could reveal the Father to them – again, it is by God's sovereignty that the disciples received eternal life.
 - In verse 9, Jesus, in praying for His disciples again emphasizes that the disciples belong to the Father and that He gave them to Jesus. Their salvation, their role as apostles, they received per God's sovereign will.
 - Contemporary Application
 - What characterizes those who belong to the Father whom He gives to Christ, i.e., what is the difference between those who belong to the Father and those that don't?
 - What, if anything, can you do to help others be those who belong to the Father?

UNDERSTANDING HEART

- We have looked at several Scriptures that clearly show that it was God's plan/will that Jesus had to die to bring salvation to His people. Why is that an important message to share with others?
- How can we best communicate to someone that Jesus died for them personally, to give them the opportunity to be one of God's people?

WISDOM HANDS

- Think of someone in your circle of friends/family that needs a personal relationship with Jesus. What can you do to help them come to know that Jesus died for them personally and that His death only brings them salvation if they put their trust in Him?
- Start praying for them each day that God will use others and you to help them come to faith in the crucified Jesus.

PRAYER

End your time together with a prayer. Thank Him for His salvation given to us through His Son!

CLASS OUTLINE

"...but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:31) The Gospel of John was written so that those who read its message may believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God, THE CHRIST. The following outline holds the major themes expounded on in the Gospel of John in order that its readers may believe in Jesus and have eternal life. (Adapted from the "Key Themes" outline in the ESV Study Bible):

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (January 4)
2. THE WORD IS...
GOD (January 11)
 - a. Jesus is GOD
 - b. 1:1–2, 18; 5:17–18; 8:58–59; 10:30–33; 20:28
3. THE WORD IS...
BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD (January 18)
 - a. Jesus existed before the creation of all there is.
 - b. 1:1–2; 8:58; 17:5, 24
4. THE WORD IS...
OMNISCIENT (ALL KNOWING) (January 25)
 - a. Jesus has supernatural knowledge that only God can possess.
 - b. 1:48; 2:4, 19, 23–25; 3:14; 4:17–18; 6:51, 70; 8:28; 9:3; 10:15, 17–18; 11:4, 14; 12:24, 32; 13:10–11, 38; 21:18–19
5. THE WORD IS...
THE MESSIAH AND SON OF GOD (February 1)
 - a. Jesus is the promised Messiah and Son of God prophesied in Old Testament.
 - b. 1:36, 41, 49; 3:18; 4:25, 29; 5:25; 7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42; 9:22; 10:24, 36; 11:4, 27; 12:34; 19:7; 20:30–31
6. THE WORD IS...
THE "I AM" (February 8)
 - a. Jesus is the "I AM" from the Old Testament. He is Yahweh/Jehovah.
 - b. 4:26; 6:20, 35, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58; 9:5; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1; 18:5–6 (cf. Ex. 3:14–15; Isa. 41:4; 43:10–13, 25; 45:18; 51:12; 52:6)
7. THE WORD IS...
THE SON WHO WAS SENT BY AND REFLECTS THE FATHER (February 15)
 - a. Jesus was sent by God and reflects the very essence of the Father.
 - b. 3:17, 35–36; 5:19–26; 6:40; 8:35–36; 14:13; 17:1
8. THE WORD IS...
THE FULFILLMENT OF JEWISH FESTIVALS/INSTITUTIONS (February 22)
 - a. Jesus fulfills the Jewish festivals and institutions found in the Law (even the temple itself).
 - b. 1:29, 36; 2:14–22, esp. v. 21; 4:23–24; 8:12; 9:5; 19:14
9. THE WORD IS...
THE GIVER OF ETERNAL LIFE (March 1)
 - a. Jesus gives eternal life to those who believe in Him.
 - b. 1:4; 3:15–16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 26, 39–40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47–48, 51, 53–54, 68; 8:12; 10:10, 25, 28; 11:25; 12:25, 50; 14:6; 17:2–3; 20:31

10. THE WORD IS...

A MIRACLE WORKER (March 8)

- a. Jesus performs signs and wonders that demonstrate that He is the promised Messiah.
- b. 2:1–11, 13–22; 4:46–54; 5:1–15; 6:1–15; 9:1–41; 11:1–44

11. THE WORD IS...

TESTIFIED BY OTHERS TO BE THE MESSIAH (March 15)

- a. Witnesses testify that Jesus is the Messiah.
- b. 1:7–8, 15, 19, 32, 34; 3:11, 32–33; 4:39; 5:31–39; 8:14, 18; 10:25; 15:26–27; 18:37; 19:35; 21:24

12. THE WORD IS...

UNIFIED WITH FATHER AND SPIRIT IN THEIR WORK OF REVELATION AND REDEMPTION (March 22)

- a. Father, Son, and Spirit are united in their work.
- b. 14:17–18, 23, 26; 15:26; 20:21–22

13. THE WORD IS...

THE BASIS OF SALVATION (March 29)

- a. It is by Jesus' death that God brings His people salvation.
 - i. 1:29; 3:14–15; 6:51–58; 10:15; 11:50–52; 12:24; 15:13
- b. God is sovereign in salvation.
 - i. 3:21; 5:21; 6:37–45, 64–65; 10:16, 26–30; 15:16; 17:2, 6, 9

14. BELIEVERS MUST...

CONFESS AND BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH (April 12)

- a. Salvation is obtained by believing in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God.
 - i. 1:12; 3:15, 16; 5:24; 6:29, 35; 8:24; 11:25–27, 42; 12:44; 17:8, 21; 20:31
- b. The benefits of salvation can be experienced here and now (in this evil age), but will be fully known when He returns.
 - i. 3:18, 36; 4:23; 5:24; 6:39–40; 10:10, 26–29; 11:25–26

15. BELIEVERS MUST...

CONTINUE JESUS' WORK AND MISSION (April 19)

- a. Believers are called upon to continue the work of the Savior in order that all men may know and be saved.
- b. 4:38; 15:16; 17:18; 20:21–22

16. CONCLUSION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (April 26)