

# Epilogue: Knowing Jesus *and* His Word



---

## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *John 21; John 11:9, 10; John 8:42–44; John 4:46–54; 2 Tim. 3:16; John 15:1–11.*

**Memory Text:** “‘You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me’ ” (*John 5:39, NKJV*).

John's Gospel, like Mark's, ends with a meeting in Galilee. This final lesson on John deals with that meeting but integrates it with the theme of how we know Jesus and the Word of God—a concept that runs through the fourth Gospel.

Though they were with Jesus more than three years, the disciples were still greatly unprepared for the Crucifixion and Resurrection, even though Jesus had told them again and again what would happen.

Unfortunately, they didn't take Him at His word.

We today can be in danger of doing the same thing: hearing or even reading the Word of God but not listening to it, not abiding in it, and not obeying it. That is, not accepting it as the light that should guide our thoughts and actions. This, unfortunately, is where, perhaps unwittingly, too many Christians are.

In this, our last week in John, we will look at some of this Gospel's key points, which can help us move beyond the mere head knowledge of Jesus to, instead, knowing Him better and more closely abiding in Him and in His Word.

\* *Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 28.*

## Meeting in Galilee

**Read** John 21:1–19. What crucial truths are revealed here, especially about God’s grace—and human humility?

---

John 20 ends with the purpose of the book, which would be the logical place to conclude, but there is one more chapter. Chapter 21 begins with some of the disciples back in Galilee, with Peter suggesting a night on the lake. It looks as though old times have returned, and the disciples are back to their old trade, fishing. But they catch nothing that night.

In the morning, a mysterious stranger on the shore tells them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. They then catch so many fish that they cannot pull in the net. It was like the beginning of their ministry with Jesus (*see Luke 5:1–11*). John immediately recognizes Jesus and tells Peter, who immediately jumps in the water and swims ashore.

Jesus asks Peter three questions, all concerning love for his Master. Before the Crucifixion, Peter insisted that he would lay down his life for Jesus (*John 13:37*). That is when Jesus predicted his threefold denial (*John 13:38*). At this meeting in Galilee, Peter does not make himself the reference point but rather makes it Jesus: “‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you’ ” (*John 21:17, ESV*).

Some note that Jesus uses the verb *agapaō*, which means to love, in questioning Peter (except for the last time), and that Peter always responds with *phileō*, which means to love, but just as a friend. The implication is that Peter has not achieved the higher kind of love.

Actually, Peter’s response is focused on humility. With Peter’s failure ever before him, it is more likely that he humbly uses a “lower term,” daring not to claim too much for himself. And it is this humility that Jesus affirms, and which becomes crucial in restoring Peter to ministry. No question, humility is one of the greatest qualifications for ministry because the focus then becomes Jesus Christ and not self.

Peter’s restoration and role as leader in the early church is one of the strongest evidences that Jesus rose from the dead. It would be hard to explain Peter’s prominence if Jesus had not, in the presence of the other disciples, restored him to ministry.

**Why is humility so key in anyone seeking to know the Lord? In light of the Cross, what do any of us have to be proud of?**

---

## Keeping Your Eyes on Jesus

**Read** John 21:20–22. What question led Peter down a wrong path? How did Jesus straighten the path?

---

---

---

Jesus had just restored Peter to ministry and told him, “Follow me” (*John 21:19*). It was probably an actual physical following of Jesus down the beach. And that is because Peter turns and sees John following Jesus as well, and he inquires about John. “ ‘But Lord, what about this man?’ ” (*John 21:21, NKJV*).

In restoring Peter to ministry, Jesus had predicted Peter’s manner of death (*John 21:18*). It seems Peter was curious about John’s death, as well. Jesus redirects Peter’s attention instead to the issue of following Him, not worrying about what will happen to another disciple.

**Read** John 21:23–25. How was Jesus’ statement misunderstood? How did the apostle John correct that misunderstanding?

---

---

---

People misunderstood what Jesus meant when He said, “ ‘If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!’ ” (*John 21:22, ESV*). They thought it meant that Jesus would come back before John died. As time passed and John grew old, it would become a crisis if he were to die (which, of course, he did) and Jesus had not returned. John corrects this misconception by indicating that it was a matter of Jesus’ will, not a prophecy of what *would* happen.

The idea of focusing on Jesus, instead of on other people, is a powerful lead into the rest of the week’s lesson. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is our Savior. People will inevitably disappoint you, perhaps even hurt you, as well.

The truths covered for Tuesday through Thursday will pick up on the theme of understanding the Word of God, with the aim of knowing and following Jesus, who alone should be our Master and Guide—regardless of the help, counsel, and guidance that others might give us.

**How often have others, whom you might have looked up to, disappointed you? What lessons, however hard, did you learn from that experience?**

## Light and Darkness

**Read** John 1:4–10; John 3:19–21; John 5:35; John 8:12; John 9:5; John 11:9, 10; and John 12:35. What great contrast is present here, and why is this contrast so foundational to understanding truth?

---

---

---

The world is in darkness; it shuns the light and cannot, on its own, find its way to the true God, the personal God of Creation, revelation, and Redemption.

“Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine. ‘It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?’ Job 11:8. Only the spirit of adoption can reveal to us the deep things of God, which ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.’ ‘God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 412.

Only Jesus Christ “has declared Him,” the Father (*John 1:18, NKJV*). The Greek verb is *exēgeomai*, which means “to interpret,” “explain,” or “exposit.” John presents Jesus as the heavenly Messenger, the One who explains what it means to know God. Only through Jesus can we truly know God.

**Read** John 8:42–44. How does Jesus describe the false foundation on which the religious leaders of Israel had based their faith?

---

---

---

Those who do not stand in the truth speak from their own resources. They “see” the meaning of a text only from a human perspective. By contrast, we must accept that Christ is the light of the world and follow Him in our interpretation of His Word. In contrast, the devil speaks from “his own resources” (*John 8:44, NKJV*). If we are not careful and are not surrendered in faith and obedience to God, we are in danger of doing the same thing: reading the text based only on our own desires, wants, and perspectives, which is much easier to do than we might realize.

**How do you respond to truths that “step on your toes,” as opposed to how you *should* respond to those truths?**

---

## Theology From “Above” or From “Below”

**Read** John 4:46–54. What problem brought the official to Jesus, and what was the real underlying issue here?

---

This man came to Jesus, the Light of the world, but he had made up his mind to believe only if Jesus healed his child. We could say this man’s theology was a “theology from below.” Theology from below sets rules and standards for God and His Word. Human ideas, as flawed and as limited and as subjective as they are, become the final authority on how people interpret the Word of God. What a dangerous trap to fall into!

Theology “from above,” in contrast, responds by faith, with belief in God and His Word first (*John 4:48; John 6:14, 15; 2 Tim. 3:16*). When the Bible is accepted by faith, it becomes its own interpreter. The worldview of Scripture, rather than the philosophy of the age, is the guide to understanding and interpreting Scripture. Human views must be subjected and subservient to the Word of God, and not the other way around.

We must believe the words of Scripture if we are to believe the words of Jesus (*John 5:46, 47*). “ ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed’ ” (*John 8:31, NKJV*). If we doubt God’s Word, His Word cannot abide in us (*John 5:38*). “ ‘He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak’ ” (*John 12:48, 49, NKJV*).

To hear God’s Word is more than a passive intake of information. It means also to do God’s will. And this is the active response to hearing the Word. “ ‘If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority’ ” (*John 7:17, NKJV*).

And this hearing, and doing, of God’s Word is an expression of love for Him. “ ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him’ ” (*John 14:23, NKJV*).

**What is the relationship between our love for Jesus and obedience? Why is any kind of “obedience” not based on love in danger of being legalism?**

---

## Abiding in Jesus

**Read** John 12:32. In what ways does this striking statement describe the authority of Jesus Christ?

---

---

---

As we have seen throughout this quarter's lessons, the Gospel of John draws us to Jesus, but only if we are willing to know God and to do His will. Throughout John's Gospel, people who encounter Jesus either accept the light and grow or reject the light and become blind. Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the royal official, the man at the pool of Bethesda, the 5,000 fed loaves and fishes, Jesus' brothers, the religious leaders, the man born blind, Mary and Martha, Pilate—all encountered Jesus and made choices about the truth and light He brought.

Theology from below begins with human argumentation to determine and examine the existence and nature of God. The human perspective—flawed, fallen, and prejudiced—takes precedence over the Divine, holy, perfect, and omniscient. Theology from below is guaranteed to lead people astray, as it has done in the past and will do in the future (*see Rev. 14:1–12*), when human wisdom, seeking to supersede the Divine, will attempt to force false worship upon the world.

**Read** John 15:1–11. What is the secret of spiritual growth and health?

---

---

---

The secret is to stay connected to Jesus. He is the Word of God, the Bread of Life, the Light of the world, the Door of the sheep, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the True Vine.

The Members of the Godhead and Their Word, the Bible, are like magnets. If not resisted, they will draw us to them. “The voice of God is speaking to us through his word, and there are many voices that we will hear; but Christ has said we should beware of them who will say, Here is Christ or there is Christ. Then how shall we know that they have not the truth, unless we bring everything to the Scriptures?”—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 3, 1888. And then, we must surrender our own views to those presented in the Word of God.

**Further Thought:** God’s perspective is vastly different from that of humans. God shares His perspective with us through His Word, the Bible, under the power of the Holy Spirit. It is our choice whether we wish to walk in darkness or accept the light coming from Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word.

Integral to this choice is our own personal surrender to Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Redeemer of humanity. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God the Father has revealed to us—in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—the depth of His love. And we know about Jesus because His life, death, and resurrection have been recorded in the Word of God.

“The angels of God are ever passing from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth. The miracles of Christ for the afflicted and suffering were wrought by the power of God through the ministration of the angels. And it is through Christ, by the ministration of His heavenly messengers, that every blessing comes from God to us. In taking upon Himself humanity, our Saviour unites His interests with those of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam, while through His divinity He grasps the throne of God. And thus Christ is the medium of communication of men with God, and of God with men.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 143.

### Discussion Question:

- ❶ Of all the stories in the book of John, which one speaks the loudest to you about the love and character of God? Share with your class why you find that story so compelling.
- ❷ In practical terms, how should one go about the search for truth?
- ❸ Why is it usually difficult to lay aside self as the arbiter of truth? Can we ever fully do it, or will our humanity, to some degree, still impact how we view the Scriptures? Why must we recognize this fact, and how does humility come in to help us surrender our prejudices to the Word of God?
- ❹ The history of Western Christianity is filled with horrific examples of what happens when the Word of God is made subject to the politics and prejudices of humans. What are some of those examples, and what lesson can we learn from them today about just how dangerous it is when human perspectives become the dominant filter to “interpret” the Bible?
- ❺ Summarize in your own words the big picture of the Gospel of John. What is its central message for us today?

# The Key to an Alaskan Village

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY

Mission pilot Jim Kincaid found it hard work to fly from remote village to remote village in the U.S. state of Alaska. Taking off and landing in the bush was the easy part. Finding Alaska Native hearts who were receptive to the gospel message was more challenging.

It looked like trouble when Jim landed his small plane at a settlement about 150 miles north of Fairbanks. He was flying literature evangelists from village to village to sell Bibles and other Christian literature. As he parked, all-terrain vehicles swarmed around the plane. The occupants were very unwelcoming.

“Who are you?” one said.

“What are you doing there?” said another.

At that moment, Jim remembered a name. A man from the village had attended one or two evangelistic meetings that Jim had led in Fairbanks sometime earlier. Jim turned to the village gatekeepers.

“Is Robert Frank in town?” he asked.

Immediately, their expressions changed. Angry looks gave way to curiosity and then hospitality.

“Oh, you know Robert Frank?” said one.

“We will take you to see him!” said another.

Jim was taken to visit Robert. It was like he had the key to the village.

Robert was eating a meal when Jim arrived, and unfortunately didn’t immediately recognize the pilot. Jim had to remind him about how and why they knew each other. But then Robert remembered, and he was very cordial. He offered Jim a piece of fresh bear meat.

And so it was that Jim and the literature evangelists gained entry into a new village that otherwise would have been out of reach. All it had taken was knowing someone’s name.

Jesus also knows people’s names. Jesus said that He, the Good Shepherd, “calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (*John 10:3, NKJV*).

If Jesus knows names, might it also be a good for His followers to follow His example?



“Knowing someone in the village, even if it is just knowing the name of a person in the village, can give you rapport with an entire village,” Jim said. “It’s like in any culture. If you remember someone’s name, it goes a long way.”

---

*Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help to open a center of influence for Alaska Natives in Bethel, Alaska. Thank you for planning a generous offering this Sabbath.*



The entire Bible testifies to the fact that God is love (*1 John 4:8, 16*). Love is at the core of who God is, at the core of everything that we believe, and should be at the core of everything we do. And how we understand God's love has massive implications for our faith and practice.

God's love is far greater than we might think. God's love as depicted in Scripture is far superior to the ideas that pass for "love" in much of our world today. In this quarter's study, entitled *God's Love and Justice*, by John Peckham, we will look more closely at some of the most prominent and beautiful aspects of God's love, which are revealed in the Bible.

And, as we continue on, we will see how divine love and justice are inextricably connected. The God of the Bible loves justice (*see, for example, Isa. 61:8*). And, as the Bible portrays them, divine love and justice go together such that you cannot have one without the other.

The God of the Bible, who is love, is often portrayed throughout Scripture as brokenhearted and grieved by love rejected and love lost. The entire story of Scripture is about what God has done and is doing to restore love to every corner and crevice of the universe. This and much more is the topic of this quarter's lessons.

## Lesson 1—God Loves Freely

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Beyond Reasonable Expectations** (*Exod. 33:19*)

MONDAY: **Unrequited Love** (*Hos. 14:1–4*)

TUESDAY: **Love Freely Given** (*John 17:24*)

WEDNESDAY: **Many Are Called but Few Are Chosen** (*Matt. 22:1–14*)

THURSDAY: **Crucified for Us** (*John 10:17, 18*)

**Memory Text**—*Hosea 14:4, NKJV*

**Sabbath Gem:** The ultimate question that God poses to each one of us in our time and place is, Do you love Me? Everything depends on our answer to that question.

## Lesson 2—Covenantal Love

### The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The Everlasting Love of God** (*Ps. 33:5, Ps. 145:9*)

MONDAY: **Covenantal Love** (*Deut. 7:6–9*)

TUESDAY: **Conditional Relationship** (*John 14:21, NKJV*)

WEDNESDAY: **Mercy Forfeited** (*Matt. 18:23–35*)

THURSDAY: **You Have Freely Received; Freely Give** (*John 15:12*)

**Memory Text**—*John 14:23, NKJV*

**Sabbath Gem:** God's love is not unilateral but deeply relational, in that it makes a profound difference to God whether or not humans reflect His love back to Him and to others.

**Lessons for People Who Are Legally Blind** The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free in braille, on MP3 disc, and via online download to people who are legally blind and individuals who cannot hold or focus on ink print. Contact Christian Record Services, Inc., PO Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097. Phone: 402-488-0981, option 3; email: [services@christianrecord.org](mailto:services@christianrecord.org); website: [www.christianrecord.org](http://www.christianrecord.org).