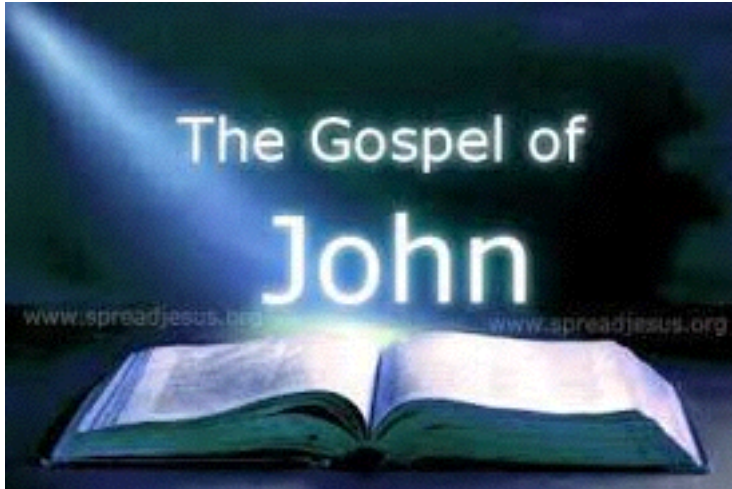


GEMS OF TRUTH

NUMBER 16

November 26, 2014



FROM THE EDITOR

The last ten chapters of the Gospel of John are in the setting of what is often called “holy week” which refers to the last week that Jesus spent on this earth before His death and resurrection. The teachings in these chapters are not developed to fully anywhere else in the entire Bible and deserve our very prayerful and frequent study. Such themes as the

Holy Spirit in the role of the Comforter, the command to love one another, the intercessory prayer of Jesus for His followers, some of the details of the trial of Jesus, and His post resurrection appearances are indeed very special and unique. In my very brief GEMS in this issue I have touched on just a few highlights to bless you and hopefully whet your appetite to dig deeper into the treasures to be found in this most amazing Gospel of John. TD

If you wish to be on my email list or send some comments contact me as below:

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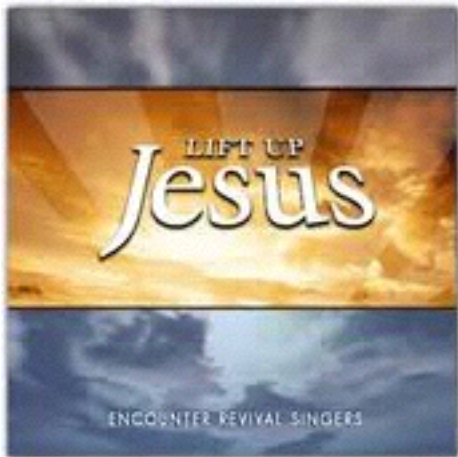
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LIFT UP THE SAVIOR

John 12:31-32 Amplified Bible (AMP)

31 Now the judgment (crisis) of this world is coming on [sentence is now being passed on this world]. Now the ruler (evil genius, prince) of this world shall be cast out (expelled).

32 And I, if and when I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw and attract all men [Gentiles as well as Jews] to Myself.

Jesus embraced the whole world in His saving work and those who accept Him are judged as righteous in Him and pass from death unto eternal (resurrection) life. Everything needed for time and eternity is freely given to those who believe. The prince of this world was utterly defeated (made ineffective) in the work of Jesus Christ. Satan cannot touch those who trust in the Savior for in Him they are always victorious. Believers dwell in the New Jerusalem which indeed has come down to earth and in that city they are secure from the enemy's attacks. When Jesus is lifted up He will "draw and attract all men" to Himself. How do we lift Him up? Yes, sometimes by words but mostly by reflecting His character to others. People need to see His love and compassion lived out in us and those who have open hearts will be attracted to the Savior through our godly example. Those whose hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin may reject our witness and sometimes try to do us harm but they can never take away that resurrection life which is ours for it is safe and secure for eternity. Each day we can pray, "Lord what will you have me to do this day to bless others and to glorify your name?" When we do this our life will be a simple but very effective expression of the Savior's love and people will desire to join us in serving Him.

HOW EVERYONE WILL KNOW

John 13:34-35 Common English Bible (CEB)

34 “I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. 35 This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other.”

I've thought about these verses so many times and have asked myself, "How could we have missed it?" It sounds so simple, "This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other." For centuries Christians have fought among themselves over doctrinal beliefs or how the church should be governed instead of loving one another. In many cases certain doctrinal distinctives have been used to identify those who feel superior to others. Even those who claim to be free from such things have often failed to love one another fervently. The command to "love your neighbor" was found in the Law of Moses so it was not new in the sense that it was never heard of before (see Leviticus 19:9, 18). What was new was the part "Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other." In the immediate context of the command to love one another here we have the Savior doing the work of a lowly servant in washing the disciples' feet. In Jesus we have a condescending, sacrificial kind of love that had never been revealed in such fulness before (see John 15:12-13). His expression of love is an example for us to follow (John 13:15). If we are giving our primary attention to beliefs of some kind, even those that seem better than others, we could be missing out on what being a true Christian is all about. I strive for doctrinal correctness but at the same time increasingly realize that unless my daily life is truly reflecting the love of the Savior I have really missed everything. Because I do indeed take my beliefs seriously this is especially an area that I need to carefully watch. The way we treat others is the ultimate test of the genuineness of our faith journey (see Matthew 25:31-46).





ANOTHER COMFORTER

John 14:16 Amplified Bible (AMP)

16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, and Standby), that He may remain with you forever—

The gift of the Holy Spirit enables us to experience Jesus more fully than when He was physically present on the earth. The Scriptures affirm that Jesus is at the right hand of the

Father as our High Priest. That is the central theme of the Book of Hebrews. Through the Holy Spirit He is close beside us at all times. So in that sense He never really left (see Matthew 28:20). In the gift of the Spirit we have “another Comforter” and “Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, and Standby.” The Greek word “paraclete” means one who is right along beside us, never failing to meet every human need. One English word is not sufficient to translate “paraclete” as the depth of this gift is really beyond words to describe. The topic of the Holy Spirit has historically been much neglected in Christianity but in recent times has come more to the forefront.

If Jesus had remained in the physical realm His presence would have been limited but now He is everywhere, universally and always available to all of us wherever we are.

Satan is bound. This is indeed good news. He cannot take away our Savior nor stop His work in our individual lives or the spread of His gospel throughout the world. We have a Savior that is closer than we could ever begin to imagine and He does indeed hear the cry of our hearts and knows more than we do what we need at any given time.

There are good ethical teachings in the many world philosophies, religions and self help programs but no Savior such as we have in Jesus. I’m thankful that I’m not abandoned to my human efforts to become righteous and to live for the glory of God each day (see Hebrews 4:14-16).

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

John 15:26-27 New Living Translation
(NLT)

26 “But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. 27 And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.”



The Holy Spirit testifies of and points us to Jesus our Savior and the testimony of our life should glorify Him. We do not seek to glorify ourself or make ourself the center of attention. It is fitting at times to testify of what the Savior has done in our life, not to draw attention to ourselves, but rather to His power and grace. The gospel is not about human beings but about Jesus—what He has done, is doing, and will continue to do (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-5). We should be wary of those who claim to be His messengers and keep drawing attention either to themselves or to some organization which supposedly has THE truth and the answers to all of the most important questions about life and eternity. There is an element in human nature that desperately wants to follow leaders and organizations. The reasoning goes like this: “Follow this leader or this organization and everything will be taken care of. You won’t need to really think much for yourself anymore. Just continue to be a good follower and become firmly entrenched in certain beliefs and practices.”

This psychology is characteristic of all cults and unfortunately millions are deceived by it. If the foundation of our faith is built on anything other than Jesus Christ and His saving work we are building on shifting sand which will be washed away when the trials of life come and they will indeed come (see Matthew 7:24-27; John 14:5-6; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 2:19). It is only as we abide in the Savior and trust in Him that we can be victorious through all the temptations and trials of this present life. Without Him we can do nothing and with Him we can do all things (see John 15:1-6; Philippians 4:13). In Him we are always overcomers, even when we think we are not doing so well (see 1 John 5:4). He is our righteousness and our hope is not in how well we are doing but in what He has done for us in His redemptive work on our behalf (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). Pick up your Bible and ponder the Bible verses suggested above and you will be greatly strengthened in your walk with Jesus.

“Security is not found in the absence of danger, but in the presence of Jesus.” — John Eldredge



THE PEACE THAT JESUS GIVES

John 16:33 Amplified Bible (AMP)

33 I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.]

Our world is indeed very troubled and the news is dominated by the negative. In the midst of all of this turmoil believers have a refuge in Jesus Christ that nothing can harm, dilute, or take away (see Romans 8:31-39). He has conquered the world with all of its rebellion against the Kingdom of God and all of those who believe are embraced in that victory (see 1 Corinthians 15:57). We are not promised freedom from tribulations and trials in this present life but have the assurance of peace and confidence in the midst of them. We cannot experience this peace while we allow ourselves to be preoccupied with what the media continually displays. If we give the negative more time and attention than we do to communion with God we are squandering the wonderful gift of peace and shall suffer accordingly. The way we spend our money and use our time indicates what is most important to us. If we fail to build a foundation in God we shall not be prepared to meet the tests and temptations that come each day. Jesus confronted the devil in the wilderness with "It is written." We cannot follow His example unless our minds are continually fortified with truth.

SENT INTO THE WORLD

John 17:15-18 New International Version (NIV)

15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.



The expression “the world” has various meanings in the Bible such as the physical world or realm of matter that is around us, the “land” referring specifically to the known world at the time of Christ, worldly affairs, the inhabitants of the world, or in a general way to human beings who live in ignorance and rebellion against God. The context must always be carefully looked at and these meanings can overlap as well. Jesus spent much time alone in prayer and at times took His disciples into a quiet place apart from the masses for instruction and spiritual renewal (see Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:31).

However, His life was not lived in isolation from the needs of humanity but rather in healing, teaching, and preaching (see Matthew 4:23). As followers of Jesus we are to be involved in the world in ways that we are called to minister and at the same time not be “of the world.” If we allow ourselves to think, act, and believe as popular culture would indicate we are choosing to be robbed of the spiritual power that we need to make a difference. How can we avoid being drawn into the thinking of a world that is dominated by ignorance, fear, self-centeredness and opposition to the principles of God’s Kingdom? The answer is clearly stated in the text: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (verse 17). Unless the truth of God is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit and becomes the center of our life we are unprepared to be sent into the world to bring hope and healing. We need to earnestly watch and pray everyday to truly experience being IN the world but not OF the world. Especially we need to be praying for that spiritual discernment to enable us to be effective instruments for God to use for His honor and glory.

MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD



John 18:36 New King James Version (NKJV)

36 Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

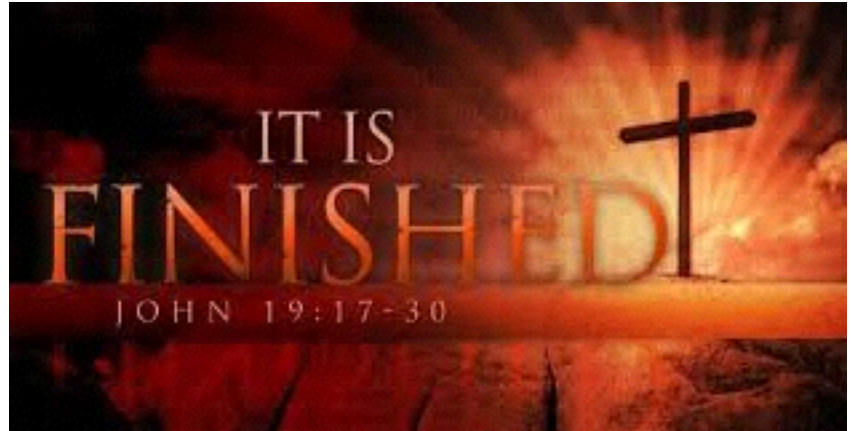
The Kingdom of God does not advance and evil is not really overcome through fighting and warfare as the world practices them (see 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Evil was overcome in the truest sense of the word when Jesus died on the cross which was the method of execution of the worst criminals as practiced in the Roman world. To His followers this looked like total defeat. Their expectations of a Messiah who would conquer the Romans and set up an earthly kingdom were totally destroyed. None of us could begin to imagine the kind of disappointment that the followers of Jesus experienced. This moment when things looked the darkest was the pivotal point in the history of the human race. In our personal lives and in the larger world there are apparent evils on every hand. Human methods of warfare do at times seem to conquer a certain evil but another one, sometimes even worse, arises and it goes on and on. The followers of Christ are privileged to overcome evil in whatever form it may appear by using the spiritual weapons that God has provided which the Bible describes as love in its many facets and ways of expressing itself. The temptation is always there to use some kind of human methods to overcome a particular evil and we all need to be more aware of this. As we learn to lean fully upon the Savior in His ultimate victory over evil we shall indeed see healing in seemingly hopeless situations. We are privileged to pray at all times and cast our burdens upon the Lord and He will go before us and mountains of seemingly unresolvable problems will be removed and our way made plain (see Psalm 55:22; Isaiah 40:4; 1 Peter 5:7)

IT IS FINISHED

John 19:30 English Standard

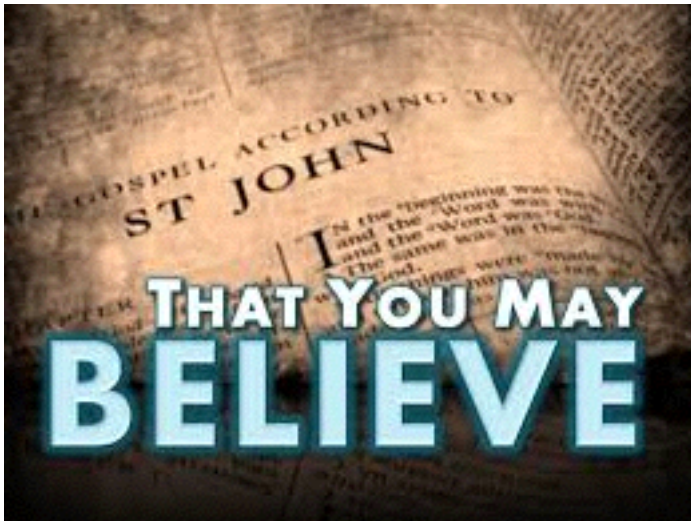
Version (ESV)

30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.



I believe that when Jesus said “It is finished” as He was dying on the cross that this embraces the entire “Christ event” which consists of His virgin birth, perfect life, atoning death on the cross, life giving resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father where He ministers forever as our great High Priest in the holy of holies. We all are embraced in this complete plan of redemption from the nightmare of sin and death which entered through the sin of Adam. All that was lost in the first Adam is restored in Jesus, the last Adam (see Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:22). The word “finish” as defined in the dictionary includes such things as reaching, completing or bringing to an end a certain goal or objective or sometimes destroying something. All of the hopes of God’s people were fulfilled in Messiah Jesus and nothing can be added to His finished work.

We need to understand more fully what the “finished” work of redemption really means to us personally and how we can apply it. In Jesus Christ we have a full and complete redemption from sin and its power is utterly broken. Satan is utterly defeated, rendered ineffective, and has no power over us unless we choose to either neglect or give away the power that has been given to us in the finished work of Jesus. When we choose to neglect that which is provided for us by the grace of God it is tantamount to rejecting it. If Satan has been defeated then why is there still so much sin and suffering in the world? The answer (in part anyway) is simply that most of the world chooses to live in darkness instead of in the light of the gospel and thus we see a world which is operating at a very dysfunctional level. Even many who claim to be children of light allow themselves to be blinded by the popular culture of those who choose darkness and thus largely disconnect themselves from the power that is in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our privilege as believers to enter into the full benefits of our divine heritage as provided in the gospel. Doing this is, of course, a process of daily growth in grace. We can only advance one step at a time as more light opens to our understanding. However, unless we are very intentional in our spiritual journey we shall default to the darkness of the world.



WHY THE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN

John 20:31 New Living Translation (NLT)

31 But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.

The words quoted above apply specifically to the Gospel of John but they summarize well

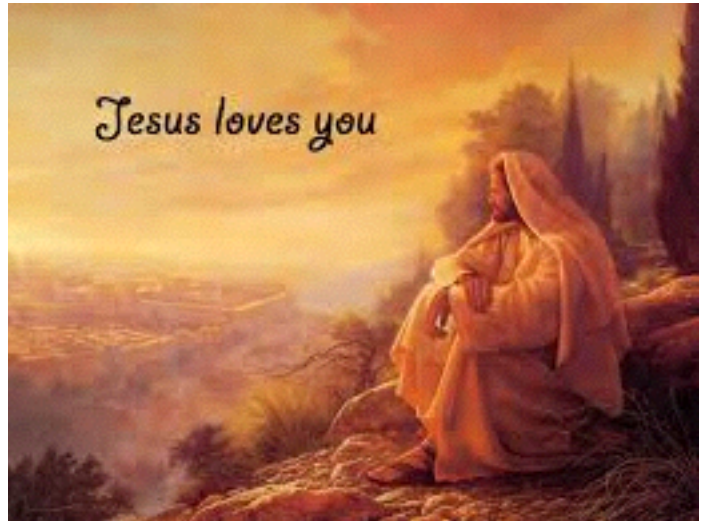
the essential purpose of the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments. In another place Jesus, referring to the OT Scriptures, said that their purpose was to testify of Him (see John 5:39-40). The mistake that the chosen people of His time made is the same one that many Christians often repeat, i.e., overlooking the main purpose of the Bible which is to bring us to faith in Jesus Christ and to new life “by the power of His name.”

There are indeed many principles of practical everyday living in the Scriptures but these must be applied from a Christ-centered perspective or they can degenerate into legalistic rules and regulations which often do more harm than good. Endless speculations about things that are not clearly revealed have often obscured the real purpose of the Scriptures (see Deuteronomy 29:29). Those who displace Jesus and His gospel with other things are manifesting the spirit of the antichrist which really means “in place of” Christ. The book of Revelation is supposed to be a “revelation of Jesus Christ” but nearly all commentaries and articles written on that book contain almost nothing that really exalts Jesus Christ and His saving work as “the Lamb of God.” Foolish interpretations about the “end times” which incite fear and exalt some imagined future antichrist are very popular. All belief systems that don’t have as their central focus Christ and Him crucified are ignoring the main point of the Scriptures (see 1 Corinthians 2:2; 15:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17). Jesus is still the Savior of the world and that good news should be the top priority of all truly Christian ministry (see John 4:39, 42; Acts 4:12; 1 John 4:14). If we lose sight of this we have “lost it all.” No other world religion or philosophy has a savior or any clear teaching about the grace of God (see Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 2:11). They are all based upon human efforts and finding salvation (wholeness, healing) through human works. They are all very “me centered”. The gospel is all about Jesus Christ and His finished work and not “about me” (see Galatians 2:20).

THEY THREW THE NET OUT

John 21:4-6 Good News Translation (GNT)

4 As the sun was rising, Jesus stood at the water's edge, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Then he asked them, "Young men, haven't you caught anything?"



"Not a thing," they answered.

6 He said to them, "Throw your net out on the right side of the boat, and you will catch some." So they threw the net out and could not pull it back in, because they had caught so many fish.

Jesus was ever thoughtful of the temporal needs of others and so He asked His disciples how things were going in their everyday occupation. Be assured that whatever your situation in life the Savior is interested in being there to help you if you open your heart and give Him a chance. Jesus gave the disciples specific directions which they needed to follow exactly. He told them to cast their net "on the right side of the boat," rather than speaking in a more general way. When they acted upon His word they experienced abundance. Sometimes we need to listen to His voice to us personally and follow it exactly to receive the needed blessing. Perhaps "the right side" could mean that we may need to change our usual ways of thinking and doing things to be more in harmony with God's will. To cast out our net could mean a greater trust and commitment to follow the Savior than we have experienced thus far. We often block abundance by having narrow vision and clinging to our own way. The most important lesson from this passage is the personal interest of the Savior in people and in meeting them right where they are. We would do well to follow His example and be more sensitive to the needs of others and how we might help.

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