

The Gospel of John

John 11:55 – 17:26

The Book of Glory: Jesus Preparation of the Messianic Community and his Passion (11:55-20:31)

We have reached a transition section of the Gospel of John. The turning point is dramatic in the Gospel.

The Book of Signs comes to a close with the most profound and glorious sign of raising of a three-day dead Lazarus back to life. Many of those who witnessed this sign “believed in Jesus” However, the more Jesus glory was on display, the more the corrupt Jewish leadership purposed to bring resolution.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. –John 11:47-53

Things have reached a climactic point of no return and “the Jesus question” must be resolved one way or another for everyone, and so the Gospel must move to its conclusion. While the Jewish leadership may believe they are solving the Jesus problem with their plans, the reader is informed that it is the Divine plan they are fulfilling. The stage is set for John’s Book of Glory. In this next section of the Gospel, the focus turns to the preparations for Jesus’ passion and his death on the Cross.

Remember, the structure of the Gospel of John is as follows³⁴:

- **Prologue: The Word made Flesh (1:1-18)**
- **The Book of Signs: The Signs of the Messiah (1:19-11:54)**
- **The Book of Glory: Jesus Preparation of the Messianic Community and his Passion (11:55-20:31)**
- **Epilogue: Witnesses to Glory: Resurrection and Witness (21:1-25)**

³⁴ Adapted from the outline by Andreas Kostenberger, John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2004) pgs. 10-11.

The Book of Glory

John 12-20

Preparations for Glory	John 12
The New Passover	John 13
The Farewell Discourse	John 14-16
The High Priestly Prayer	John 17
The Passion: Betrayal, Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion and Burial	John 18-19
The Resurrection	John 20

Preparations for Glory (12)

The Anointing for Burial

Jesus retreats to Bethany where he dined with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Mary had intentionally purchased an expensive perfumed ointment and began to anoint Jesus feet with the “pure nard” and her hair. The entire home was filled with the beautiful aroma of Mary’s extravagant love. However, Judas (the soon-to-be betrayer) objects on pious grounds of serving the poor. Jesus explains that Mary has done a correct action.

Jesus said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.” –John 12:7-8

The reader of the Gospel should now begin to understand that Jesus is going to Jerusalem with one purpose—to die.

The Triumphal Entry

Jesus entry in triumph into Jerusalem is thus more poignant for the reader, even though the disciples in the story still do not see the glory of the Cross (12:16). Jesus crucifixion is a triumph over evil and sin and an exaltation of Jesus as Messiah. Ironically, the exaggerated fears of the Pharisees would be realized.

So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

While the phrase “the world has gone after him” was a common Jewish hyperbolic phrase (cf John 21:25; Acts 17:6; 19:35; Col. 1:6) But in this case, it was not hyperbole.

Sir, we wish to see Jesus

The disciples are immediately approached with “Greeks” who desire to “see Jesus”. This becomes the occasion for Jesus to explain to the disciples that the “hour” of glorification of the Son of Man has finally arrived. Paradoxically, glory manifests in death. Like a grain of wheat that dies in order to produce an abundance of fruit. While the fruit of the glory is wonderful, the dying is troubling.

Jesus taught his disciples:

*Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.
And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.
—John 12:31-33*

The reader is told that by “lifted up” Jesus was indicating the type of death he would die. Jesus glorification would divide all of humanity into two groups: believers and unbelievers.

Unbelievers will reject the glory of the Son of Man because they love “the glory that comes from man more than God.” (12:43) Believers recognize that in the person of Jesus they are seeing the glory of God the Father. Belief in and obedience to the glory of Jesus is eternal life. (12:50)

The New Passover (13)

The Foot Washing (13:1-20)

The washing of the disciple’s feet serves to dramatically illustrate what it means to believe in Jesus. Belief is about having the humility to receive the grace of God offered through the service of the Son of God. Jesus’ humility in taking the role of a slave points dramatically to his service on the cross. (cf. Phil 2:7-8)

Peter receives a lesson in being served by his master. His pride would prevent him from receiving. But as Jesus taught Peter: “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” (13:8) Jesus is offering grace and salvation, but it must be humbly received in order to be effective. Once a disciple is a recipient of grace, he must give it. The next lesson for the disciples is to live a life under grace. Jesus asks,

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 also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.—John 13:14-16

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

—Philippians 2:5-8

Have you received the washing from Jesus by humbly accepting his salvation offered on the cross?

The Farewell Discourse (14-16)

Jesus' last teachings with the disciples are recorded in greater detail in John's Gospel than the synoptic Gospels. John takes three entire chapters to provide some of the most rich and profound teaching by Jesus in all of the New Testament. Here we find the last two "I am" statements. Also, Jesus offers an extended teaching on the role of the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life

With Jesus announcement of his imminent departure, discouragement has set in for the disciples. However, Jesus reassured the disciples in his sixth "I am" statement. His departure from the disciples will ultimately be for their triumph and glory—if they will not lose their bearings. And, they know the way to glory.

Jesus reminds them:

I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. —John 14:6

They know the way to glory because they know Jesus. So long as they keep their faith in him, they will never be led astray. Jesus indicates that it will actually be *better* for him to depart so that the Holy Spirit can come.

The Helper (14:15-31)

While Jesus physical presence is glorious, he is able to empower the disciples more significantly by indwelling his disciples spiritually. Jesus teaches his disciples about the Helper, the "Spirit of truth". Again, Jesus makes a distinction between the unbelieving world and his disciples. The world will not be given the Spirit of Truth (14:17), but the one who keeps the commandments of Jesus and loves Jesus will be given the Spirit. The Spirit will have certain roles and functions for the disciples to help them to remain faithful to Jesus while living in the World.

The primary role Jesus highlights at this point is to be a surrogate for Jesus himself by providing continuing help and instruction to the disciple after Jesus departs.

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. —John 14:25-27

The key to understanding the relationship to the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and the Disciple is in the last "I am" statement.



I am the True Vine

Remain connected to the source of life. The key to understanding the role and nature of the Holy Spirit and his role in the lives of the disciples is illustrated by the metaphor of the Vine.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. –John 15:5

All throughout the Gospel, Jesus has been making the point that he is the source of life. In this seventh “I am” he reveals that the way to remain connected to that life is through the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. The way a disciple can be assured of the connection is by the manifestation of fruitfulness. The fruit that the Father is purposing to see in the lives of the disciples is obedience to the commands of Jesus.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another. –John 15:16-17

Jesus clearly states that his primary command is to love. Paul would teach something similar in 1 Cor. 13, Galatians 5:16-25 and Romans 12. Assurance of connectedness to Jesus comes with the manifestation of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Jesus delights to do his Father’s will and so will his disciples (15:10).

The Hatred of the World (15:18-16:33)

The very love of that Jesus has for his disciples and that his disciples have for him will become an occasion for persecution of the disciples by the world. The world hates Jesus; it hates God the Father; therefore, it will hate Jesus’ disciples. The disciple must always remember that the world and Jesus are enemies. The disciple must never be naive to this enmity.

But, again this is where the Helper, the Spirit of Truth is beneficial to the disciples. The Holy Spirit will bear witness against the world through the disciples (16:8-11) The Holy Spirit will give the disciples the right words to speak and provide reassurance. (16:12-15)

Victory over the World

Ultimately, Jesus reassures the disciples that he will return and ultimately and finally triumph over the evil powers of this world. One day the disciples will be like a woman who has given birth to a baby. They will forget the pain and rejoice in the new life.

In the meantime, the disciples will suffer, but they should take heart in the ultimate victory in Jesus Christ. It is all about perspective. The suffering and tribulation facing the disciples in the world looks very different through the lens of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” –John 16:33

The Prayer of Jesus: The High Priestly Prayer (17)

The conclusion of the farewell discourse leads right into the throne room of intercession. After giving final instructions to his disciples, he now offers a final prayer. The prayer has traditionally been referred to in the church as the “High Priestly Prayer”. This is mainly because Jesus is making intercession on behalf of his followers to God the Father. The prayer breaks neatly into two main sections. First, Jesus prays for himself and his disciples. Second, Jesus prays for all believers and world.

Jesus Prays for Himself and his Disciples

Jesus is a finisher. In completing the work he has been given to do, the glory will shine. However, this last work (as all of his works) requires the strength and working of the Father in him. Jesus first prays for himself.

“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. –John 17:1-2

The content of the farewell discourse becomes a collected prayer of intercession to God on behalf of the disciples. Jesus prays for their protection and provision through the sanctifying work of the Helper, the Spirit of Truth.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. –John 17:15-18

Jesus prays that his disciples would be made holy through the revealed Word of God and his Truth. The disciple would be in the world, but not of the world. In order to maintain that distinction, the disciples need help from the Spirit and the Truth. Remember the words to the Samaritan woman: “The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers of the Father will worship in Spirit and Truth (4:23). The gift to all believers from the first disciple and apostles of the Lord is the faith received from them in their recorded teachings found in the New Testament, the Word of the Lord.

Jesus Prays for All Believers and the World

The second half of the prayer focuses on the Church that will come to being because of the work and “word” of the disciples. One of the most important characteristics of the believers of Jesus is that they remain united in him. There is only one God, the Father and the Son are one. The unity of all believers in the Word of God under the Son of God is the only hope for the conversion of the world.

Knowing the danger to the life and witness of the church from heresy and schism, Jesus prays for our unity and witness to the world—that the world may know!

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.
–John 17:22-23



The Bible Challenge
A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year