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A SERIES OF FOUR STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Instructions

1. Read John right through first at least once before you start the study. Ask God to teach you its meaning as you read.
2. Look up all the references given and also read the verses before and after them.
3. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.
4. Write down your own questions if you do not understand the Bible or the study material.
5. Talk to others about the study. Look up other books if you want to but only write down your own thoughts and in your own words.

PART 1 - KNOWING WHERE WE ARE GOING

John introduces Jesus to us with a special title 'The Word.' (John 1:1,14) What does he mean? He could have used titles like The Power. 'In the beginning was the Power etc'. Or The Love. 'In the beginning was the Love etc' to emphasise the ability or the character of Jesus. Words are about meaning and communication - passing meaning on, so presumably the first thing he wanted to tell us was that by sending Jesus into the world God was wanting to give us a way of making sense of our confused, drifting, unhappy world.

In 1:1 we are told that the Word was God himself, not just a good man or a prophet, in 1:2 that He has always been and in 1:3 that He made everything. Then 1:4 tells us that He gave us life and that His life casts light on and makes sense of our lives. The world is not an accident that began with nothing and will slowly wind down again into nothing. The whole world shows evidence of having been intelligently created and for a purpose. Jesus did it and Jesus will show us what His purpose is for His world and for us.

How does He go about it? 1:6-8 describes John the Baptist whose job was to introduce people to Jesus. Sadly many of His own race, the Jews, refused to accept Him and His offer to make sense of life for them. (1:9-11) But if we do believe that He is who He says He is and receive Him into our lives, (1:12), we become God's children, like Him, and with His life inside us.

So that is what the book is about, God who became a man for a while to make sense of life for men and women by living inside them. But how does this happen for me? In the rest of chapter 1 there are a series of introductions. First John introduces the religious people to Jesus but they do not want to know Him. (1:19-28) Then He introduces the public to Jesus, (1:29-34), and finally Andrew and another disciple. (1:35-40) They follow Jesus. Next Andrew introduces his brother Simon Peter to Jesus. (1:41,42) Peter also follows Him. Jesus introduces Himself to Philip. (1:43,44) Philip follows Him. Finally Philip introduces Nathanael to Jesus. (1:45-51) He too follows Him.

Introducing means communicating. Following means having direction and purpose. 'The Word' is about both.

Going on a journey to a new place is so much easier if we have someone to show us the way. Jesus said 'Follow me'. (1:43) But following is easier if there are signposts to confirm what the one who leads us has said. John presents us with a series of seven signposts to help us to be sure of what Jesus says. Each

sign is a miracle that points to the final miracle of the gospel, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. (chapters 20 and 21) The first two are pointed out to be signs. (2:11 and 4:54) The other five signs we are left to find for ourselves.

Question 1 List all seven signs or miracles and explain briefly what happened on each occasion.

Each sign tells us something more about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Like signposts on the road there is more detail as we draw closer to the event being pointed to. Miracles show the power of the Creator. If He could make the world (1:3), He can certainly show His power over what He has made in doing what to us as men seems impossible. Miracles are also messages in pictures. To understand the pictures we need to see how the Bible consistently uses certain everyday objects to picture certain spiritual ideas. Let us see how this works.

Question 2 The first miracle is the changing of water into wine. (chapter 2) At the wedding in Cana what practical lesson for today can we learn from the presence of Jesus and His disciples at a family social occasion? Does it surprise you that He went to a party?

Question 3 What are 'water', (John 7:37-39), and 'wine', (Matthew 26:27-28), used to picture elsewhere in the New Testament? What could they be saying in this story about what the resurrection of Jesus is meant to do in our lives?

Blood in the Bible represents life (Leviticus 17:14) as in the Old Testament sacrifices. The blood of Jesus which He shed for us on the cross represents His life.

Question 4 What does His blood do for us? (I John 1:7)

Jesus not only wants to give His life for us but to put His life into us.

Question 5 How does He do it? (John 14:16-20)

Receiving the Holy Spirit into our lives allows Jesus to live His life in us. His life in us will produce a miraculous change in our characters, a miracle even greater than the miracle Jesus did at the wedding.

Question 6 For the miracle at the wedding to take place what did Jesus' mother Mary have to do? What did the servants have to do? For the miracle to be recognised what did the head waiter have to do? For Jesus' character and power to show in our lives what do we have to do?

The second miracle is about a dying child who was healed and lived. (4:46-54)

Question 7 How does the Bible describe those who have not had their sin taken away by Jesus' death on the cross? (Ephesians 2:1) How will believing in Jesus change this condition? (John 10:10) How then does this second miracle explain what the resurrection of Jesus does for us?

Question 8 What this time was the condition for the miracle taking place? What 4 things did the royal official do that led to his son being healed? What do we have to do to have the miracle of the resurrection bring us alive in Christ? (John 5:24)

Question 9 Who else apart from the child was affected by this sign? (4:53) Who else will be affected when we come alive by trusting in Jesus Christ?

The third sign is about a man who had been sick for 38 years. He was unable to walk. He would live by begging. He had hoped in vain for a miracle until he met Jesus.

Question 10 What spiritual idea is 'walking' used to picture in the New Testament? (II Corinthians 5:7, Ephesians 4:17, 5:2, 5:8, 5:15) How does this miracle explain the change that the resurrection of Jesus can bring about in us? What practical lessons can we learn from the illustration of 'walking' as a picture of Christian living?

Question 11 Why did Jesus ask "Do you wish to get well?" Wouldn't the answer be obvious? Remember the man was probably a beggar. Jesus asks the same today about receiving His resurrection life into us. 'Do you want Me to take over and to change your life?' Why might we say no?

Question 12 Why did some religious people object to what Jesus did for this man? Why do some people still object today if Christ's life changes us?

The fourth sign was the feeding of 5,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fishes. (John 6:1-14)

Question 13 What does Jesus explain 'bread' to picture? (6:35, 48-51) To what Old Testament story does Jesus compare this miracle? (Exodus 16) What idea about Christian living is being explained in this sign? In what two ways are people hungry today?

Question 14 Why did Jesus test Philip? (6:5) How does He ask us the same question and how do we give a similar answer? How on the other hand can we follow the example of the small boy who brought his lunch to Jesus? What are we to do about the spiritually hungry people around us if we feel we have only a little knowledge of Jesus and His word. What did the people have to do to be fed?

Question 15 Everyone was satisfied and every disciple had a basket of bread to carry away. What had all of them learned about having the life of Jesus Christ within them?

The fifth sign illustrates an important reason why we hold back from inviting Jesus to come and live in us. (John 6:16-21) Picture the sea as the world which can sometimes be a rough and threatening place and the boat as our family, or fellowship, a group of people who live and work together to survive in a tough world. Sometimes it seems like everything is against us and everything is going wrong and there is just no hope of a life that makes sense. It is at just such a time that Jesus comes to us and offers us His life and His hope.

Question 16 What was Jesus teaching the disciples when He walked on the sea? Why were they afraid? Why are we afraid to have Him in our lives? How did He settle their fears? How does He settle ours?

Question 17 Once He was in the boat how did their circumstances change? How does the presence of Jesus in our lives change our circumstances?

The sixth sign was about a blind man seeing. (John 9)

Question 18 The state of blindness is used to picture more than physical blindness in the Bible. What is it? (II Corinthians 4:4, John 9:39-41) How does Jesus picture Himself as the answer to blindness? (9:5) What is He teaching us about our spiritual state without Him and the difference He can make?

Question 19 What method did Jesus use to heal this man? What do 'clay' and 'water' picture in the Bible? (Isaiah 45:9, John 7:37-39) What did the man have to do to have his sight restored? What do we have to do to be spiritually able to see? Once we can see spiritually how will we see the needs of others in a different way? Why did the Pharisees try to prove the miracle had not really happened?

Question 20 What does this story teach us about why illness and physical handicap happen? (John 9:2,3)

The final sign is the resurrection of a dead man. (chapter 11)

Question 21 Why did Jesus take so long to get to Lazarus when he was sick? (11:6) What doubts or objections did Jesus' disciples and friends have to His plan to raise Lazarus to life? (11:8, 12, 16, 21, 32, 39) How do we also get in the way of Jesus' plan to bring spiritually dead people to life?

Question 22 What did Lazarus have to do to receive new life? What do we have to do? What could Lazarus' grave clothes picture so far as we are concerned? How can other people help us when we first receive new life to be rid of our old 'grave clothes'?

Question 23 What effect did Lazarus rising again have on ordinary people and on the religious people? How does the same thing happen today?

Question 24 Now reread the story of the resurrection (John 20 and 21) and pick out all the ways in which the 7 signs we have studied are explained further in the account of Jesus rising again. Now link together all the lessons you have learned from each of the 7 signs about how Jesus gives His resurrection life to us.

Question 25 What are you going to do about what you have learned? Write your answers to this last question in a diary or notebook just between you and God. Take it out and read it again in a month, three months, a year and ask God to show you what He has been able to accomplish in you, and still wants to do.