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A SERIES OF FOUR STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

PART 4 - HOW WILL IT WORK

Jesus Christ makes sense of a senseless world. He is the Word and He is God. (1:1) He lets us see in a dark world; He is the light. (9:5) We begin to see that our lives can have a worthwhile direction and purpose. He comes into our lives to give us the power to take His direction. He is the life. (14:6) He died for us to take away our sins and rose again to live in us and make us different for one reason. He is love. (I John 4:16) He cares about us deeply and wants the best for us.

All this sounds fine but before most of us will dare to trust the running of our lives to Jesus we need to see a working model. We need to see that all these great ideas really could work out in practice. John provides us with such a model in Jesus' own life. To show us this he compares three relationships. God the Father to Jesus the Son, Jesus to us, and us to one another.

Much of the teaching of this Gospel is about the relationship between the three persons who are the one God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They form a pattern for us. Throughout His time on earth Jesus depended totally upon His Father by means of the Holy Spirit to live within Him.

At the same time a great deal of teaching in this Gospel is about what relationship we are to have with Jesus. We are to depend totally upon Him to live in us by the same Holy Spirit, exactly as He depended upon His Father. (17:18, 20:21)

Our relationship with each other is to be as His relationship to us. As the Father loves us through Jesus so Jesus wants to love others through us. (13:14, 15 & 34) As we see the Father in the life of Jesus so others are to be allowed to see Jesus in our lives. (14:6-9, II Corinthians 4:10,11)

In this final study we will examine more closely some of the passages in which Jesus is teaching about these three parallel relationships. We will see that they tie together the three lines we have previously followed, the 'I am's' and the needy people whom Jesus loved.

We have already studied in 5:1-9 the third of the signs that pointed to Jesus' death and resurrection, the healing of a man, sick for 38 years. The religious leaders were furious. (5:16) Their excuse was that He had done this on the Sabbath day, the day of rest. (Exodus 20:8-11) What had begun as God's loving provision for our need of a day's rest from our normal work, they had turned into a rigid rule that gave excuse for ignoring the needs of others. The real reason for their anger was that He had done something that only God could do. They did not want to accept the truth.

5:17,18

Q.1 Who did Jesus claim had done the work of healing the sick man? What was He therefore saying was the nature of His relationship with God, the Father?

5:19

Q.2 What was the secret of all that Jesus did on earth? What is to be the secret of all that we do in our Christian lives? (15:5)

5:20-24

Q.3 Why did the Father do all that He did through the Son? What is the greatest miracle that Jesus can do for anyone? (v.21) What do we have to do for that miracle to happen to us? (v.24)

5:30

Q.4 From where did Jesus get all His ideas for His teaching and His miracles? From where are we as Christians to get our ideas as to what we should say and do? (5:24, 10:3, 12:47)

Following the two signs in chapter six of feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and 2 fishes and then walking on the stormy sea the crowds wanted to know what these things meant. (6:22-25) Jesus was very much aware that some people claim to be His followers just to get material benefits like food. (6:26) He encouraged them to seek to know Him for spiritual food and strength so that they could do God's work. (6:27)

6:29

Q.5 What does Jesus say is the only way in which we can do work pleasing to God? What does He mean? How could this work? What at the same time does He tell us about His relationship with His Father?

They missed the point (6:30) so He illustrated what He meant by the story of God miraculously providing manna or bread daily for the Israelites during their time in the wilderness. (Exodus 16) He wanted to be their spiritual food (6:35) as they fed on or believed in Him.

6.37

Q.6 Whose work did Jesus recognise it was to bring people to Him? And who accepted those who came? How then can we bring people to Jesus today? And who should decide whether a certain person is acceptable in a Christian fellowship?

6:38-40

Q.7 Whose plan was Jesus carrying out on earth? What is that plan? Who therefore should plan every detail of our lives?

6:41-51

Q.8 What did the crowd realise Jesus was claiming about His relationship with the Father? Why were they reluctant to accept His claim? What further claims did He go on to make about how people become Christians, learn in the Bible what they can expect in the future, and about who He is?

6:56,57

Q.9 After explaining further what it meant to share the life of Jesus by feeding on Him (6:52-55), the Lord described our relationship with Him as having two sides to it. What are they? Once more He drew a comparison between the Father and Him on the one hand and Him and us on the other. What is it and what does this mean?

Many people were coming together in Jerusalem for one of the special religious holidays. (7:10-13) Jesus was the hot topic of discussion. People were divided as to who He was and whether they should follow Him. Two things about Jesus impressed them deeply, His character (7:12) and His teaching. (7:15)

7:16-19

Q.10 How could Jesus teach so well without education? What was the secret of His teaching? Can we be effective Christian teachers without much education?

How can we be sure if Jesus' teaching is true and where it comes from? What test can we apply to anyone's teaching even today to be sure if it is right?

7:25-29

Q.11 As the argument among the crowd continued the question came to be 'where was Jesus from?' What were the two points of view? In what two ways can we see our purpose or mission in life? What difference does it make which one we choose?

7:37-39

Q.12 What does it mean to be spiritually thirsty? When we receive Jesus into our lives in what form does He come into us? What picture does Jesus use to describe what happens to us at this time and then what happens to those around us? Again people were divided by Jesus' invitation. (7:41-43) They still are. Are you sure which side you are on?

The Pharisees had embarrassed themselves by their hypocrisy over the woman caught in adultery. (8:1-11) Jesus had shown amazing insight into human behaviour and motives. Now He explained how He came to have such understanding of people and how we could too. (8:12) The Pharisees objected to His claim to be 'the light of the world' because He made it about Himself; they only had His word for it.

8:13-16

Q.13 What did Jesus claim was the secret of His ability to judge or understand people accurately? In what way did the Father witness to who Jesus was? (5:37-39 and 46,47) How can we have an accurate understanding of other people? (7:24) How do we look at others and their behaviour and their needs differently when we abide or live in Christ?

8:26-30

Q.14 From where did Jesus get His teaching? Why did it fit people's needs so well? What do we have to do to have something to say worth hearing that really meets the needs of those around us? Why was the Father pleased with Jesus? How can we be sure that God is pleased with us?

8:31-36

Q.15 What do we have to do to be set free from the power of sin which is described as being like slavery? How will Jesus do this for us?

8:37-47

Q.16 The Jews talked about Abraham as their Father, the one whom they thought they took after. Jesus said we may have one of two spiritual fathers. Who are they? What decides who is our spiritual father? How will it show in our lives?

In chapter nine a blind man was given sight and Jesus pictured Himself as the light of the world - the one who gives spiritual sight to the spiritually blind so that we see Him, our sin and others needs in new ways. In chapter ten we are introduced to a new picture which we have already studied, the shepherd, Jesus, and the sheep, us. As we have seen He used two 'I am's', the door and the good shepherd, to explain how He is the way into a relationship with God and the one who keeps us and cares for us in that relationship. This illustration provides another way of explaining the secret of the three relationships we have been considering.

10:14,15

Q.17 How in this section is there again a parallel between the relationship of Father to Son and Son to us? What did Jesus do because of His relationship with His Father? How will we also feel free to do the same? What forms does this take in practice?

10:16-18

Q.18 How will knowing Jesus Christ personally affect our belonging to many different churches, fellowships and denominations? What does it mean to 'hear' Jesus as our shepherd? If we are to give or sacrifice ourselves in Christ's service what do we first need to know about God?

10:25-30

Q.19 Again people were divided by Jesus' words. (10:19-21) Some wanted Jesus to make their uncertainty sure. How did He tell them they could be certain about who He was? When we have become certain about who Jesus is what else will we be certain about?

The raising of Lazarus from the dead in chapter 11 was the most amazing miracle that Jesus did during His time on earth because Lazarus had been dead for four days; there was no possible way to get around the fact that something had happened that only God could do. From this point on the religious leaders were determined to kill Him (11:53); they waited for an opportunity to arrest Him. (11:57) Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples who had objected to Mary's loving sacrifice (12:1-8), was their undercover agent willing to make that opportunity and betray Him. Again people were divided over what Jesus had done for Lazarus. (12:9-11) Those who believed in Him gave Jesus a king's welcome as He entered Jerusalem on a donkey. (12:12-18) His enemies were becoming desperate to silence Him. (12:19) But on the other hand even non-Jews wanted to meet Him. (12:20-23)

12:24-26

Q.20 What picture did Jesus use to describe His coming death and resurrection? What would be the result in other people's lives? How can we have the same attitude He had? What does this mean in practice? How will those around us also be affected by such an attitude in us?

The ruler of this world is a title for the devil. 'Glorify' means to show what God is like. God spoke from heaven. (12:28) He confirmed that Jesus was who He claimed to be. The argument was about how God would show us what He was like.

12:27-36

Q.21 How did Jesus say this would happen? How on the other hand did the crowd expect it to occur? Why was Jesus' way the right one? How does His way of showing God's glory affect our lives? Again Jesus explained why some people would reject Him however amazing were the miracles He did. (12:37-41)

12:40-43

Q.22 What was the reason? Why were some people reluctant to be open about their faith in Christ? How does the same thing happen today? What is the secret that allows us to be unafraid to be Christians openly?

12:44-46

Q.23 When people believed in Jesus and saw Him, who were they really believing and seeing? How does this explain what it means to 'glorify God'?

12:47-50

Q.24 By contrast if we reject Christ's words what are we really doing? From where did Jesus get His teaching?

The last supper at which Jesus washed His disciples' feet was the occasion for His last and longest message as recorded by John. (chapters 13-17) The Passover was about sacrifice. (Exodus 12) He was to be that sacrifice for us on the cross. Washing the disciples' feet was about service. The message that followed was about both sacrifice and service - His for us and ours for others. (13:12-17)

13:17-20

Q.25 There are two choices before us regarding Jesus' sacrifice for us. What are they? Which have you made? Judas made his choice. (13:21-30) What was it?

13:31-35

Q.26 How will our choice to receive Christ and His sacrifice for us show? What is His new commandment? Is it difficult? How then can we do it?

Simon Peter wanted to follow Jesus, not yet understanding what His death was all about. He thought they would die fighting as heroes. Jesus intended to give His life willingly for us. (13:36-38) Jesus began to explain how we can become truly part of Him. (chapter 14) We have already studied the three 'I am's', the way the truth and the life. (14:6) They teach us how to come to Christ and live the Christian life.

14:7-12

Q.27 How could the disciples see God the Father? Whose life, words and work could they see in the Lord Jesus Christ? How can we do greater things than Jesus did? Remember that no-one could receive the Holy Spirit until after Jesus' death and resurrection. (John 16:7)

14:13-16

Q.28 Do these verses mean that we can ask God for anything and He will do it? What was Jesus' example of what asking God is all about? What therefore does 'in my name' really mean?

14:17-31

Q.29 Who was their new Helper to be? How did they know Him already? What would He do in their lives and ours? How can we know He is living in us?

Chapter 14 pictured us being part of God and Christ, as the Holy Spirit, living in us as being like someone living in a house. God shows His love for us by welcoming us into His house. He wants at the same time that we should welcome Him into our house, our lives. Once He is welcome in our lives, others will be too and we will love them. Chapter 15 uses a new picture which we have already studied, the vine and the branches. As a branch is accepted by the stem so we are accepted in Christ. At the same time the branch accepts the life of the stem into it, as we accept His life into us. The fruit of His Spirit, His character will appear in our lives. The first part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) is love, the theme of the rest of chapter 15.

15:9-13

Q.30 What is the best example of love? How did that love show in Jesus? How will it show in us?

15:14-17

Q.31 How did the Father show His friendship for His Son? How will Jesus show His friendship for us? How can we show our friendship for Him? What does it mean to 'go and bear fruit'?

15:18-27

Q.32 If we love Christ what treatment can we expect from the world we live in? Why is this? How will His life in us help us to handle the way we are treated?

At the beginning of chapter 16, Jesus warned His disciples again that to be His followers would mean a lot of trouble for them. For the moment their greatest anxiety was that He kept saying He would leave them by dying on the Cross.

16:7-15

Q.33 Why was His death good news not bad? What will the Holy Spirit do for everyone? What will He do for Christians?

16:15-24

Q.34 When and how will Christians see Jesus again? Is He just talking about His return to earth in the future?

16:25-33

Q.35 At last the disciples understood and were convinced as to who Jesus was. How? How can we too be sure? Yet why would they still fail Him when He was arrested? Why do we still fail Him? How can we overcome our failure? (v.33)

Chapter 17 is a prayer of Jesus to His Father which His disciples, and now we, were allowed to overhear. In the last 3 chapters He has said a lot about prayer. Now He illustrates what He means by His promises to us. (14:13,14; 15:7, 16:24)

17:1-8

Q.36 What was God's purpose in sending Jesus into the world? How had that purpose been achieved? How will His purpose be achieved in our lives today?

17:9,10

Q.37 What was Jesus asking first in prayer? (v.9) Why didn't He ask for everyone? How was His prayer answered?

17:11-16

Q.38 What did Jesus ask secondly? How was this prayer to be answered? Why didn't He ask for us to be removed from the world as soon as we become Christians?

17:17-26

Q.39 What is His third prayer? For whom was Jesus praying this time? What will be the most evident result of this prayer being answered? How does this last section finally explain how 13:34,35 could actually happen in real life?

The rest of the book, chapter 18 - 21, is a simple factual record of what happened in the next few days. Please read it again, slowly, thoughtfully and prayerfully and then answer two last questions.

Q.40 What has Jesus Christ done for me? What am I going to do about it?

Once again write your answers to these questions in a private diary or notebook and review honestly what you have written in one month, three months, twelve months. And keep on adding to your discoveries about who Jesus wants to be in you for the rest of your life.