

THE JESUS YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW

Seeing Jesus in John's Gospel

Mike Taylor

www.TaylorNotes.Info

Lesson 8: The King Accomplishes His Mission

INTRODUCTION



John Chapters 18–21 moves swiftly from the quiet intimacy of the Upper Room to the chaos of arrest, trial, crucifixion, and ultimately resurrection. The tone changes dramatically.

The One who spoke peace in chapters 13–17 is suddenly surrounded by soldiers. The disciples who confidently pledged loyalty scatter in fear. Religious leaders appear to win. Rome appears to rule. Darkness seems to prevail. And yet—John wants us to see something deeper.

What looks like defeat is actually divine accomplishment. What appears to be tragedy is the unfolding of a sovereign plan formed before the foundation of the world. Jesus is not swept along by events; He steps into them. He is not trapped by political pressure; He directs the moment. He is not a helpless victim; He is the Lamb who willingly lays down His life.

Throughout these chapters, John highlights subtle but powerful indicators of Jesus' control:

- Jesus steps forward in the garden rather than hiding.
- He identifies Himself with divine authority.
- He declares His kingdom is not of this world.
- He announces, "It is finished," not "I am finished."
- He rises exactly as He promised.
- He restores the very disciple who denied Him.

John carefully presents Jesus as the sovereign King who accomplishes redemption precisely according to plan. The cross is not a collapse of His mission—it is its completion. The empty tomb is not a surprise twist—it is the validation of everything He claimed.

READ JOHN CHAPTERS 18-21

A. The Arrest of the King (John 18:1–14)

Jesus crosses the Kidron Valley—a place associated with sacrifice and judgment—and enters a familiar garden. Judas knows the place because Jesus often met there with His disciples. The arrest is not accidental; it is anticipated.

John alone records that Jesus steps forward and asks, “Who is it you want?” (18:4). He does not wait to be discovered. He initiates the encounter. When He answers, “I am He” (Grk. *ego eimi*), the soldiers draw back and fall to the ground (18:6). This is not a stumble—it is a physical reaction to divine authority. The phrase echoes the covenant name of God (Exodus 3:14). Even in chains, Jesus is unmistakably sovereign.

Notice also His protective shepherd heart: “If you are looking for me, then let these men go” (18:8). John connects this to Jesus’ earlier promise that He would lose none of those given to Him (17:12).

Peter reacts impulsively, swinging a sword and cutting off Malchus’ ear. But Jesus rebukes him: “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” (18:11).

The “cup” is Old Testament imagery for divine wrath and judgment (Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15). Jesus understands the deep meaning of what is happening. This is not martyrdom—it is substitution.

Notice: Jesus is not seized by force; He yields by choice. The cross begins in the garden with surrender.

B. The Trial Before Pilate (John 18:28–19:16)

The Jewish leaders bring Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, because only Rome can authorize execution. Ironically, they refuse to enter the governor’s residence to avoid ceremonial defilement before Passover—while simultaneously plotting the death of the true Passover Lamb.

Pilate repeatedly declares Jesus innocent:

- “I find no basis for a charge against him.” (18:38)
- “I find no basis for a charge against him.” (19:4)
- “I find no basis for a charge against him.” (19:6)

Three times innocence is affirmed—yet justice is not upheld. Pilate questions Jesus about kingship. Jesus clarifies: “My kingdom is not of this world” (18:36).

This does not mean His kingdom has no relevance here. It means its source and authority are heavenly, not political. If His kingdom were earthly, His servants would fight. Instead, He stands unarmed.

Pilate embodies political pragmatism without moral courage. He knows the truth but fears losing favor with Caesar. When the crowd threatens, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar,” Pilate caves.

C. The Crucifixion: Mission Completed (John 19:17–37)

John omits many graphic details found in the Synoptics (Matthew-Luke). Instead of emphasizing physical agony, he emphasizes theological fulfillment. Jesus carries His own cross—symbolizing voluntary sacrifice. Above Him is written: “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (19:19). Pilate refuses to change the inscription. Ironically, Rome proclaims a truth it does not understand.

John repeatedly notes fulfilled Scripture:

- Soldiers divide garments (Psalm 22:18).
- No bones are broken (Exodus 12:46).
- His side is pierced (Zechariah 12:10).

When Jesus declares, “It is finished” (Grk. *tetelestai*), the term was commonly written on receipts meaning “Paid in full.” The debt of sin is satisfied. The mission is complete. Redemption is accomplished—not initiated.

Notice also: “He bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (19:30). The grammar indicates deliberate action. His life is not taken—it is given (John 10:18).

D. The Empty Tomb: Evidence of Victory (John 20:1–18)

Mary Magdalene arrives while it is still dark—both literally and symbolically. She sees the stone removed and assumes theft. Peter and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” run to the tomb. Inside they find:

- Linen wrappings lying there.
- The face cloth folded separately.

If grave robbers had taken the body, they would not have carefully unwrapped it. The folded cloth suggests order and intention. Resurrection is not chaotic—it is controlled. John says, “He¹ saw and believed” (20:8). Faith begins with evidence. But resurrection becomes

¹ Most likely the Apostle John.

personal when Jesus speaks one word: “Mary.” Recognition comes not by sight but by voice. The Shepherd calls His sheep by name (John 10:3).

E. From Doubt to Declaration (John 20:24–31)

Thomas was absent during the first appearance. When told of the resurrection, he demands empirical proof. His statement is strong: “Unless I see... I will not believe.” Eight days later, Jesus appears again—specifically addressing Thomas’ demand. He invites him to touch the wounds. Thomas does not record touching. Instead, he erupts in confession: “My Lord and my God!” (20:28). This is the theological climax of John’s Gospel. The Word who was “with God” and “was God” (1:1) is now explicitly confessed as God by a disciple.

Jesus then pronounces a blessing: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” That includes us. John closes with his purpose statement (20:31): These signs are written so that you may believe—and by believing have life.

F. Restoration and Recommissioning (John 21)

John 21 functions like an epilogue. The disciples return to fishing—their former occupation. It may reflect discouragement or uncertainty about the future.

After a fruitless night, Jesus appears on the shore and instructs them to cast the net on the right side. The result mirrors Luke 5: a miraculous catch. The number, 153 fish, likely emphasizes abundance and eyewitness detail. On shore, a charcoal fire burns. The only other charcoal fire mentioned in John is the one beside which Peter denied Jesus (18:18). The setting is intentional.

- Three times Jesus asks, “Do you love me?”
- Three times Peter responds.
- Three times Jesus commissions him: “Feed my sheep.”

The repetition corresponds to the denial. Jesus does not shame Peter—He restores him. Then Jesus predicts Peter’s future faithfulness, even unto martyrdom. The once-fearful disciple will one day stand firm.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Jesus’ behavior during his arrest reveal about His deity?

2. Why is “It is finished” so important in understanding salvation? (Hint: See GotQuestions, [What did Jesus mean when He said, “It is finished”? | GotQuestions.org](#))

3. Was Thomas wrong to doubt Jesus’ resurrection? What changed his mind?

4. How does Jesus handle Peter’s failure?

5. Why did Jesus tell Peter to “feed my sheep”? (Hint: See GotQuestions, [Why did Jesus tell Peter to “feed my sheep” in John 21? | GotQuestions.org](#))

SUMMARY

John 18–21 reveals Jesus not as a tragic figure overtaken by events, but as the sovereign King who governs every moment of His passion. In the garden, He steps forward rather than shrinking back. Before Pilate, He stands as Truth incarnate. On the cross, He declares completion, not defeat. In the tomb, death cannot hold Him. By the sea, He restores the very disciple who denied Him.

At every stage, Jesus is in control. What appeared to be chaos was actually choreography. What looked like humiliation was exaltation in disguise. The cross was not a collapse of hope—it was the accomplishment of redemption. When Jesus cried, “It is finished,” He announced that the debt of sin was fully paid, divine justice satisfied, and the way to the Father permanently opened.

The resurrection then vindicates every claim He made. The empty tomb declares that sin, Satan, and death do not have the final word. Fear gives way to courage. Doubt gives way to worship. Grief gives way to joy.

These chapters also show us something deeply personal: Jesus does not abandon weak disciples. Thomas’ skepticism is met with invitation. Peter’s denial is met with restoration. The disciples’ confusion is met with commissioning. The risen King does not merely accomplish salvation—He continues His work through flawed but forgiven followers.

Failure, doubt, and fear are not the final word in the life of a believer. Grace is. Restoration is. Purpose is. John closes his Gospel with a living Christ and a renewed mission. The King who completed redemption now sends His followers to shepherd, to witness, and to love. His mission did not end at the empty tomb—it expanded.

And the same sovereign, victorious, restoring King still calls, still forgives, still commissions, and still works through ordinary people for extraordinary purposes.

APPLICATION

1. I can always trust Christ’s _____ even when life becomes chaotic.
2. I can rest in the _____ knowing that salvation is not based on works.
3. I can find comfort in knowing that Jesus can _____ when I fail and still use my life.