



PREPARATION

- > **Spend the week studying John 1:1-18, 19:28-37, and 20:1-18.** Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.
- > **Determine** which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > **Pray** for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their receptivity to God's Word.
- > **Focus on the Main Point.** Jesus is the central character of all of God's story. His life, death, and resurrection allow us by grace through faith to place our hope in Him as our maker, forgiver, helper, and Lord.

INTRODUCTION

Who do you think is the most important person in American History? Why did you choose that person?

Who has been the most influential person in your own life? What did they do that made such a difference in your life?

Locating the central figure in American History is a matter on which people hold a variety of opinions. Some might identify men like George Washington or Thomas Jefferson because of their pivotal role in establishing our country. Abraham Lincoln may be another popular choice. These are all matters of preference and opinion. However, when it comes to the most influential person in all of history there can only be one answer. Jesus is the center of God's story and He is the central figure in all of history. The unique Son of God, broke into human history and the world has never been the same. His life, death, and resurrection are the centerpiece of God's story. Everything before it led to it, and everything after it flows from it.

LEARN

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 1:1-18.

Why do you think God began his gospel by emphasizing the eternal nature of Jesus? What does this teach us about Jesus?

What does John mean when he says the "Word became flesh"? Why was it essential that Jesus be a man?

Read Hebrews 4:15. Why did Jesus endure temptations and trials?

What confidence does it give you to know that Jesus was tempted as you are every day and never sinned?

“The Word became flesh” is a simple statement that reveals profound and life changing truth. The Word identified Jesus as the eternal, uncreated, unique Son of God. If you wish to see who God is and what He is like, look to Jesus. “Became flesh” means that Jesus, who was in the form of God (Phil. 2:6), took on our flesh and its nature. It is also important to note, however, that Jesus was born of a virgin and so did not inherit our sin nature when He took on human flesh. When Jesus took on flesh it was not simply God looking like a man, but God becoming fully man. Jesus is both God and man, together in one person.

What types of things did Jesus do that demonstrated that He was God in the flesh?

Read Luke 24:13-35. How does Jesus fulfill all of the Law and the prophets through His earthly ministry?

What specific Old Testament prophecies did Jesus fulfill? Spend some time discussing these as a small group.

Jesus fulfilled the law that was given through Moses (1:17). Everything we have studied in this series leads to Jesus. The encounter Jesus has with the men on the Road to Emmaus is a pivotal text to help us understand who Jesus is. If we are to follow Jesus, we must interpret our Bibles the way He did. Jesus takes these men through the story of Scripture showing how He is the answer to every law and every prophecy. All the promises of God find their yes and amen in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 19:28-37.

Read Genesis 3:15. How did Jesus fulfill this prophecy in His death? Where else do we see Jesus fulfill the Scriptures in John 19?

How is Jesus our substitute? How did Jesus being fully God and fully man make this possible?

Jesus said “it is finished” before He died. Why does He say this? What was finished?

Christianity is distinct from all other religions because all other religions say “do” and Christianity says “done”. When Jesus died, as a substitute, He provided everything necessary for us to be at peace with God. As a man, He is able to represent us before God. And His perfect life speaks on our behalf. As God, Jesus is uniquely able to absorb the punishment due our sins. Jesus’ identity as the God man provided for our atonement.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 20:1-18.

In what ways did Jesus' resurrection confirm His identity as the Son of God and fulfill the Scriptures?

How does the resurrection assure us that all of Jesus' promises are true? What hope does that give you?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-57. What did Jesus accomplish in His resurrection? What has Jesus done with our sin and the power of death?

The resurrection is the single most important event in human history. Because when Jesus rose from the dead, He conquered sin, defeated death, and provided a way for us to have peace with God. The greatest problem that every person faces is they are born with a sin nature that separates them from God and rules their lives. When Jesus walked out of the tomb, He solved our greatest problem. He destroyed the power of sin in the lives of His people and secured their eternal redemption.

LIVE

Does the resurrection fill you with hope? How should the resurrection change the way we live?

How would you respond to someone who thought Jesus was simply a man or only a good teacher?

LEAD

Jesus is the climax of God's story. How can we share the centerpiece of God's story with the people in our communities and work places?

How might we, as individuals and as a group, be more intentional in our relationships with the lost people around us? God delights to answer specific prayers. Spend some time praying for specific friends who do not know God.

PRAY

Praise God for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Ask that the center of God's story would be the center of your life. Express your hope and assurance in the cross. Pray for each member in the group to be bold and confident when sharing the truth of God's Word with people who do not know Him.

FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- 1. The challenge to share the gospel with one person.**
- 2. Can you think of 3 lost people in your life to pray for?**
- 3. Memorize John 1:14.**

COMMENTARY

JOHN 1:1-18.

1:1-18. John's prologue presents Jesus as the eternal, preexistent Word-become-flesh (vv. 1,14) and as the one-of-a-kind Son of the Father who is Himself God (vv. 1,18). Jesus culminated God's plan of salvation. Previous to Jesus this plan included God giving the law through Moses (v. 17), His dwelling among His people in the tabernacle (v. 14), and the sending of John the Baptist (vv. 6-8,15). The prologue introduces several themes that are emphasized later in the Gospel, including Jesus as life, light, and truth, believers as God's children, and the world's rejection of Jesus.

1:1. In the beginning was the Word echoes Gen. 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John located Jesus' existence in eternity past with God. "The Word" (Gk *logos*) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech (Ps. 19:1-4). God's Word is effective. He speaks, and things come into being (Gen 1:3,9; Isa. 55:11-12).

1:14. The Word continues the theme of 1:1. Became flesh does not mean the Word stopped being God; rather, the Word was made flesh. Took up residence among us literally means "pitched His tent" (Gk *skenoō*), an allusion to God's dwelling among the Israelites in the tabernacle (Ex 25:8-9; 33:7). In the past God demonstrated His presence to His people in the tabernacle and the temple. Now God has taken up residence among His people in the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). The references to God's glory hark back to OT passages that describe the manifestation of God's presence and glory in theophanies (appearances of God), the tabernacle, or the temple (Ex 33:22; Num 14:10; Dt 5:22). The Greek word *monogenēs* underlying One and Only Son from the Father means "only child" (Jdg 11:34; Jer. 6:26; Am 8:10; Zech. 12:10). "Only" may mean "one of a kind," as in the case of Isaac, who is called Abraham's "one of a kind" son in Gen 22:2,12,16 (in contrast to Ishmael; cp. Heb. 11:17). In the OT, the Son of David and Israel are called God's "firstborn" son (see Ps. 89:27). The reference to God's "giving" of His "One and Only Son" in Jn. 3:16,18 may allude to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22).

1:15. Full of grace and truth recalls "lovingkindness (Hb *hesed*) and truth (Hb *emet*)" in Ex 34:6 (cp. Ex 33:18-19), where the expression refers to God's covenant faithfulness to His people Israel. According to John, God's covenant faithfulness found ultimate expression in His sending of His One and Only Son, Jesus (see textual note at 1:14).

1:17. The contrast between the law and grace and truth is not that the law was bad and Jesus was good; rather, both the giving of the law and the coming of Jesus Christ mark stages in God's reaching out to humanity. Jesus, however, marks the final, definitive revelation of God's grace and truth. He is superior to Abraham (8:53), Jacob (4:12), and Moses (5:46-47; cp. 9:28).

JOHN 19:28-37.

19:28-29. The reference to Scripture being fulfilled builds on verse 24 (see note there), most likely in allusion to Ps. 69:21: "They gave me vinegar to drink" (cp. Mt 27:34,48; see Ps 22:15). Soldiers and laborers used sour wine to quench their thirst (Mk 15:36). It is different from the "wine mixed with myrrh" Jesus refused on the way to the cross (Mk 15:23). Hyssop was a plant classified in 1Ki 4:33 as a humble shrub. It was used for the sprinkling of blood on the doorpost at the original Passover (Ex 12:22).

19:30. Gave up may echo "submitted Himself to death," which was prophesied of the Suffering Servant (Isa 53:12).

19:31. On preparation day, see note at verse 14. That Sabbath was... special because it was the Sabbath of Passover week. For the Jews, bodies of hanged criminals were not to defile the land by remaining on a tree overnight (Dt 21:22-23; cp. Jos 8:29).

19:31-33. The legs of crucifixion victims were broken to hasten death. This prevented them from pushing themselves up with their legs to open the chest cavity and thus breathe better. Since the victims would now have to pull themselves up by the arms instead, suffocation occurred once their arm strength failed. See note at verse 36.

19:34. The flow of blood and water proved that Jesus was dead (1Jn 5:6-8). The passage may also allude to Ex 17:6: "Hit the rock, water will come out of it and the people will drink" (cp. Num 20:11). The spear was about three and one-half feet long and consisted of an iron spearhead joined to a shaft of wood.

19:36. After verses 24 and 28-29 (see notes there), this is the third scriptural proof that shows that Jesus' death fulfilled Scripture (Ex 12:46; Ps 34:20). Jesus escaped having His legs broken since He died so quickly, and the spear did not damage any of His bones.

19:37. The Roman soldiers again fulfilled prophecy without knowing it: "They will look at Me whom they pierced" (Zech 12:10; also cited in Rev 1:7).

20:1-18.

20:1. The first day of the week was Sunday. Mary Magdalene (and several other women) decided to attend to some matters that had been left undone because of the beginning of the Sabbath (see note at 19:42). The need to complete the care for the dead may have overridden the customary seven-day mourning period (see note at 11:20). On while it was still dark, compare the slightly different time frame depicted in Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2; and Lk 24:1.

20:2. At this point Mary had no thought of Jesus' resurrection. The Jewish charge that His disciples stole His body (Mt 27:62-66; 28:11-15) shows that grave robbery was not uncommon. The plural we suggests the presence of other women besides Mary. On the other disciple, see note at 18:15-16.

20:5-7. Apparently by now there was enough daylight to see inside the burial chamber through the small, low opening in the cave tomb. The other disciple did not go in, presumably in deference to Simon Peter, a leader among the Twelve. Jesus' resurrection body apparently passed through the linen wrappings similar to the way in which He later appeared to His disciples in a locked room (vv. 19,26). The reference to the head wrapping being folded up in a separate place by itself counters the notion of grave robbers, who in their haste would not have taken the time to fold up this cloth.

20:8-9. The presence of two witnesses rendered the evidence admissible under Jewish law (Dt 17:6; 19:15). The other disciple believed based on what he saw, not on an understanding from Scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. This lack of expectation of a resurrection shows that the disciples did not fabricate the resurrection story to fit their preconceived expectations. Rather, the resurrection shocked them and did not fit with what they understood from Scripture. Only later, aided by the Spirit's teaching (see notes at 14:26 and 16:13), did they come to see that Jesus' resurrection was foretold in the OT.

20:10-12. When the disciples went home, "the disciple Jesus loved" in all likelihood told the Lord's mother, whom he had taken "into his home" (19:27), that He was risen. Mary was crying, not because Jesus had died, but because His body had vanished. She saw two angels in white. Angels often appeared in pairs (Ac 1:10) and are often depicted as dressed in white (Ezek 9:2; Dan 10:5-6; Rev 15:6). The angels were sitting... one at the head and one at the feet of the burial shelf.

20:15. Mary mistook Jesus for the gardener, which suggests that Jesus was indistinguishable from an ordinary person. Gardeners often tend to their grounds in the early morning.

20:17 My Father and your Father maintains a distinction between how Jesus and the disciples relate to God. Even so, Jesus called believers His brothers.