

The Gospel of John

Lesson #88
The Journey
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The Gospel of John

- No less than five times in this chapter Jesus says, “I lay down my life for the sheep” – he was describing the ultimate voluntary action.
- It was not as though the “sheep” were in any way worthy of such a sacrifice – on the contrary, except for love, we could not find a reason why he would die for us.
- So, at least from the time of his baptism, Jesus lived with the knowledge of what awaited him just a short piece down the road – humiliation and suffering beyond belief.

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The Gospel of John

- John 10:16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, and one shepherd.
- So now Jesus says something that was a mystery before – that he had sheep who were from another sheepfold.
- What is interesting is that he does not explain the “other” sheep from another sheepfold – he just sort of drops this bomb, lets it sit, and it will age well.

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The Gospel of John

- The other sheep from the other sheepfold is only known by reading the rest of the New Testament, and then looking back, that we easily see the other sheep are we, the gentiles.
- Ephesians 2:12 Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

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So, what about the gentile before Jesus comes? If that question has not crossed our minds, maybe it should have. Paul describes them as, "having no hope and without God in the world". If we were asking that question in Jesus' day we would probably ask, "are the heathen (Gentiles) lost?". And it makes us wonder about our ancestors – did they have some hope, slim hope, or no hope of escaping hell? I like what C.S. Lewis said when he wrote this – "We know that no one can be saved except through Christ. We do not know that only those who know him can be saved by him."

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Now before you shout, "heretic" and run screaming from the room you should know that nearly every Christian believes some form of the same thing Lewis said. Most, if not all, Christians believe that aborted babies (who never knew the name of Jesus) are given entrance to heaven by the grace of God. And most, if not all of us believe that the mentally handicapped are also ushered into heaven when they die because they lacked the intellectual capacity to decide for, or against Christ. None of the souls in those two groups ever "believed on Jesus", but we believe God saved them anyway. Now who is to say that God could not apply the same grace to those who have never heard as he does to the aborted and mentally handicapped?

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Allow me to go on – the C.S. Lewis quote is not scripture so we should never let it cross our minds to have a strategy of letting the unreached stay unreached because we think God will save them by default. Such a strategy is too dangerous and is in fact countered by Jesus when he said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

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• Ephesians 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

• As Jesus was fulfilling the law and the Messianic prophecies hardly anything was said about the gentiles, but the work of the cross was just as much for gentiles as it was for Jews. 8

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• Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— 2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

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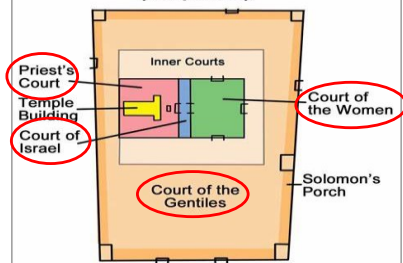
The Gospel of John

A mystery in the Bible is not something that no one can figure out – it is something that was never taught before but is being made plain now.

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The Temple in Jesus' Day (simplified)



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- What Paul writes later is directly related to what Jesus just dropped on the “Jews” and the rest of crowd in John 10 when he spoke about other sheep.
- The gentiles being equal beneficiaries of the promises of God was no after thought – it was always God’s intentions that his promises extend to all who believe.
- Do not forget the one who first received the promises was none other than that pagan gentile, Abram.

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- We can only imagine how the Jews would have reacted if they had an even a hint of the meaning of what Jesus told them about other sheep from another sheepfold!

- They seemed to have little respect for their fellow Israelites let alone those gentile “dogs”.

- And then for Jesus to add, “and they will listen to my voice” would just add insult to injury to the proud and haughty Jews Jesus was dealing with.

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- We must wonder why it was the gentiles who would be the ones eager to listen to the voice of God as opposed to the Israelites who seemed to be dragged kicking and screaming.

- My theory is that “no teaching” is superior to “false teaching” when it comes to spiritual things – the average Israelite had been brought up in a corrupted Judaism.

- The average gentile would have been brought up in no religion or some empty form of paganism that most would have seen through to what they were – empty rituals.

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- John 10:17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

- He repeats “I lay down my life” and that act is of course a direct reference to the cross.

- God approved of the mission, but there is evidence that Jesus had autonomy in the mission – “I lay it down of my own accord”.

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- We know from Jesus’ struggle in the garden of Gethsemane that laying down his life was no easy thing – it was without a doubt the most difficult task ever done by anyone.
- It’s hard enough to go through humiliation, pain, and sorrow when you have to, but who does such work when they don’t have to?
- And who does such a thing for those who hate you and ridicule you?

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We often think about Jesus’ struggle in the garden when he said, “nevertheless, not my will, but yours”. Just because that’s the only time that struggle was recorded does not mean it’s the only time it occurred. For the Son of God to humble himself and subject himself to all that it means to be human in a sin cursed world was no doubt all part of the sacrifice he made. Perhaps every day of his 33 years was a struggle in its own right – have you ever had to go somewhere you just dreedded to go, but you knew you had to? That was perhaps Jesus’ mindset when entering the market place of this world to buy something (some ones) who didn’t even know they were in danger and really didn’t care. Yet he knew it was the only way for his sheep to be purchased and saved.

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Questions?

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