

SESSION 4

JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY

BIBLE STORY: John Wrote about Jesus (John 14:1-6; 18–20; Acts 1:9-12)

SOME PEOPLE SAY: There are many ways to get to heaven.

GOD SAYS: Jesus is the only way to get to heaven.

TODAY'S POINT: Jesus is the only way.

THEME VERSE: Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. *Romans 12:2*

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. *Romans 12:2 (KJV)*

BONUS VERSE: There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved. *Acts 4:12*

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. *Acts 4:12 (KJV)*

BIBLE BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard several eyewitnesses give an account of the same car accident? They can vary widely depending on the quality of a person's eyesight, the quality of his memory, and his motivations for sharing the story.

The Gospel accounts of Jesus' life on earth come from eyewitnesses or interviews of eyewitnesses. They agree surprisingly well on the details. And all these writers knew they could face imprisonment or even death for proclaiming the name of Jesus, so their motives are hard to question. We know all of God's Word is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). God chose specific writers to chronicle the details He wanted us to know.

Today's session studies the facts in one of those eyewitness accounts: that of John. John was one of Jesus' disciples and closest friends. He wrote down facts from actual experience and observation. He showed that Jesus is alive today and is the only way to heaven. He stood with many others to provide testimony to this truth. Because of John's continued writing, we also know that it is a fact that Jesus will one day return to take His church home to heaven, to a place that He is preparing for us.

FACT: JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY (JOHN 14:1-6)

One of the first steps in determining if a statement is factual or not is to determine the credibility of the person making it. If someone who is known to be a habitual liar says he has the answer to all of life's problems, we would be unwise to follow his counsel. If, however, someone else who is known to consistently speak truth offers directions to a destination we desire to visit, we would be wise to heed his counsel. We've already established John's reliability, but what about the One John was recording? The Bible says Jesus cannot lie (Titus 1:2). This means we can trust everything He says.

Jesus is the One who said that He is the only way to heaven. A key word in fully understanding this passage is the word *the*. *The* refers to one specific object, while *a* refers to many different options. If Jesus had used the word *a*, the passage would have been much different. Instead, Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him.

The world would have us believe that there are many different ways to get to heaven. That all religions and forms of spirituality are a way to heaven. If this were the case, then the rich young ruler from the previous session would not have needed to ask about gaining eternal life. He would have had assurance that his way would work just as well as any other. The fact is that Jesus is the only way to the Father, and He clearly articulated this when He was here on earth.

FACT: JESUS IS ALIVE (JOHN 18-20)

John recorded the facts of the night Jesus was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death, as well as the day that He died. John 18:15 seems to indicate that John was present at the trial. He is referred to again in John 19:26 as being present during the crucifixion. John 20:3-6 shows John and Peter running to the tomb on the third day to confirm that what Mary Magdalene said was true: the tomb was really empty, and Jesus is really risen! This solidifies John's eyewitness status. He was present for every part of the most important thing Jesus ever did.

Jesus had told the disciples what would happen on several occasions, but they did not understand. This message was not a message of despair, but rather a message of hope because Jesus told the disciples that death was not going to win. Instead, Jesus was going to, and did, defeat death. As a direct result of Jesus defeating death, He taught that those who follow Him will defeat death too. Jesus clearly stated that He would live, and His followers would live too.

Over the years, many scholars have tried to disprove the reality of Jesus' resurrection by putting forth alternate explanations for the empty tomb. Some of these theories have included:

- The religious leaders decided to move Jesus' body as an additional form of cruelty.
- The disciples formed a conspiracy to convince people that Jesus had been resurrected when He was really still dead.
- The eyewitnesses visited the wrong tomb.
- Jesus did not really die but went into a deep coma, reviving later in the cool of the tomb.

But Christian apologists, those who study how we can know the Bible is true, point to flaws in all these theories.

- If the religious leaders had had Jesus' body, they would have displayed it to prove He was really dead and squash Christianity before it could form.
- If the disciples had invented a conspiracy, it's unlikely that they would all have been willing to go to prison and die for it. One of them would have confessed rather than die.
- The fact that the Bible uses women as the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection helps prove the disciples did not form a conspiracy. In legal proceedings at the time, women were not considered

reliable witnesses, and so the Gospel writers would not have used female testimony to support their claims if they were false claims.

- Scripture clearly says that people saw where Jesus was buried and that it was guarded by Roman soldiers. Several different people visited the tomb to verify that it was empty. These people would not have believed in the resurrection without sufficient proof that Jesus' body was gone.
- Roman crucifixion was a brutal way to die. A Roman soldier would not have mistaken a coma for death. And even if that somehow took place, a weakened, half-dead person could never move a heavy stone away from a tomb.

While it is important to understand these facts, along with the fact that the Bible says more than 500 people saw Jesus after He rose (1 Corinthians 15:6), the most convincing proof of Jesus' resurrection is the presence of Jesus living within believers. Believers regularly testify to the changes Jesus has brought to their lives and the strength He gives them to do whatever He calls them to do. The Bible is a true and sure foundation for our belief in the resurrection. And our own personal experience can help confirm it as well.

The Bible states that God has placed eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). This means that we all long for something beyond ourselves and we know that there is something beyond this lifetime. The world tells us to trust in ourselves and we will be able to achieve our eternal home through whatever belief feels best to us. This belief is built upon the assumption that we can determine our own truth. Jesus, however, said that only He was capable of defeating sin and death. Because of His sacrificial love, we can experience abundant and eternal life in and through Him.

FACT: JESUS IS COMING BACK (ACTS 1:9-12)

One additional fact we can learn from this session is that Jesus is coming back. The context of this passage is that Jesus had been raised from the dead and had spent 40 days on earth. He was now ascending back to the Father, and the disciples were present to watch this take place. It was at this time that 2 men appeared and said that Jesus "will come in the same way" that the disciples witnessed Him go into heaven.

These two men did not indicate any doubt or hesitation in what they said. Their words were not just a prediction of a possibility but of a fact. Jesus Himself promised the disciples several times that He would one day return. And later in John's life, he received prophecies and visions that further pointed to Jesus' return. Looking at the truth with which Jesus lived His life, we can be confident that He was not lying about this. We have a firm hope that He is coming back someday!

Have you ever ignored your GPS, thinking you knew the route better, and then regretted it? In a similar way, hearing the truth of Jesus' death, resurrection, and return and not acting on it will only lead to regret. The profound truth that He took the penalty for our sins, defeated death, and has a plan for those who receive His gift to live forever with Him should entirely shape our lives.

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

- The world says that we can believe whatever we want to believe and get to heaven. Jesus said that we are to believe in Him and that He is the only way to heaven. What is the difference between knowing about Jesus and believing that He is the way, the truth, and the life?
- Jesus told His disciples that because He was going to live that they too would live. This truth applies to those who follow Him even today. What does it mean to truly live for Jesus, knowing His tomb is empty, and ours will be one day as well?
- How should the fact that we know Jesus is coming back for His church shape our everyday lives?