

JOHN — WEEK 7

WHO IS THIS GUY?



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A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The cover image is *Ecce Homo (Behold the Man)* by Caravaggio

Jesus challenges the Jews with a direct claim to divinity—which trips their wire big time—and then ups the ante by telling them that they don't believe in Him because they don't believe what Moses wrote. Then He feeds the 5,000 and walks on water.

To some, but not all, His identity is clear.

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1 John 5:24–30

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”

Just in case the Jews weren’t ticked enough at Him already, Jesus now turns to the subjects of resurrection and eternal life. Jesus even claims to hold the keys. He said, back in verse 21, *“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”*

Now He says, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”*

This is quite a jump. Now Jesus isn’t just talking about life after death. Believers already have *everlasting life*. They’ve *passed from death into life*. That’s odd; weren’t they alive to begin with?

Not the way Jesus means it. People normally considered to be biologically “alive” can be eternally “dead.” Eternal life is a dimension that exists in the present—not just in eternity. This agrees with the next verse.

Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. This isn’t about some resurrection in the future; this is about now.

And, once again, Jesus is making it about Him.

Those who hear His voice *will live*.

This leads to some tough questions. If eternal life starts when we *hear the voice of the Son of God* (and confess Him as Lord), there should be some noticeable difference. Everything should be different.

But is it? For many people, everything isn’t all that different; Christianity isn’t what they expected. Eternal destiny may have changed, but life hasn’t. Same job; same house; same problems; same life. They wonder when this new life they were born into will start. It all seems so boring.

This passage gives the answer. It’s in the words *“hear the voice of the Son of God.”* “Hear” in this passage means obey. The boredom is self-imposed. Do nothing and nothing happens.

Christians who are busy obeying Christ see great things. They’re anything but bored.

2 John 5:31–37

“If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.”

Jesus continues to say that it’s all up to Him, but there’s an interesting twist in this passage. It’s the word “*finish*” in verse 36.

But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

Jesus did a lot of miracles, but He could have done countless more. That work could never be described as finished. The work that He is to finish must be something else. What?

It’s to die on the cross.

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. — John 19:30

That finished *the works which the Father has given Him.*

There’s another way that Jesus dying on the cross is the work that He was referring to in verse 36. Notice that Jesus specifically said that His works “*bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.*”

Jesus’s miracles demonstrate many wondrous things, but they don’t specifically prove that He was sent by the Father.

But something else does. Who raised Jesus from the dead? Did Jesus raise Himself?

No, the Father raised Him.

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. — Acts 2:23–24

That’s the proof *that the Father sent Him.*

3 John 5:38–47

“But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

“I do not receive honor from men. But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”

Remember, this all started because the Jews wanted to kill Jesus for healing someone on the Sabbath (and telling the healed man to take up his mat and walk). Jesus replied to their questions about it in a way that claimed divinity. They’re not buying that for a second. That’s why Jesus says to them, *“But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.”*

Notice that this has nothing to do with the evidence. Their minds are closed to the idea of a divine messiah. Jesus could perform every miracle in the book, and it wouldn’t matter. They’d already figured out what the messiah will look like and incarnation isn’t it. They’ve overthought this and have way too much confidence in their analysis.

Their egos have landed them on the wrong side of history.

This is one of the great dangers in studying God and the Bible. The minute we start thinking we’ve mastered the subject, we’re in trouble. The Bible is a finite book, about an infinite subject, written for finite minds.

The goal of studying the Bible is to learn that which will make us better servants. We delude ourselves if we think we’re going to really understand God. Our Bible study must be couched in a humble understanding of who we are.

Humility isn’t just the key to studying God; it’s the key to studying anything. The minute we start thinking we know it all, we stop learning.

And people who think they know enough to teach others are in danger of getting too far out over their skis.

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. — James 3:1–2a

Always keep your pastors in prayer. And please pray for me and all the authors at Ailbe.

4 John 6:1–15 (ESV)

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?” He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

This is an example of how Jesus can work incredible miracles and still conceal His true identity. He feeds this huge crowd from almost nothing—and everyone knew it was Jesus that did this. *When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”*

So, they call Him the prophet. At least it’s not just a prophet. They’re probably thinking of Moses’s promise in Deuteronomy 18:15–16:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’ “

So, they might be thinking that Jesus is the return of Moses or maybe even Elijah. That’s impressive, but still falls way short of who Jesus really is.

Then the crowd gets ready to do something incredibly stupid. Their desire *to come and take Him by force to make Him king* horrifies Jesus. That wouldn’t just get Him crucified; it’d get everyone crucified. (In the rebellion in AD 70, the Romans crucified as many as a thousand people a day.)

So, Jesus heads for the hills.

5 John 6:16–21

Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. But He said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.

The Greek words in verse 20 translated as, “*It is I*,” are not the normal “ay-me” but rather “egg-oh ay-me.” This overly emphatic way of Jesus referring to Himself is a direct claim of divinity. It harkens back to God speaking to Moses from the burning bush.

And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” — Exodus 3:14

There, God used an overly emphatic way of saying it in Hebrew (eh-yeh ah-share eh-yeh). That’s why it’s written in all caps in the Bible.

Of course, Jesus wasn’t speaking in Greek when He said, “*It is I*.” He was speaking in Aramaic, which is very similar to Hebrew. Presumably, He said something like, “eh-yeh.” They all know what that means.

So, what Jesus says to them amounts to, “God is here; you can relax now.”

This whole incident is discipleship training. They’re going to have many moments of fear, weakness, and doubt. They need to get used to it.

That explains the strange ending to this passage. Jesus doesn’t calm the waves this time; He ends the whole thing instantly—*and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going*.

Think about what that must have felt like to these guys. They’re struggling to deal with the weather. They’re miserable, and they’re scared. Then Jesus comes out walking on the water like some kind of ghost. That’s even more scary. Then He says, “*It is I; do not be afraid*,” using the divine term for “I.”

They relax a bit and let Him in the boat. And then,

blink, they’re on the shore.

For a moment, reality disconnects. This has an “everything is just an illusion” feel to it—sort of like in the movie, “The Matrix.” For an instant they wonder if this is all a dream, but it’s soon clear that it’s real.

In a way, that’s the scariest thing of all. Any confidence they had in themselves or in their grasp of reality just went out the window. Everything has turned to Jell-O.

Trusting Jesus is the only thing they have left.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. How is your life different?
2. What kind of our works can be finished?
3. Do you think of your pastor as being in danger?
4. In what way do people still misunderstand who Jesus is?
5. Have you ever doubted your perception of reality?

Items for prayer: