

HIGHLIGHTS AND Lowlights

I decided this is kind of like a **PLAYBILL**
You can't tell the players without the
playbill...



So, my intention is to help you out, with a PLAY BILL according to the Gospel of John.

Jesus

Not a bad place to begin...

In case being hit over the head with it throughout the gospel wasn't enough for you, I would like to repeat:

John's Gospel tells us that NO ONE can really know God unless they know Jesus.

Which makes ME think of a new slogan for the next march...

KNOW JESUS, KNOW GOD...

NO JESUS, NO GOD...nope, it doesn't work, but it was a valid attempt. I tried.

So WHO IS Jesus?

Jesus Is "The Man" (and He Knows It)

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus is God's only son, sent by his father to finally tell the people of the world what God is really about.

So, yeah, he's impressive.

And boy does he know it.

Over the course of the entire gospel, Jesus tells us that he is..."the Son of Man" (1:51)

"the bread of life" (6:35)

"the light of the world" (8:12)

"the gate" (10:9)

"the good shepherd" (10:11)

"the resurrection and the life" (11:25)

"the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6)

"the true vine" (15:1)

I'd say he's a bit full of himself, but then again, he is co-equal with the Creator of the Universe, so he's probably earned some VERY MAJOR bragging rights.

Just a Little Bit Emo

When you constantly use metaphors to describe yourself, you run into a little bit of a problem: nobody understands you.

Everyone is always misinterpreting the things that Jesus says. Even believers have a tough time.

When Jesus tells Nicodemus "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (KJV 3:3), Nicodemus thinks that means you have to literally **go** jump back up your mother.

Seriously, Nic? Um, even I know that aint happeninø

The poetic stuff doesn't help him much with his detractors.

They obviously never had to take ninth-grade English because they freak out every time Jesus breaks out some figurative language.

You remember EVERYTHING from 9th grade English, right?

To be fair, these misunderstandings push the story forward and eventually lead to Jesus's death.

Plus, listening to Jesus is kind of like reading *The Divine Comedy*—even his footnotes have footnotes!—and their footnotes probably have footnotes, so it gets pretty confusing! (You can check it out in the footnotes!)

I have to say, all this confusion helps the reader feel a little bit smarter.

Yup, that's right.

We're way brainier than the "religious authorities" and the "religious elite of Jerusalem" who have completely written off Jesus because they just don't "get him."

We're also one step ahead of the disciples who keep forgetting that Jesus is a miracle worker. Or, that he is the Lord. Or, that he is the Messiah. Or, that he is God! Silly disciples!

The constant questions also give Jesus a platform to expand on his teachings. CONSTANTLY!

So, you're the bread of life? Can you tell us what that means?

Oh, do go on!

Death Becomes Him

In the other three gospels- **Mark, Matthew, and Luke**- Jesus is just a tiny bit leery about being nailed to a cross to die a slow, painful, and humiliating death.

But not in John's Gospel.

Nope, John's Jesus is totally fine with it: **Bring it!**

"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say- 'Father, save me from this hour'?"

No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour." (12:27)

Not dying on a cross is for wimpsõ and for people who don't listen to everything God tells them to do.

Bottom line: Jesus is utterly and completely faithful. That's what we are supposed to get out of this.

Now what about you? How faithful are you?

He aligns himself with God by being 100% in tune with everything God wants him to do.

God wants him to deliver his message to the entire world? Check.

God wants him to confront some non-believers holding sharp rocks? Done.

God wants him to be nailed to a cross? No problem.

Jesus is like the ultimate **yes man**.+

But in this case, it's a good thing. after all, his direct supervisor is the Ruler of Heaven and Earth.

He's History

Sure, Jesus is ~~a~~ literary figure,+but he was also ~~a~~ real, live person+who walked the earth (and also the water) thousands of years ago.

John's Gospel tells us a little about what everyday life was like for Jesus.

Up until he started his ministry, he lived in Galilee in a sweet little Jewish home. Ranch style, white picket fence, flowers in the garden. American flag hung off the porch.

When all the Gospel of John drama goes down, he's already in his 30s.

You know, 0-30 happens like that (snap of fingers!)

We've heard it's the best decade of life, although **John Stamos** might have proved us wrong. The 40s really worked for him.

And I hear, 70 is the new 40, but I am not sure about that one— especially in the morning— creak, moan, groan, stumble, hack, sniffle— but fortunately for him, Jesus, never had to face those advanced years—

Okay, back on track.

Other things we knew about Jesus:

He probably spoke Aramaic, (Not French or German or Pig Latin) but may have known some Greek, the language used throughout the Roman Empire.

He's the son of Joseph, but spent time with his mom, too. A lot of time. There is no mention of Joseph anywhere after the age of 12.

He apparently had some brothers, who may have been disciples, and who also might **NOT** have been his biggest fans.

Yep, even Jesus had to deal with **sibling rivalry**.

He also apparently had **SOME** sisters, although you know that girls were not considered to be all that important.

Not too far off from a normal human life, right?

Oh, except he traveled from town to town with his followers, preaching about what God had told him and living off donations from sympathetic listeners— especially the women.

Maybe Jesus was a %ooker!+

Widows flocked to him, as did other folks who were disenfranchised. You don't see that too much these days.

The Legacy

Jesus is probably one of the most influential figures in all of human history.

His birth. His life, His death,.. and His resurrection are hugely important to just about every artist in the western world. You don't have to go very far to find a Christ-figure in art or in modern :

- **Uncle Tom**
- **Billy Budd**
- **Randle McMurphy**
 - **Aslan**
 - **Santiago**
- **Frodo Baggins**
- **Jim Casy**

- Harry Potter
 - Mufasa
 - Neo
 - The Doctor
 - Spock
 - Klaatu
- Andy Dufresne
 - Superman
 - E.T.
- Anakin Skywalker

I could go on. Trust me...

God

God never makes an actual appearance in the Gospel of John, so we don't need to talk about him.

The end.

Oh, wait.

This guy is everywhere- even when he's not.

God sets all the events of the story in motion and he's the one who all the characters claim to be following.

So what's his deal? What is a Bible study without talking about God?

God's Got Backs

Throughout the story, God's name is on everyone's lips. Jesus calls him "Father" and lives his life according to God's will.

Even the people who can't stand Jesus claim to hate him because his teaching and actions are offending God.

Little do they know, God totally and completely has Jesus' back.

How do we know?

Because Jesus tells us God is on his side, and Jesus is always right. (Hey, wait one little minute, doesn't everybody say that God is on **THEIR SIDE**?)

Yep, in John's gospel, we're told that Jesus knows his stuff. Lotsofstuffõ one word. Lotsofstuff.

The religious authorities, on the other hand, think they have a pretty good confirmation that God is on their side.

TOLD YOU SO! Everybody says that. The Germans said it World War II, so did the Allies. Who is right? Who is wrong? Could they both be right? Could they both be wrong? Perhaps, just perhaps, God does not take %sides!+

What do you think?

It's a little book they like to call the Torah.

They've been following it since they were tiny Pharisees-to-be.

And God would never renege on Holy Scripture, right?

The authors of this gospel want us to side with Jesus, but not everyone does.

What do you think: is the story convincing? Or not? Just so you know there was never a canonical gospel written after John. John was like, %the final word.+

There's Only a Plan A

The Gospel explains God's %master plan+pretty clearly.

He needs to send Jesus into the world to (1) show us all how much God loves us and (2) make him die a miserable death. Nice plan, God.

Lots of people have speculated over the years that maybe God is a not-so-nice deity- after all, he asks his beloved son to die on the cross. But if we're taking The Gospel of John's words as the final say, that's not the case.

The authors tell us that Jesus is "the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (1:29, 36) and that his death is also going to "glorify God" (21:19).

That means that Jesus's death is another step in God's plan for saving the world. (SALVATION)

Is that fair?

Is it right?

If not, it's just one more event in a long line of totally unfair things God has asked people to undergo to prove a point.

Check out **Abraham's almost-sacrifice of Isaac** and everything that happens to **Job** for just two examples.

Shut Up and Believe

The gospel writers want us to **be like Jesus**, which means no questions for the all-knowing God, please.

God wants Jesus to die and that's what's going to happen. Period.

End of story.

Of course, that won't stop us from whispering about God in the halls and in between classes or during coffee hour or in private conversations in our heads

Simon Peter

Peter's nickname is "**The Rock**," but we're guessing it wasn't because he walked around Galilee hitting non-believers over the head with folding chairs.

Let's take a look, though, just to be sure. Ya never know about Peter or what he might do or accomplish!

Right-Hand Man

The writers of the Gospel of John don't go into it, but **Matthew** explains that Peter gets his nickname because he's "the rock" on which Jesus will build his church (16:18).

John's gospel thinks he's **a pretty standup guy**,+too:

Peter refuses to ditch Jesus: "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (6:68).

He defends Jesus during his arrest. Even if Jesus does have to tell him to chill out (18:10).

He's one of the first people on the scene on Easter morning (20:3).

When he spots Risen Jesus on the shore, he jumps off the boat and swims to him (21:7). He doesn't get there any faster, but he gets an A for effort.

We're definitely supposed to like Peter and see him as a bona fide leader.

Someone worthy of heading the church once Jesus dies. The first Pope. The keeper of the keys at the Pearly Gates in Heaven. Yep, that's the same guy. Wears white. Neat hat. Little tiny white shoes drives around in little cars

Falling Rocks

But Peter isn't perfect. And when he messes up, he messes up- big time.

Hey, don't we all. Especially me, I mess up a lot.

On the night he's arrested, Jesus predicts, "before the cock crows, [Peter] will have denied [him] three times" (13:38).

Sure enough, within a few hours, Peter is shrugging his shoulders and saying, "Jesus who?" to some hostile questioners.

Why does Peter deny knowing Jesus?

Maybe it's because he's scared. And can we really blame him?

His Lord and Savior has been arrested on capital charges and Judea is not known for having a long and thorough appeals process.

He's probably right to think that if he goes to bat for Jesus, he'll be next on the religious authorities' hit list.

Back in the Game

The Gospel of John throws in a nice little post-resurrection scene with Jesus, in which Peter gets to redeem himself.

As they're sitting on the beach, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves him.

"Peter felt hurt" (Aww, poor boy) that Jesus would question him, but, hey, it had only been a week since he refused to admit he even knew Jesus. EMO PETER, who knew?

The three professions of love wipe away the previous three denials, and Jesus asks Peter to take care of his sheep. Yep, that's where the church gets it that he should be the first pope.

All is forgiven and Peter can take his rightful place as caretaker of the church.

Order is restored.

All is good.

What's the point?

Probably that even if you stray, there's always a chance for redemption.

Prodigal son, anyone? Yeah us, there's hope for us, yet!

The End

The end of John's Gospel also hints at the fact that Peter is going to be put to death for continuing to stay faithful to Jesus.

According to Christian tradition, (yikes tradition) about 30 years after Jesus died, Peter was also sentenced to death by crucifixion.

The only thing Peter asked was that he be **crucified upside down** because he wasn't worthy to be put to death in the same way as Jesus.

Loyal 'til the end. JUST LIKE JESUS.

The Beloved Disciple

I would like to announce a name change.

No courts were involved in this name-change.

FROM NOW ON:

I would officially like to be called "The Beloved Pastor."

Is that possible?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Not gonna fly, you say.

Well, you gotta admit, it was a valiant attemptõ a nice try.

Somehow, it worked for this guy named John.

Now back to my regularly scheduled Biblical analysis.

We never quite catch this disciple's name, but he's clearly teacher's pet.

After all, his nickname is "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

According to the gospel, he's also the source for all John's info on Jesus' life and work.

Yeah, we think he's worth a look.

Why He's Awesome

Though he doesn't show up until Chapter 13, ~~the~~ The Beloved Disciple gets a feature role in some of the most important moments of Jesus' life (and death):

He's the one who asks Jesus to explain a little more about the "betrayal" thing at the last supper (13:23-25).

He hangs out with the ladies at the foot of the cross, making him the only male disciple with enough guts to be there.

He's the first one to believe in Jesus' resurrection: he "reached the tomb first [ō] and he saw and believed" (20:8).

He's the first to recognize the post-resurrection Jesus as the disciples are fishing on the Sea of Galilee (21:7).

This guy is sharp.

He gets it.

No silly misunderstandings for him.

Which makes me wonder (although it did take him 13 chapters to earn the beloved status) so may we assume, that he didn't start out being the beloved that he had to earn his way, and earn the title?

More food for thought!

Rival Disciples

Is that like dueling banjos?

Did you notice a bit of tension between Peter and **The Beloved Disciple** during the course of the story?

The two followers just love to play off each other:

It's Peter's *idea* to ask who's going to betray Jesus.

The Beloved Disciple does the asking.

When they find out Jesus' tomb is empty, Peter and **The Beloved Disciple** race there.

The Beloved Disciple wins, but Peter gets to go into the tomb first.

The Beloved Disciple spots Jesus on the shore, but Peter's the one who jumps off the boat to swim to him.

And, in the end, when Jesus tells Peter his fate (spoiler alert: he's going to die), Peter immediately asks what's going to happen to **The Beloved Disciple**.

What's going on here?

It's like they're locked in some kind of weird discipleship contest or competition.+ Maybe they were competing for the Bishop of Rome position only there was no white smoke yet because the Cardinals (the guys in the red suits and hats) hadn't met yet? Hey do they have red shoes like Dorothy? Click em three times and you might be Bishop of Rome!

Are we supposed to be comparing the two?

Seriously, I am asking.

Peter wins out.

He gets the chair of St. Peter almost was the chair of St. John hehehe.

Man of Mystery

This beloved guy...the one whom Jesus loves...

Maybe his name **is not** John at all.

So who exactly is this mysterious follower of Jesus?+

No one really knows.

For years, Christians thought that he was actually named John and that he wrote the whole Gospel himself.

Hence, the Gospel of John or Jose or Hosea hehehe.

Over the years, other theories have floated around.

Was he one of Jesus's brothers? There was a brother named Joseph.

Was he Lazarus?

Was he actually a she? (Gasp!)

Oh no, Mary Magdalene, another rumor or false narrative.

Now, many scholars believe that he may just be a creation of the gospel writers. "a special, gifted disciple to be the ultimate witness for their version of Jesus's life."

But I do not buy that. I do not like John's gospel to begin with, so why would I care about this speculation.

The questions continue to this day.

What was his name?

Did he really exist?

And what kind of running shoes was he wearing when he beat Peter in that race?

Sadly, the world may never know.

And as a Markan scholar, I don't care. Sorry.

Mary Magdalene

Talk about prime seating. Mary Magdalene is only mentioned twice- very late in the Gospel- but she gets up close and personal at the most important events in the story: the crucifixion and the resurrection.

People have a lot to say about her, that's for sure, but what does John's gospel want us to know about this (in)famous Mary?

One of the Guys

John never lists of all the disciples by name, so it's pretty safe to assume that there are more than just twelve guys hanging around Jesus during throughout the story.

If that's the case, Mary probably would have spent a lot of time with Jesus & co.

Sorry, I do not buy into the whole, she was his wife thing.

I will however give her the title of Apostle or as one sent out. Or even as apostle to the apostles. But, Mrs. J, nah.

In fact, after the whole empty tomb fiasco, Jesus appears to her before he even goes to visit the guys.

He tells her:

"Go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (20:17)

Wait, what?

The girl disciple gets to go back and tells the guys what she's seen and heard?

A biblical woman telling men, anything????

Future feminists erupt into cheers on her behalf.

Natural Woman Addendum (Sorry) You Make Me Feel Like a Natural Woman

Looking out on the morning rain
I used to feel uninspired
And when I knew I had to face another day
Lord, it made me feel so tired
Before the day I met you, life was so unkind
But your love was the key to my peace of mind

'Cause you make me feel
You make me feel
You make me feel
Like a natural woman

And when my soul was in the lost-and-found
You came along to claim it
I didn't know just what was wrong with me
'Til your kiss helped me name it

Now I'm no longer doubtful
Of what I'm living for
'Cause if I make you happy I don't need to do more

You make me feel
You make me feel
You make me feel
Like a natural woman

Oh baby what you've done to me
(What you've done to me)
You make me feel so good inside
(Good inside)
And I just want to be
(Wanna be)
Close to you you make me feel so alive

You make me feel
You make me feel
You make me feel
Like a natural, natural woman

You make me feel
You know you make me feel
You make me feel
Like a natural woman

You know you
You make me feel
You make me feel
You make me feel
Like a natural woman

Natural woman

As you might imagine, women weren't running companies back in the 1st century- that's to say, things weren't quite the same back then.

And people weren't afraid to discredit Mary Magdalene because of it.

In the first few centuries, people discredited the resurrection because it was based on the witness of "a half-frantic woman."

You know, hysterical, same root word as hysterectomy.

It's not surprising, then, that Mary has gotten kind of a bad name.

She was considered a "fallen woman" since way back in 591 C.E. when Pope Gregory the Great **told everyone that she was a prostitute.**

Idiot! Sorry, a Biblical scholar, he was not.

He should have read the book.

Leaker.

None of the gospels say anything about Mary being a prostitute or even a notorious sinner, but the charges stuck.

And it wasn't until 1969- nearly two millennia later- that the Catholic Church finally corrected that little error.

Better late than never, I guess.

What a bunch of Bozo\$õ I tell you. Open the book up and read it. It is required reading material for all my Confirmandsõ

But popes can't be botheredõ

Where's Mary?

Being one of the only women who consistently appears in the Jesus stories has its advantages. Kind of and it doesn't at the same time

For one, Mary gets a lot of screen time in art and literature worldwide.

She is usually portrayed with **long, red hair**, signifying her supposed lack of modesty. you know those red-heads.

Lots of people have even imagined some kind of romantic relationship between her and Jesus.

Just as another group of people have talked about homophobic behavior

Pfffffffffttttttttttttttttttt . to em all Give me a break!

The plot of ***The Da Vinci Code*** also hinges on the idea that the Catholic Church has attempted to cover up the fact that Mary Magdalene and Jesus were secretly married and had kids.

The Catholic Church to be honest has been known for its cover-ups of late so, the speculation just continues

Why all this attention?

Well, as a prominent disciple, a vital witness, and a powerful woman, Mary's the total package. Plus she is a womanõ

That would mean girl disciplesõ

And, girl preachers.

Girl pastors. Ordination for womenõ Yikes! No, not that!

(Incidentally the ELCA has been ordaining women since 1970õ 51 years ago, I know it is not much, but many churches still are not there, yet!)

Chokes, (Roman Catholic)

Coughs, (Missouri Synod)

Hacks, (Wisconsin Synod) Come on boys, what are you waiting forõ

Judas Iscariot

Things never quite work out for Judas.

He gets a bad rap right from the beginning of the story- but does he deserve it?

Et tu, Judas?

Just a little bit of Shakespeare for the Shakespeare lover in you...

Judas' big defining character trait is that he betrays Jesus. That might explain why you've met tons of guys named Peter but have never come across a **Judas**.

No one wants to name their baby after a turncoat. (We bet you've never met a **Benedict** either.)

John's Gospel doesn't go easy on Judas, that's for sure.

Not only are we told that he's "going to betray [Jesus]" (6:71) way back in Chapter 6, we're reminded of this little fact *every time* **Judas'** name pops up.

Try to get a label like that off your Google search results.

Ah, the **dramatic irony**.

We know all along that **Judas** is the bad guy, but it isn't until the last supper that Jesus finally reveals the big-fat-juicy-secret.

He hands him a piece of bread- not exactly the most dramatic choice- and **Judas** runs out into the night to meet up with the religious authorities (13:30).

Jesus even pins his death on **Judas**, telling Pilate "the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin" (19:11).

No mercy for the wicked, indeed.

Bad to the Bone

On the day I was born
The nurses all gathered 'round
And they gazed in wide wonder
At the joy they had found
The head nurse spoke up
And she said "leave this one alone"
She could tell right away
That I was bad to the bone

Bad to the bone
Bad to the bone
B-B-B-B-Bad to the bone
B-B-B-B-Bad
B-B-B-B-Bad
Bad to the bone

I broke a thousand hearts
Before I met you
I'll break a thousand more, baby
Before I am through
I wanna be yours pretty baby
Yours and yours alone
I'm here to tell ya honey
That I'm bad to the bone
Bad to the bone
B-B-B-Bad
B-B-B-Bad
B-B-B-Bad
Bad to the bone

I make a rich woman beg
I'll make a good woman steal
I'll make an old woman blush
And make a young woman squeal
I wanna be yours pretty baby
Yours and yours alone
I'm here to tell ya honey
That I'm bad to the bone
B-B-B-B-Bad
B-B-B-B-Bad
B-B-B-B-Bad
Bad to the bone

And when I walk the streets
Kings and Queens step aside
Every woman I meet
They all stay satisfied
I wanna tell ya pretty baby
Well Ya see I make my own
I'm here to tell ya honey
That I'm bad to the bone
Bad to the bone

B-B-B-B-Bad
B-B-B-Bad
B-B-B-Bad
Bad to the bone

As if betraying the son of God weren't bad enough, John's gospel ups the ante on **Judas'** evil ways.

When **Judas** objects to Mary of Bethany wasting money on expensive perfumes to wash Jesus' feet, the authors don't let us believe he wants the money to go to poor instead.

Nope, it's because "he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it" (12:6). Yikes!

That's right.

He's **a liar** and **a thief** and he doesn't even care about the poor.

Clearly, we're not supposed to feel sorry for this guy.
Poor-old-**Judas!**

Just Doing His Job

Yep, yes so you know, there is a gospel of Judas.

The Gospel of Judas is a non-canonical Gnostic gospel.

The content consists of conversations between Jesus and Judas Iscariot.

Given that it includes late 2nd century theology, it is widely thought to have been composed in the 2nd century by Gnostic Christians, rather than the historic Judas himself.

What were **Judas'** motivations for turning in Jesus?

Did he do it for the money?

Was he jealous?

Did he think Jesus was a fraud?

The Gospel never really gives us a good reason.

No matter what the reason, Jesus needs **Judas**.

If **Judas** had never turned him in, Jesus wouldn't have been able to carry out God's orders.

Jesus knows from the beginning that **Judas'** actions are going to set off the chain of events that lead to his death.

So wait.

Does that mean the salvation of the world is made possible because of **Judas'** devious actions? Does this mean he was supposed to betray Jesus? Predestined to betray Jesus.

Maybe Jesus should be thanking him instead of condemning him.

What do you think?

Popular

Judas is right up there among the most talked about folks in the gospels.

Authors and artists just love to write and talk about his role in Jesus's life and death.

And no wonder. He's kind of at the center of all the drama.

Some of these chatters go the "ultimate betrayer" route.

Like, say, Dante, who shows **Judas** in the **ninth circle of hell** being chewed on for all eternity by Satan himself.

Thanks for the image, Dante.

That's for those of you, who have never read the *Inferno*, but always wanted to.

Other people take a more sympathetic view.

The musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* portrays **Judas** as a tragic figure who only turns Jesus in because he thought the whole "son of God" thing had gone a bit too far.

Oh, and Lady Gaga even has a song called "**Judas**" about the way people are constantly pulled toward the bad guys.

And hey, when Lady Gaga has a song about you, you know you've arrived. I am still waiting for her song to come out about PJ. Hehehe.

The Other Disciples

The Twelve?

Not Quite

Christian tradition tells us that there were exactly twelve disciples, no more, no less.

Unless, of course, you read John's Gospel.

Aside from "the twelve" (6:67) who are always hanging around, there seem to be plenty of other men and women who make an appearance.

In addition to Peter, the Beloved Disciple, and Mary Magdalene, John's Gospel names several disciples specifically: Andrew, Nathanael, Phillip, and Thomas.

Usually, the spare disciples are just milling around asking questions and generally being confused about what Jesus means by things.

It's quite helpful, actually, because they provide an avenue for Jesus to answer questions and keep talking.

Oh, Jesus, won't you tell us more about the vine and the branches?

We have no clue what you're talking about.

Let's look at an example:

Before Jesus multiplies the loaves and fishes, he asks his disciples how they're going to get more food.

Philip tells him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little" (6:7).

Andrew offers, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" (6:9).

It's only once the disciples have registered their doubts and proven themselves to be a little thick that Jesus rolls up his sleeves and gets to work proving them all wrong.

Ladies' Night

Isn't there a song by that name?

Well looky here...look what I found...of course, I had to include it, I mean, why not, right?

Ladies Night

Atomic Kitten, Kool & The Gang

Mmm oh yeah, oh what a night, its ladies night

This is your night tonight

Everything's gunna be alright,

This is your night tonight

Come on girls!

Girls, we all got one,

A night that's special everywhere(everywhere)

From New York to Hollywood

It's ladies night and girl the feeling's good

Oh yes it's ladies night

And the feeling's right

Oh yes it's ladies night

Oh what a night (oh what a night)

Oh yes it's ladies night

And the feeling's right

Oh yes it's ladies night
Oh what a night (oh what a night)
This is your night tonight
Everything's gonna be alright
This is your night tonight
Everything's gonna be alright
Romantic lady, ooh yeah, single baby
Mmm sophisticated mama,
Come on you disco baby yeah yeah
Stay with me tonight
If you hear any noise
It ain't the boys, it's ladies night, uh huh
Come on girls!
Gonna step out ladies night
Steppin' out ladies night
Gonna step out ladies night
Steppin' out ladies night
OH yes its ladies night,
And the feelings right
Oh yes its ladies night
Oh what a night (oh what a night)
Oh yes its ladies night
And the feelings right
Oh yes its ladies night
Oh what a night (oh what a night)
On disco lights your name will be seen
You can fulfill all your dreams
Party here, party there, everywhere
This is your night, baby
You've got to be there
This is your night
Tonight, everything is gonna be alright
This is your night
Tonight, everything is gonna be alright
(Keep repeating until the end of the song)

Don't worry, ladies, there's room for you in the 1st century, too. In addition to Mary Magdalene, we meet Mary (the wife of a guy named Clopas), Jesus's aunt, and Jesus's mother, named—wait for it—Mary.

Martha, Lazarus's sister, is definitely a follower of Jesus, too.

There really is **something about Mary**.

The name was by far the most common for Jewish girls in the first century.

Why?

Maybe because it was also Moses's sister's name—Miriam. Mary is simply the updated version of Miriam.

Even Disciples Get the Blues

Not everyone is cut out for a life following Jesus.

In addition to Judas, who flat-out betrays Jesus, there are other disciples who leave him behind after they hear his teaching about eating flesh and drinking blood.

And we have to admit, it's questionable preaching strategy.

The disciples that remained would have almost certainly put themselves in danger by sticking with Jesus.

Think about it: they're following around a guy who enrages the folks in positions of power and who people alternately want to worship and kill.

You've got to be pretty tough to stick that one out.

The Religious Authorities

Rotten to the Core

All in all, the religious authorities are a rather nasty bunch. They hear everything (EVERY THING) Jesus has to say about God, watch him perform miracles, and then have him arrested and executed.

Their annoyance with Jesus starts out slow: First, they're just grumbling about Jesus baptizing people (3:26).

Then, they're openly questioning why he is healing on the Sabbath in defiance of Jewish law (5:16).

Next, they're trying to trap him into saying something illegal or, you know, attempting to stone him (8:6).

Finally, they decide to turn him over to Rome to be crucified (11:53).

It looks like their issues stem from two sources: (1) Jesus is violating Jewish laws and ideas, and (2) he is openly insulting God by claiming to be equal with God.

This latter charge is called blasphemy. + Nice charge.

This flies in the face of everything they know and hold dear about God, so, clearly, Jesus has to die.

That's just how things roll in Rome or in Jerusalem or in Judea or in Galilee but almost all scholars today will point out it is NOT ALL JEWS.

JUST the Jewish elite of Jerusalem, the Jews of the TEMPLE, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Scribes but even not ALL OF THEM, but SOME OF THEM were definitely involved.

Stop the anti-Semitism.

Stop the hatred.

Stop the Jew-bashing.

Dang, Christians pppffffffttttt !!!!

Was That a Threat?

These guys clearly view Jesus and his ministry as a threat to their authority in the community.

They're worried that, if Jesus is allowed to keep preaching and performing miracles, everyone's going to be jumping on the Jesus bandwagon.

Where will that leave them?

What about the laws God has handed down through Moses?

Jesus has pretty much undone everything they've achieved for themselves.

All those fancy diplomas for nothing. All that wasted %amb skin.+

Justified...

Are the religious authorities being paranoid?

Are they judging too quickly?

Or are they witnessing a guy claiming to be the son of God and reasonably thinking he's a total crazy pants?

CRAY, CRAY as the kids say.

Think about it:

one day, a guy strolls into the temple.

He's from nowhere important and has no formal education, but he claims to know things that only God knows.

Hmmm.

Wouldn't you laugh someone like that out of the building?

Not to mention, the religious authorities have worked their whole lives studying to gain knowledge of God and the law.

How dare some nobody off the street claim to know more than them? They went to Harvard.

There's also **SOME** fear for the greater good. Not a lot, but **SOME**.

The authorities are worried that if everyone becomes a Jesus groupie, the Romans will come into Judea and destroy the people and their holy places in order to squash any hint of disorder (11:48).

They feel like they have a duty to protect %the people+and %the temple+from a disaster like this.

What do you think. is that a reasonable concern? Or not?

But Wrong

As understandable as their skepticism towards Jesus is, in this story, they are completely and utterly in the wrong. And all we can do is stand by and watch them dig their own graves.

During Jesus' trial before Pilate, the religious authorities are practically foaming at the mouth to see Jesus nailed to a cross.

In their zeal, they end up professing their loyalty to the Roman Emperor (19:15) rather than God, and. bam. they condemn themselves right in front of God's face. That's going to be hard to make up for.

What's in a Name?

The name game. Shirley! Shirley, Shirley

Bo-ber-ley, bo-na-na fanna

Fo-fer-ley. fee fi mo-mer-ley, Shirley!

Lincoln! Lincoln, Lincoln. bo-bin-coln

Bo-na-na fanna, fo-fin-coln

Fee fi mo-min-coln, Lincoln!

Come on ev'rybody, I say now let's play a game

I betcha I can make a rhyme out of anybody's name

The first letter of the name

I treat it like it wasn't there

But a "B" or an "F" or an "M" will appear

And then I say "Bo" add a "B" then I say the name

Then "Bo-na-na fanna" and "fo"

And then I say the name again with an "'f" very plain

Then "fee fi" and a "mo"

And then I say the name again with an "M" this time

And there isn't any name that I can't rhyme

Arnold! Arnold, Arnold bo-bar-nold

Bo-na-na, fanna fo-far-nold

Fee fi m-mar-mold. Arnold!

But if the first two letters are ever the same

Crop them both, then say the name

Like Bob, Bob, drop the "B's", Bo-ob

Or Fred, Fred, drop the "F's", Fo-red

Or Mary, Mary, drop the "M's", Mo-ary

That's the only rule that is contrary

And then I say "Bo" add a "B" then I say the name

Then "Bo-na-na fanna" and "fo"

And then I say the name again with an "'f" very plain

Then "fee fi" and a "mo"

And then I say the name again with an "M" this time

And there isn't any name that I can't rhyme

Say Tony, Tony, bo-bo-ney

Bo-na-na fanna, fo-fo-ney
Fee fi mo-mo-ney, Tony!
Let's do Billy!
Billy, Billy, bo-gil-ly, bo-na-na
Fanna, fo-fil-ly,
Fee fi mo-mil-ly, Billy!
Let's do Marsha!
Marsha, Marsha, bo-bar-sha
Bo-na-na fanna, fo-far-sha
Fee fi mo-ar-sha, Marsha!
Little trick with Nick!
Nick, Nick, bo-bick, bo-na-na
Fanna fo fick, fee fi mo-mick. Nick!
The name game

The Gospel of John has lots of different names for this group of naysayers.

Sometimes they're referred to as "the Pharisees" or "the chief priests," and sometimes they're simply "the Jews."

The point of these characters is to show that many of the people opposing Jesus held official religious positions in the Jewish community.

So for the sake of clarity, I decided to just call these guys what they are: the religious authorities.

Kind of like the bishops and their staffs. (No, not that kind of a staff.) I am thinking employees, henchmen ñ hehehe.

Or at least those who think too highly of themselves and their power and their positions.

Demigods is a good word I think.

Figuratively, it is used to describe a person whose talents or abilities are so superlative that they appear to approach being divine.

Pontius Pilate

Pilate is the guy who sentences Jesus to death.

Pretty big deal, right?

But you might notice that the gospel authors tend to cut him quite a bit of slack. He was a Roman henchman. Not known as being a warm and caring guy.

The blame is usually placed on **Judas**, the blood-thirsty crowd, or the religious authorities- not on the actual person who's ordering the crucifying.

OR, just the JEWS in general. YIKES! More antisemiticism

Let's take a closer look.

Judge, Jury, and Executioner

In the Gospel of John, Pilate decides Jesus' ultimate fate.

The religious authorities come to him because they want Jesus put to death but don't have the authority to do it.

The trouble is, Pilate can't figure out what Jesus has done wrong. He is momentarily confused by it all

He REPEATEDLY denies that Jesus is guilty of any crime: "I find no case against him" (18:38). Ditto.

"Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him" (19:4). Ditto.

"Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him" (19:6). Ditto. 3 times for emphasis sake?

"Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out" (19:12). Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him

Translation: NOT GUILTY.

But don't remove the handcuffs just yet.

The Judean court of appeals isn't exactly a model of justice.

In the end, Pilate decides that it will be much easier just to crucify Jesus and make the crowd happy.

After all, he's just an insignificant Jewish peasant, right?

Basically, Pilate's role in the story is to vouch for Jesus' credibility and to highlight just how low the religious authorities have stooped.

But is that what really happened? Hmmmm .

Let's Get Historical

Full disclosure: Pilate isn't just a stock literary bad guy. He's also a very real person, who actually served as the Roman governor of Judea from 26 to 36 CE and sentenced Jesus to death.

And though he comes off as lenient in John's gospel, in reality he was anything but. Ruthless is more like it.

Pilate managed to keep rule over the Judean province for ten years, but his relationship with the Jewish people was often strained.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that Pilate **repeatedly tried to put Roman emblems in the temple** (a violation of Jewish law because they commemorated other gods).

That didn't make for very happy subjects.

Another Jewish historian, Philo, wrote that Pilate "was a man of a very inflexible disposition, and very merciless as well as very obstinate" (*On the Embassy to Gaius*, 38:301).

Not exactly a little ray of sunshine.

He was ultimately removed from Judea by the Roman Emperor after he ordered some powerful Samaritans to be killed.

So would the real Pilate have given a second thought about sentencing Jesus to death?

Maybe.

If his relationship with the Jewish authorities was hostile, he might have refused to play a part in their little game.

It's only because the crowd pushes him so much that he finally caves in. And would a Royal Governor of Pilate's status really cave in to public pressure?

Pilate also seems to be a bit scared of that crowd. Huh?

Pilate would have rather killed the whole bunch of them, slaughtering them mercilessly, rather than have to deal with them.

When he hears their accusations and chants, "he [becomes] more afraid than ever" (19:8). Really?

After all, they outnumber him and his job is to keep the peace.

Why not just execute this guy and get it over with? Pilate takes the easy way out.

Making Waves

Pilate definitely gets some choice roles in art and in our world literature:

In *Jesus Christ Superstar*, he is alternately annoyed with and sympathetic to Jesus.

In *The Passion of the Christ*, Pilate desperately tries to free Jesus, but the blood-thirsty crowd won't have any of it.

In *The Crucible*, John Proctor calls one of the other characters Pontius Pilate because of the role he's playing in sentencing the women of Salem to death.

Song of Solomon features a female character who is named Pilate after her father picks the name at random from the Bible.

John the Baptizer

John the Baptizer is like **that guy who announces the boxers before the big fight** (*Coming to you all the way from Nazareth, it's the Lamb of God himself—Jeeeeeesuuuuuuus!*).

All the gospels show John proclaiming the start of Jesus' ministry, so it's clear that Jesus' entry into the world is very closely tied to this guy.

In the other three gospels, John baptizes Jesus himself.
In **Luke**, they're actually cousins.

Jesus can't seem to get away from this guy.

Pay No Attention to the Man Behind the Curtain

The Gospel of John is very (*very*) clear about who John the Baptizer really is.

His main job is to tell people about Jesus but not to hog the spotlight.

Here are a few of the things John shouts from the rooftops about Jesus:

"He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me." (1:15)

"I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." (1:27)

"Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29)

"I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." (1:34)

Talk about dramatic.

When John's disciples catch wind of all this, they leave John and promptly go to follow Jesus.

But it ain't no thang to John.

It's what everyone is supposed to be doing.

Sounds like John needs a little self-esteem boost.

Why All the Hoopla?

(Because the Milwaukee Bucks are in it, to win it!)
Sorry, I thought the word was "hoops"
Never mind!

The Baptizer doth protest too much, me thinks.

Why does John keep going on about Jesus being the greatest of all time, you know the g.o.a.t.?

The Gospel seems desperate to make clear that Jesus—not John—is actually the messiah sent by God.

It stands to reason that there were some people at the time who doubted this was the case.

If it weren't a concern, they wouldn't have to mention it, right?

The Real Guy

(Like the real thing!)
Coke?

For all the excitement surrounding this guy, it's easy to forget that he's a real historical figure.

The Gospel of John mentions that John the Baptizer was beheaded by Herod Antipas (3:24), but doesn't go into the details.

Too bad, because they're good.

Mark's gospel and the 1st-century Jewish historian, Josephus, go into a little more depth.

Josephus calls John "a good man" and says that "Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause" (*Jewish Antiquities*, Book 18, Chapter 5:2).

Looks like John met the same end as Jesus, but without all the subsequent fanfare.

We guess starting one of the world's most popular religions is harder than it looks.

If it were not, everyone would start one

Nicodemus

Better known as Nick at Night!

Nicodemus is a member of the religious authorities, but he's also sympathetic to Jesus.

Sounds like an **oxymoron**, right?

Well, this guy pulls it off when he randomly pops up a few times in John:

He visits Jesus at night and they discuss being born again (3:1-10).

He hints that the religious authorities might be overstepping their bounds just a wee-tiny-bit while they're discussing the best ways to get Jesus put to death (7:51).

He buys a huge amount of expensive perfumes to prepare Jesus's body for burial (19:39).

Confused?

Let's dig a little deeper.

NICK, you In or Out?

Although Nicodemus reveres Jesus as a teacher, he's also not officially out as a follower of Jesus.

That might be why the gospel throws him into the story: to prove that, even among the religious authorities, Jesus has fans or maybe not

But Nicodemus is clearly worried about going against his fellow Pharisees.

He seems to know that the others aren't going to be pleased when they find out that he's been secretly visiting Jesus.

His oh-so-mild defense of Jesus during the vicious pre-trial is evidence of his unwillingness to commit social suicide.

What do you think? Cowardly or just plain rational?

One of a Kind

You can flip through the rest of the gospels to see how the other three characterize this guy, but you'll come up empty handed.

Why?

Because Nicodemus is unique to the Gospel of John.

The others either don't know about him or just don't care.

And the rest of the world seems to feel the same way.

We dare you to think of more than a couple Nicodemuses in pop culture.

Maybe Nicodemus has failed to inspire any interest because he doesn't really do anything of importance.

He misunderstands Jesus like the rest of the disciples, but he also never declares his faith in Jesus.

He keeps to his comfortable position of power and only mildly questions what's going on around him.

Compared to the others who were being martyred for following Jesus, he's not quite going the distance for God.

Lazarus

Lazarus's big moment comes when he's been dead for four days. Yikes! Poor Lazarus had to die to become famous.

But if you think about it, a lot of people had to die to become more popular and famous.

Jesus visits his tomb, says a little prayer, and Lazarus comes stumbling out, very much alive (11:44). Remember his feet were bound and his legs were bound so perhaps he was doing the Bunny Hop.

That's right, Jesus brings this guy back from the dead. But he is not the only one.

He is just the only one that there is a whole narrative about and a relationship, both before and after the raising.

Mary, Martha and Lazarus were previously introduced to them.

Once again, the writers of John are giving Jesus a chance to show off his miracle-working abilities.

And we have to say, this is easily Jesus's most impressive miracle to date.

Seriously. try to follow that one.

Johnny Carson said, "Never follow animal acts, children, or Jesus Christ!" Or, maybe I just made that up!

You might think that death and resurrection sounds familiar.

Oh right, that's because it happens to Jesus, too.

Foreshadowing, anyone?

If Jesus brings Lazarus back, you can bet he'll be making his own return appearance, too.

It's kind of like a little teaser trailer for Easter.

Supporting Actor

Being the subject of a miraculous rebirth can have its down side, too.

First, it can put your newly restored life in danger.

The religious authorities, who by this point have decided that Jesus must be stopped at all costs, also plan to kill Lazarus (12:10-11).

Jesus is winning new followers left and right after this display, and they all want to get a glimpse of Lazarus.

The plan: kill Lazarus and end the show. **NOW!**

And yeah, that's about it.

In fact, even Lazarus's sisters get to shine more than he does: they have sophisticated discussions with Jesus about life and death; and later (12:1), Mary washes Jesus' feet at a dinner party while Lazarus, presumably, sits back and enjoys the dessert course.

And, asks for seconds and thirds

Really, Lazarus is there to let Jesus show off his skills and to host a party where his sister will anoint Jesus for burial.

No speaking or agency for this guy just a bit part, kind of

Just some being dead and letting others shine.

He's an Inspiration

Lazarus's character has become synonymous with coming back from the dead.

Not a bad legacy for a guy, whose name means, **GOD HAS HELPED!**

Let's see if you knew this:

Lazarus syndrome is a medical term for a person whose body starts functioning again after being declared dead. Yep, that's a real thing look it up, if you do not believe me!

Sylvia Plath wrote her poem, "**Lady Lazarus**", about her failed suicide attempts. Strange.

Lazarus did not attempt suicide, at least that we know of

But stranger things have been done in literature.

"**The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock**" also name-drops Lazarus ("I am Lazarus, come from the dead, Come back to tell you all"). Yeah, that's a thing +

An episode of **Doctor Who** features a character named Richard Lazarus who has invented a way to cheat death. +

But Lazarus didn't cheat death, he physically died and then, he died again

Finishing up the side plot in John's Gospel, in the movie, **The Last Temptation of Christ**, a weakened Lazarus is killed to discredit Jesus.

The Greek word for "gospel" is *evangelion*, as you all know, which roughly means "good news."

And that's what all four of the gospels claim to share: the good news that God has sent Jesus into the world. +

A gospel is different from a standard **biography** because it isn't just a record of someone's life.

Nope, a gospel has a clear purpose: it wants to make you believe.

If you walk away after reading one of the gospels and your life hasn't been changed, then the gospels will hang their papery heads in sadness because they've failed to do their jobs.

The early Christians (Read Peter and Mark) invented the idea of a gospel-form-writing; up until then, nothing like it had ever been written.

And their invention worked.

Big time.

In the last 2,000 years, the gospels have helped convince billions of people all over the world that Jesus is someone worth putting your faith in.

What's Up With the Title?

This one's not too tough.

The title lets us know that the story we're about to read is a gospel and that it was written by someone named John. Oh, except that this gospel was almost certainly *not* written by any one person named John.

P.S. Remember, there isn't a standard title for this gospel.

You might see it called various things like "The Gospel According to St. John," "The Gospel of John," or, more simply, just "John."

Setting 1st-century Judea

The Gospel of John is set entirely in the **Roman province of Judea** sometime between the years 26 and 29 CE.

Who cares?

Well, Jesus and his disciples lived and worked right smack in the middle of what are disputed Israeli and Palestinian territories today.

Sadly, not much has changed since the 1st century: the people back then were pretty frustrated with their living situation, too.

This gospel calls out three key regions within the province.

Judea itself, which is home to the big Temple in Jerusalem, and where Jesus is ultimately crucified

Samaria, which is home to those enemies of the Jewish people, Samaritans (they're not *all* good apparently) — their hatred goes back centuries

Galilee, where Jesus is born and raised — and most importantly, begins his ministry

The action of the story mainly alternates between Judea and Galilee.

One gets the idea Galilee-good, Judea-bad.

Judea-snobby, Galilee poor and uneducated.

Galilee . bad rep, Judea . good rep.

Judea . supra religious, Galilee . eclectic.

Galilee . backwards-hicks, Judea . proper, educated and elite.

And, naturally, Jesus runs into different types of issues in both places.

But he and his movement are definitely stereotyped as being Galileans

Jews and Romans

The people of Judea were mostly Jewish and had been conquered and occupied by the mighty **Roman Empire**. This was no big deal to **ROME** they had more important things to worry about than some insignificant Jewish **PROVINCE** but it was a huge issue for the people of Judea.

Many of them resented Roman rule.

After all, the Romans had complete control over the land, laws, and government, and forced everyone to pay tons and tons in taxes.

The Jews were hoping (and praying) that God would send a messiah or an "anointed one" to reclaim Jewish rule of Judea and to kick out the Roman occupiers.

Home and Away

Back home in Galilee, people aren't impressed with Jesus. Think about it, if the kid who grew up down the street from you starting telling people he was God's son, you would be skeptical, too.

(That guy says he's sent from God? I knew him when he used to eat paste in kindergarten!)

So when he's in Galilee, Jesus isn't exactly treated like a hometown hero.

In Judea, he has another problem all together: he seems to reek of Galilean wherever he goes.

The people refuse to believe he's the messiah because he was born in Galilee.

The messiah is supposed to be born in Bethlehem (which is in Judea.)

That's probably why **Matthew** and **Luke** go through such lengths to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for Jesus' birth.

It is like he HAS TO be born in the CITY OF DAVID.

Bethlehem was believed to be %David's town.+

The Gospel of John, though, doesn't seem to care much about all that. The messiah was born in Galilee and the people will just have to deal with it.

Jesus is also usually in terrible danger whenever he's in Judea especially in that holy city called, %Jerusalem.+

Though the religious authorities don't really like him in Galilee, it's the guys in Judea who are really gunning for him.

They finally succeed when they turn him over to Pontius Pilate, who actually was the Roman governor (**PROCURATOR**) of Judea during the time.

Lucky for us, what happened in Judea did not stay in Judea.

But unfortunately for Jesus, what is said in Galilee doesn't stay in Galilee.

Word has a way of spreading

Light and Dark

If you've ever searched for a flashlight or candle in a power outage, you can understand why the authors of John's Gospel feel the way they do about light.

Darkness can be scary.

After all, you can't see where you're going and anything could be out there waiting in the dark to gobble you up.

It always feels good to turn on that little beam of light and finally see.

Well, after a few pranks, that is.

This Little Light of Mine

Light is one of the first images we get in the gospel, and it definitely doesn't stop there:

Light does battle with darkness and it totally wins (1:5).

Daytime is the only time to get anything important done (9:4). Not necessarily true for me, some of my best writing is done after 10 bells!

There was no florescent lighting in Judeaõ that we know ofõ dare I say, no sodium lighting?

No fluorescentõ

No solar

No LED or LIGHT EMITTING DIODE

No chandeliersõ

No ceiling mounted fixturesõ

No wall mounted fixturesõ

No Traditional recessed lightingõ

No LED down lightsõ

No Track lighting

No floor lamps õ

No table lampsõ

Why I bet they didn't even have lava lamps hehehe

Jesus is "the light **of the world**" (9:5).

People who believe in Jesus love the light because it illuminates how amazing they are (3:19).

Light brightens your path so you don't trip and fall (12:35).
Or, fall in a pit.

That, makes sense.

The authors are trying to tell us that believing in Jesus is like a sunny day, like a candle lighting up the dark night.

Before you find Jesus, you're just groping around in the dark, unable to see, trying to figure out where you are.

But, once you believe in Jesus, everything is illuminated.

Whether or not you buy it, it sure is poetic.

I keep telling you, John is sing-songy and mushy poetic stuff!!!!

THE Heart of Darkness

If light in the Gospel of John can show off what's true and good, darkness usually means something shady is happening.

Light good, darkness bad.

What's a dichotomy? A division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different.

John is full of dichotomies – as a matter of fact, the author or authors – likes-dichotomies –

It's no surprise that Judas's big betrayal happens at night (13:30).

It wouldn't quite be the same if the sun was shining down, illuminating the evil.

Darkness also seems to imply plain ol' ignorance; that is, people who have yet to step into the Jesus light:

Nicodemus comes to see Jesus at night because he is scared to admit he is one of his followers (3:2).

Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb "while it was still dark," showing her lack of understanding of what was about to happen (20:1).

Ironically, Peter denies Jesus at night while he's warming his hands by a fire (a source of light).

Peter has rejected the light, even though it's right there in front of him providing him with warmth and security (18:25).

Nice going, Peter.

The light is there, but the figures in the story seem to be expecting a bug zapper at the end of the tunnel.

The authors probably highlight these actions to show their readers that they'll be okay.

No bug zappers for Jesus.

Let There Be Light

It won't come as a surprise that in our world, light usually symbolizes good while darkness is often like a big arrow pointing towards villainy.

Examples abound.

Voldemort is always hanging around in the dark.

Light sometimes kills the baddies like in the movie ***Gremlins***.

Vampires also have a bit of trouble with sunlight

(not **Edward Cullen**, of course; he just sparkles). But then you would have to be INTO the TWILLIGHT SERIES.

Did you ever see **Buffy the VAMPIRE** hunting during the day?

Bad guys must not care about being able to see.

Water

(GOOD OLD H₂O)

There was no air conditioning in 1st-century Judea, which might be why the writers of the gospels talk about water a whole lot.

Water is also good!

It figures that a group of people living through hundred-degree summers in the desert would appreciate a nice, cool drink every now and then.

Water was not only vital to staying cool and hydrated, but to staying clean, producing crops, and raising livestock.

Basically, water was life.

In the Gospel of John, water has three main functions:

Baptizing. John the Baptizer does his baptizing in the Jordan River (1:31) and Jesus tells his followers that no

one can have a life with God "without being born of water and Spirit" (3:5).

In other words, the authors are telling us that we have to be *physically* baptized in water and *metaphorically* immersed in the "living water" that is Christ (4:10).

Or, maybe they are NOT! Discuss. Argue. Get all heated. Take sidesõ or DONQ̄!!! Heheheõ

Drinking

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well that anyone who drinks the water he has to offer will never be thirsty again (4:13) it is a pretty amazing promise, given the fact that they were standing in the middle of a desert at the time.

For the authors of John's Gospel, this is how belief in Jesus is supposed to feel it is refreshing, satisfying, and full. It is different. It is awesome.

Washing

Water is also used for cleaningõ fancy that.

Jesus washes the feet of the disciples with water as a gesture of friendship and humility before he's crucified (13:5).

It's Like Water, Water Everywhere

It doesn't stop there.

Jesus also uses water in some of his miracles.

He turns water into wine at the wedding (2:9), walks on the stormy sea (6:19), and heals the man born blind with just a little bit of spit and mud (9:6).

After his death, blood and water pour out of the wound in his side (19:34).

Why so much talk about water?

Well, it is pretty crucial to our lives.

Babies grow and develop in the water-like amniotic fluid in their mother's womb (sorry, bear with me), which is why baptism by water is seen as a way to be "reborn" into a new life.

Effective cleaning with water helps kill germs and bacteria (meaning your mom was right all those times she told you to wash your hands before dinner).

Remember COVID 19? If it taught us anything, it was wash your hands...clean things better, don't touch your face...cover your mouth, cough into your elbow, wear a mask and get vaccinated! Hehehe

Don't forget social distancing...6 feet apart!

And anyone who's ever run a mile knows how appealing the idea of never thirsting again is.

Bottled water, anyone?

If you want to get people to dunk their heads in a liquid and feel spiritually cleansed, you might as well choose something they already know, need, and love.

Chocolate milk, anyone?

Beer?

Raindrops Keep Fallin' On Our Heads

**Raindrops keep fallin' on my head
And just like the guy whose feet are too big for his bed
Nothin' seems to fit
Those raindrops are fallin' on my head, they keep fallin'**

**So, I just did me some talkin' to the sun
And I said I didn't like the way he got things done
Sleepin' on the job
Those raindrops are fallin' on my head, they keep fallin'**

**But there's one thing I know
The blues they send to meet me won't defeat me
It won't be long 'til happiness steps up to greet me**

**Raindrops keep fallin' on my head
But that doesn't mean my eyes will soon be turnin' red
Crying's not for me
'Cause I'm never gonna stop the rain by complainin'
Because I'm free
Nothing's worryin' me**

It won't be long 'til happiness steps up to greet me

**Raindrops keep fallin' on my head
But that doesn't mean my eyes will soon be turnin' red
Crying's not for me
'Cause I'm never gonna stop the rain by complainin'
Because I'm free
Nothing's worryin' me**

Where else do we see images of baptismal, drinking, and cleansing water?

Just about everywhere...

In ***The Awakening***, Edna allows herself to drown in the sea, effectively "freeing" herself from the constraints of society.

Huck Finn and Jim escape North to freedom on a raft along the Mississippi River.

The Wicked Witch of the West is killed when a bucket of pure, sweet, life-giving **water is thrown on her**.

And every time a couple stands out in the rain and kisses at the end of a romantic comedy, we're supposed to understand they they've entered into a "new life" together and that all the zany misunderstanding of the past two hours are being washed away down some New York City drain. (But of course, you knew that!)

Anyone else feeling a little bit thirsty?

Bread

The Greatest Thing Since Sliced Bread

Way back in **Exodus**, God gave the people bread when they were starving out in the desert, and now we eat it with peanut butter and jelly and a tall glass of milk.

Yep, bread has been around for quite a while, and the Gospel of John doesn't forget it.

Bread is a staple, just like water.

As a matter of fact you can live on bread and water.

In fact, God is feeding people here, too with Jesus. That's right. Bread = Jesus:

Jesus tells us that he is "the bread of life" (6:48).

He is spiritual food for everyone who takes him in.

No one who believes in Jesus will ever hunger again.

He also compares himself to the manna from heaven that God gave the Jewish people, saying that he is "the true bread from heaven" (6:32).

We demand a taste test.

Then Jesus takes things a step further and says that whoever eats the bread (i.e., him) will live forever (6:51).

Um, gross.

Jesus feeds the crowd from just a few pieces of fish and bread (6:11).

He eats bread and fish with the disciples after his resurrection (21:13).

Jesus also uses bread to indicate who will betray him.

He dips a piece in a dish and hands it to Judas, as if to say, *My body is in your hands now* (13:26).

Judas, who clearly didn't read this Bible Study, runs out into the night without ever understanding all this bread talk.

Our Daily Bread

Literature loves it ~~so~~ some bread.+

Examples? Why, of course:

A special bread, called *lembas*, sustains the hobbits throughout their long journey in ***The Lord of the Rings*** trilogy (although Gollum chokes when he tries to eat it).

In ***The Hunger Games***, Peeta is the son of a baker, and once saved Katniss and her family from starvation by giving them bread to eat.

In the Holocaust memoir ***Night***, bread is used cruelly as the German soldiers toss it into the train cars filled with starving prisoners from the concentration camps and watch as they brutally fight with each other to get even a small little piece.

Shepherd

Sheepherding was big business in the ancient world.

Farmers weren't able to look after their sheep by themselves and still maintain the farm, so they hired out shepherds to do the job.

A shepherd would be expected to lead a large flock of sheep where they needed to go and protect them out in the pasture.

Wolves, looking for a tasty snack, or thieves, looking to snag themselves some nice wool sweaters, might come by at any time, and a shepherd had to be ready.

Would-be prophets loved to use songs and stories with **pastoral** metaphors to brag about their flock-leading skills.

But not all "shepherds" were created equal and listeners had to be careful they weren't getting fleeced. **Then and NOW.**

Leader of the Flock

(Is that at all like "Leader of the Pack?)

Is she really going out with him?
Well, there she is. Let's ask her.
Betty, is that Jimmy's ring you're wearing?
Mm-hmm
Gee, it must be great riding with him
Is he picking you up after school today?
Uh-uh
By the way, where'd you meet him?
I met him at the candy store
He turned around and smiled at me
You get the picture? (yes, we see)
That's when I fell for (the leader of the pack)
My folks were always putting him down (down, down)
They said he came from the wrong side of town
(whatcha mean when ya say that he came from the wrong side of town?)
They told me he was bad
But I knew he was sad
That's why I fell for (the leader of the pack)
One day my dad said, "Find someone new"
I had to tell my Jimmy we're through
(whatcha mean when ya say that ya better go find somebody new?)
He stood there and asked me why
But all I could do was cry
I'm sorry I hurt you (the leader of the pack)

He sort of smiled and kissed me goodbye
The tears were beginning to show
As he drove away on that rainy night
I begged him to go slow
But whether he heard, I'll never know

Look out! Look out! Look out! Look out!
I felt so helpless, what could I do?
Remembering all the things we'd been through
In school they all stop and stare
I can't hide the tears, but I don't care
I'll never forget him (the leader of the pack)

The leader of the pack - now he's gone
The leader of the pack - now he's gone
The leader of the pack - now he's gone
The leader of the pack - now he's gone
[fade]

Jesus calls himself "the good shepherd," because, unlike those minimum wage shepherders who take off at the first sign of danger, Jesus is willing to go to bat for his flock.

Since all his sheep personally belong to him, he's ready to defend them **ALL** to the death if necessary.

He also knows them so well that leading them is no big deal.

Jesus can call every sheep by its name and they all recognize his voice and go where he asks (10:3).

Okay, let's ~~un-~~**un-metaphor**+ourselves for a moment.

The flock of sheep is made up of people who believe in Jesus, and it's a pretty inviting group.

Anyone can be part of it as long as they put their faith in the Jesus.

And Jesus is sure that he will be able to lead all of them toward a life with God (10:16).

And in the final scenes of the Gospel, the sheep come back again.

Peter redeems himself by affirming his love for Jesus, and Jesus gives Peter the job of taking care of his sheep (21:15-19).

With Jesus soon to be gone, he will need some well-trained shepherds to lead and protect his flock, i.e., his believers.

Really Woolly (WOOLY-BULLY?)

Uno dos, one two tres quatro

**Ay, wooly bully
Watch it now, watch it**

**Here he comes, here he comes
Watch it now, he get 'cha**

**Matty told Hatty
About a thing she saw
Had two big horns
And a wooly jaw**

**Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Yeah drive
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully**

Hatty told Matty
Let's don't take no chance
Let's not be L-seven
Come and learn to dance

Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully

Watch it now, watch it watch it watch it
Ay

Ay, drive, drive, drive

Matty told Hatty
That's the thing to do
Get you someone really
Pull the wool with you

Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully

Watch it now, watch it, here he comes
You got it, you got it

Shepherds aren't unique to the gospels, that's for sure.
They're *everywhere* in the Bible.

What can I say?

The people of Judea loved them some %wool
sweaters+õ +wool socks and wool suitsõ +wool scarves
aren't bad either, especially in Wisconsin!

We joke too, about putting on your %woolies+when it gets
really cold outside!

You've probably heard the phrase "The Lord is my shepherd," right?

Well, that's the Bible talking about **Psalm 23** to be exact. In that case, God is leading the psalmist like a sheep into calm and beautiful meadows.

Now it's your turn: go find more Bible shepherds. I dare you. I double dare you, I triple dog dare you!

Muhammad, the founder of Islam, **was also a shepherd** and ended up leading a pretty big flock himself 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide and counting

Still I believe, the world's fastest growing religion

It's not always a worldwide-religion creating image, though.

In the novel ***Animal Farm***, the sheep characters show the negative side of all this pastoral imagery.

They mindlessly bleat slogans in favor of their chief, a critique of human "sheep" who blindly follow a charismatic leader.

There.

That wasn't so baaaaad, was it? (Sorry, I had to.)

Then there is the Cross (Another image worthy of mentioning!)

The cross has become one of the most enduring and well-recognized Christian symbols throughout the world.

You'd almost never guess that it started out as a way to kill people.

Imagine seeing a little girl with a pretty electric chair charm around her neck or watching your great aunt hang a decorative noose on her front door.

That should give you an idea of how much the symbol of the cross has changed over the years.

What about a decorative syringe?

Or a hanging IV Bottle . cocktail?

Maybe a little pistol around the neck, with pearl handles!

Or a knife!

We just have so many ways of killing one another

What was once an exceptionally cruel method of capital punishment has become a sign of hope and inspiration for billions.

Don't Cross the Romans

The early Christians didn't focus much on the cross right after Jesus died probably because they actually knew **what death on a cross would have looked like**. It wasn't a pretty sight.

Crucifixion was a particularly terrible and humiliating punishment used throughout the Roman Empire.

A victim would be stripped naked, have nails pounded through their arms or feet (or both), be placed upright on the cross, and be left to die.

Since the nails alone wouldn't kill you, the death was slow.

Victims often died from starvation, suffocation, or shock, and depending on the method that was used, death could take hours or days.

Not exactly something you want to imagine your Savior going through ã or anyone else for that matter.

At The Crossroads

Within the New Testament, the authors attempt to reclaim the symbol of the cross. Rather than being a humiliating method of execution, the cross comes to represent God's wonderful plan of salvation.

The Gospel of John is definitely on board. At every step, Jesus's death is described as the glorious fulfillment of all God wants for the world. Even the agony of crucifixion doesn't seem so bad in this particular version of the story. While hanging on the cross, Jesus says that he is thirsty not because he actually is, but to fulfill a prophecy from the Hebrew Bible (19:28).

Back to the Future

Starting with people like the writers of the Gospel of John, this new understanding of the cross caught on and crosses became a more popular and widely known symbol of Christian devotion.

For centuries, the death of Jesus has been a favorite subject for artists and authors around the world.

How about a few examples? Sure, no problem, I got you!

In ***The Old Man and the Sea***, (a personal favorite) Santiago hauls the cross-shaped mast from the boat after his ordeal at sea.

In crime, crosses are frequently seen or referred to and indicate the suffering of the characters.

In ***Native Son***, we see how the cross can hold different meanings depending on the context.

Because of its simplicity, the cross is often spotted in unlikely places.

During the search for survivors at the site of the fallen World Trade Center, **two huge steel beams in the shape of a cross were found.**

Many people interpreted this as a symbol of hope and solace.

Two millennia later, and the cross is still going strong.

Sex Drugs And Violence Rating PG

Peter cuts off a guy's ear.

Jesus is beaten and whipped.

Jesus is hung on a cross to die.

The Gospel of John doesn't actually give us any of the gruesome details, but the young'uns might be a little squeamish about the thought of having nails driven through their hands and feet.

And by young'uns, I mean usõ all of us, regardless of our age.

Allusions Literary and Philosophical References

The Grapes of Wrath - It's no coincidence that Jim Casy shares the same initials as Jesus. This former preacher turns himself in to save another man and is later killed while advocating for worker's rights.

Billy Budd -Billy = Jesus, Claggert = Judas, and Vere = Pilate in this Melville tale. Case closed.

The Old Man and the Sea - Santiago suffers at sea just like our friend Jesus does on the cross.

Uncle Tom's Cabin - Tom, an elderly slave, turns to his Christian faith to see him through the hardships of life on the plantation. He dies forgiving his murderers, and inspires others to become Christian as well. Sounds pretty Christ-like to me.

A Tale of Two Cities - Before he goes to his death, Sydney Carton quotes **John 11:25-26** to show that he's cool with dying in the place of someone else.

Lord of the Flies - When Simon tries to tell the truth about the island to the other boys, he's mistaken for "the beast" and killed. If only he'd held onto the conch.

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe - Aslan sacrifices himself in order to save the life of a traitor and comes back in glory, proving once and for all that lions make the best Jesusq

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Spoiler alert! Harry dies and rises again, but not before taking a quick trip to King's Cross. He could probably walk on water, too, if only he could find the right spell.

Pop Culture References

The Day the Earth Stood Still -Mr. Carpenter comes to earth to give the world an important message about peace, hope, and love. Later, he gets shot, but, being a Christ-like guy that he is, comes right back.

The Matrix – *(I fell asleep during this one, sorry!)*
Neo is "the one" who will save humanity. We wonder if Jesus could dodge bullets in slow motion, too.

Doctor Who - The Doctor never has to worry about dying while trying to save the universe because he can simply regenerate and come back to life in a new form. He's done it eleven times so far. Even Jesus doesn't have that kind of track record.

Donnie Darko - Through the course of the film, Donnie slowly realizes he must choose to die in order to save the people he loves. But the creepy guy in the bunny suit is way scarier than the religious authorities.

Cool Hand Luke - Luke is a convict who inspires other sinners. He's shot while trying to escape from prison. We bet Jesus could eat 50 eggs on a bet, too.

LOL ã get readyã

Especially if they were EASTER EGGSã hahaha I crack myself up sometimes, the yolk is on meã hehehehe

ENJOY THE GOSPEL

PLAYBILL[®]
NEIL SIMON THEATRE

**JESUS
CHRIST
SUPER
STAR**



The **Gospel of John** is all about sticking by what we know is right. Knowing what is right. Doing what is right.

It is true that there are not many people who would go to battle over the soft drink wars (or at least we hope not).

But when it comes to the big questions in life—faith, family, politics, justice, and love—we might risk a little more. But that takes a lot of guts. Just ask Jesus.

The Gospel of John isn't your average **Matthew, Mark, or Luke**.

It is different.

It is purposefully different. Intended to be so.

It also was not written by a guy named John, (we think!) although the people who put it in the Bible thought Jesus'

disciple John had written it. And that gave the writing a certain credibility. James and John, the sons of Zebedee. One of the twelve. According to this gospel, one of Jesus' students for at least three years of time.

You do realize that all four of the gospels were written anonymously. The names were added at a later date and time.

But get this:

Now we are "quite sure" that there were actually multiple writers; after all, there are all kinds of awkward transitions and weird edits within the story. Most people do not talk about this or even realize it. But trust me, they are there.

What is so different about this anonymously written gospel? That is a story in and of itself.

Jesus does NOT talk as much about a "kingdom of God."

Jesus does NOT teach in parables.

Jesus talks about himself A LOT MORE. Sometimes he even used metaphors to explain who he WAS.

Jesus did not perform tons of MIRACLES or HEAL people possessed by demons.

The main message: the only way they could know God is to know Jesus. Period.

Just put your faith IN Jesus... or else God will not be amused.

This Gospel is all about SIGNS. Seven SIGNS to be exact.



And the sign said
"Long-haired freaky people
Need not apply"
So I tucked my hair up under my hat
And I went in to ask him why
He said, "You look like a fine upstandin' young man
I think you'll do"
So I took off my hat and said, "Imagine that
Huh, me workin' for you"
Whoa
Sign, sign
Everywhere a sign
Blockin' out the scenery

Breakin' my mind
Do this, don't do that
Can't you read the sign?
And the sign said
"Anybody caught trespassin'
Will be shot on sight"
So I jumped on the fence and I yelled at the house
"Hey! What gives you the right
To put up a fence to keep me out
But to keep Mother Nature in?
If God was here, he'd tell you to your face
'Man, you're some kind of sinner'"
Sign, sign
Everywhere a sign
Blockin' out the scenery
Breakin' my mind
Do this, don't do that
Can't you read the sign?
Now, hey you, mister, can't you read?
You got to have a shirt and tie to get a seat
You can't even watch, no, you can't eat
You ain't supposed to be here
The sign said, "You've got to have a membership card
To get inside"
Uh
And the sign said
"Everybody welcome
Come in, kneel down and pray"
But when they passed around the plate at the end of it all
I didn't have a penny to pay
So I got me a pen and a paper
And I made up my own little sign
I said, "Thank you, Lord, for thinkin' 'bout me
I'm alive and doin' fine"
Woo!
Sign, sign
Everywhere a sign
Blockin' out the scenery
Breakin' my mind
Do this, don't do that
Can't you read the sign?
Sign, sign
Everywhere a sign
Sign

Now the SEVEN SIGNS of the Gospel of John include:

- 1. Water Turned to Wine (John 2:1-11)**
- 2. Healing of the (Nobleman's) Son Near Death (John 4:46-54)**
- 3. Healing of the Lame Man at the Pool (John 5:1-17)**
- 4. Feeding of the Five Thousand (John 6:1-15)**

5. Walking on the Water (John 6:16-21)

6. Healing of the Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)

7. Raising of Lazarus from the Dead (John 11:1-47)

Seven, of course, being the number of wholeness or completion.

What is Gospel of John About and Why Should I OR ANYONE ELSE Care?

The Bible is for rebels, RADICALS.

What is that you say? Reading the Bible is a pretty tame way to rebel?

Oh, we get it.

You think the Bible is just for LITTLE old GREY HAIR ladies with STAINED CLOTHING or for little kids forced to sit through boring sessions in a sanctuary somewhere.

Well, Doubting Thomas, we are fairly sure you have not read the Gospel of John.

Not only is Jesus—THE STAR of the Gospel of John—the original rebel (flying in the face of authority and getting crucified is pretty hardcore), but the authors of John's Gospel were also pretty radical, too.

Even though they certainly knew about the other three gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—they did not worry or CARE their pretty little heads about making sure their gospel was just **Part Four** of an unstoppable Jesus quartet.

They did their own thing.

CHOOSE YOUR GOSPEL.

PICK YOUR GOSPEL. OURS is the BEST!

(Just do not pick your nose at a ZOOM meeting...others WILL SEE YOU!)

As a result, you get all new material.

Ever heard of someone casting the first stone? Turning water into wine? How about Lazarus rising from the dead? Ever been called a Doubting Thomas?

Well, you can thank “those rebels” over at the Gospel of John.

They told those stories.

In fact, the authors of John's Gospel were so revolutionary that nearly 80% of what they wrote is totally unique to their gospel.

Gospel of John Resources

Websites: What better things do you do a night? Surf, baby, surf!

From Jesus to Christ

Everything you ever wanted to know about Jesus but were unsure how to Google.

Movies and TV

The Gospel of John

The 2003 movie is a word-for-word recreation of John's Gospel (for all those times when words on a page just will not cut it). Bonus points for starring Desmond from *Lost* as Jesus.

Jesus Christ Superstar

While not exclusively about The Gospel of John, this rock opera—based on the last week of Jesus' life—has all kinds of catchy gospel-inspired musical numbers.

The Last Temptation of Christ

This controversial movie drew protest when it was released in 1988, in part because it shows Jesus struggling with doubt, depression, and lust. Guess no one likes a Doubting Messiah.

The Passion of the Christ

Maybe it is impossible to make a movie about Jesus without a little controversy. This 2004 Mel Gibson blockbuster covers the final twelve hours of Jesus' life and features dialogue in Aramaic and Latin. People balked at the gruesome depictions of the crucifixion but flocked to the theaters anyway.

King of Kings

This 1927 silent movie by Cecil B. DeMille (of *The Ten Commandments* fame) attempted to portray a more nuanced version of

its Jewish characters. It makes the high priest, Caiaphas, into a more sympathetic figure—not an easy task.

Historical Documents

The Gospel of John

Read it for yourself. We dare you.

The Antiquities of the Jews

Written by first-century Jewish historian, Josephus, around 94 CE, the third chapter of this text provides some information about Jesus and Pilate. Have at it and become a biblical scholar in one sitting.

Video

Who Was Jesus?

Here's some historical info on Jesus from the good people at National Geographic.

Where Was Jesus Buried?

No one really knows, but this short PBS news story gives us some options.

The Last Supper

In this Funny or Die original sketch, Jesus dines with his disciples at his last supper... and has a slight issue with the bill.

Do not Pray So Much

SNL takes on Jesus, Phil Hartman style.

Life of Brian

Jesus only makes a brief appearance in this irreverent Monty Python

comedy, but the crucifixion scene will have you looking at the bright side of life. Hehehehe ☐

Why I Love Jesus and Hate Religion

This spoken word poem went viral a few years ago, but it still has the power to capture our attention as an earnest mediation on faith in Jesus.

Criss Angel Walks on Water

Sure, Jesus did it in the middle of the stormy sea at night, but we guess we will give Criss Angel credit for getting across this hotel swimming pool.

Audio

John Dominic Crossan

New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan talks with NPR about Jesus, the crucifixion, and the early church. A little over the edge...

Bart Ehrman

Bart Ehrman, professor of religious studies at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, talks with Terry Gross about Jesus and the difference between the gospels. You will want to run out and read all of them again.

Bach's The Gospel of St. John

A concert performance of Bach's 18th-century oratorio, St. John's Passion. The audio includes a short introduction to the piece and its slightly problematic history in Christian worship.

Were You There?

Johnny Cash and The Carter Family sing the haunting gospel classic, *Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord)*? We dare you not to swoon.

How Bible Stories Evolved Over the Centuries

Check out this awesome NPR story on how the New Testament was shaped and changed to become the book we know today.

Images

First-Century Judea

Ever wondered where all the stars of the Gospel of John lived? This helpful map points the way—but please, no flash photography.

Map of Jerusalem

The big city.

Temple in Jerusalem

Check out how the temple looked in the time of Jesus. Money changers might want to set up shop elsewhere.

Loaves and Fishes

Here's a stunning mosaic tile floor in The Church of the Multiplication. Look familiar?

The Passion of Christ

A screen shot from *The Passion of the Christ*. The movie (inaccurately) imagines that Mary Magdalene was the woman caught in adultery.

Rio, Baby

The largest Art Deco statue in the world is located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. And it is Jesus. But NOT FOR LONG! Check this out:

The Passion of the Christ A huge statue of Jesus Christ is under construction in southern Brazil, and it will be even taller than its famous counterpart in Rio de Janeiro.

The "Christ the Protector" statue is being built in Encantado, a small town in Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul, by a local organization named Friends of Christ Association (AACristo).

Made of steel and concrete, it will stand 43 meters (141 feet) tall -- 16 feet taller than Rio's Christ the Redeemer, according to AACristo.

A screen shot from *The Passion of the Christ*. The movie (inaccurately) imagines that Mary Magdalene was the woman caught in adultery.

This gospel can be a little sing-songy, a little poetic, a little theological. Jesus' feet barely touch the ground. You get the impression that he walks 3-4 feet off the ground...

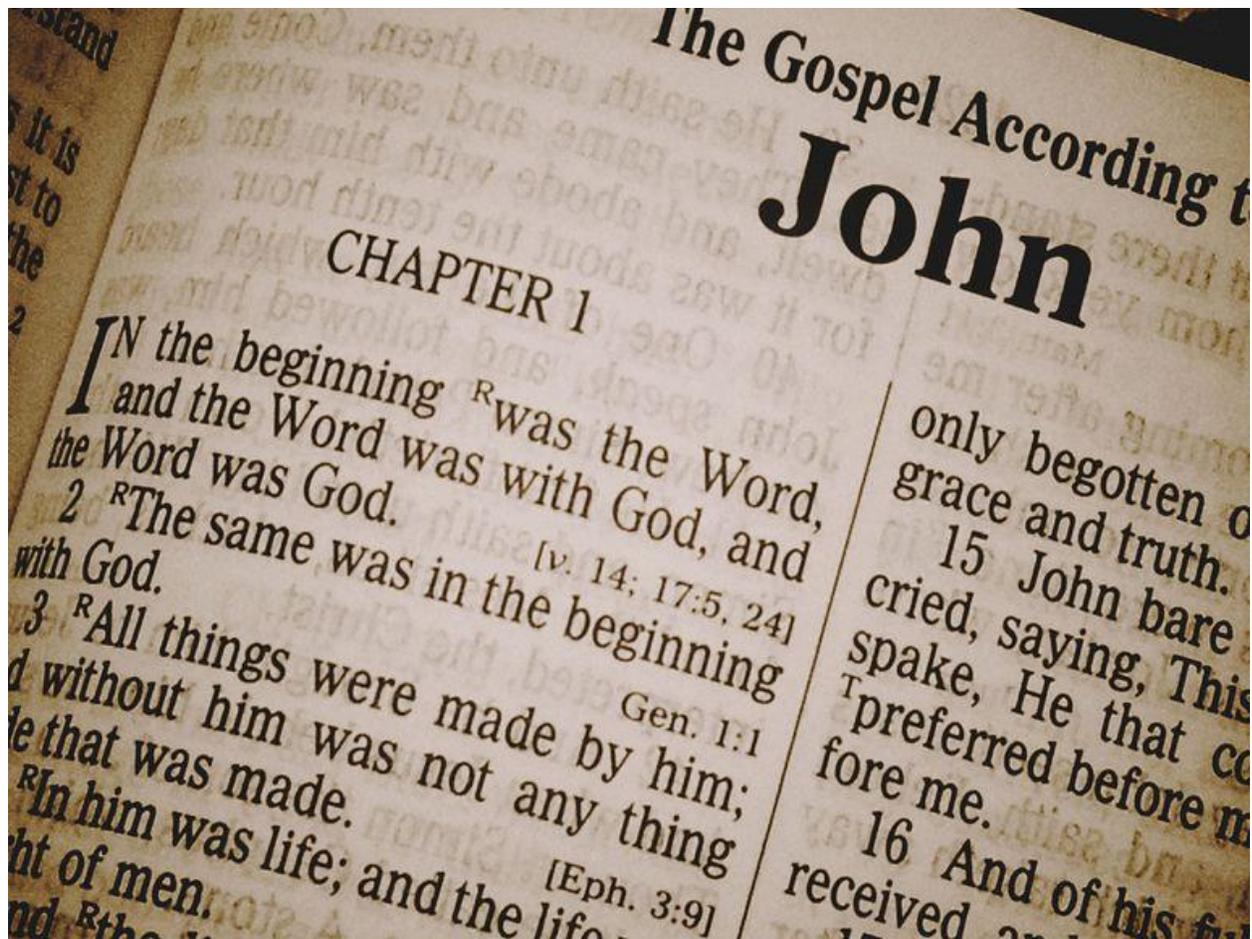
And yep, there is a halo, an ever-present-halo.

This guy is holy. He is one-righteous-dude. He is totally in charge. He calls the shots...eight ball side pocket. He is GOD.

Do not forget it is the last to be written and scholars are actually NOT SURE about its ACTUAL DATE of completion. Most people will say it was written between 90 – 120 of the Common Era.

Jesus died in 27-28-29 of that self-same century.

This gospel has been called "THE SPIRITUAL GOSPEL" a kind of mean-spirited designation suggesting the other three are not spiritual, or NOT as spiritual.



Already by the year 200, John's gospel was called “the spiritual gospel” precisely because it told the story of Jesus in symbolic ways that differ sharply at times from the other three.

For example, Jesus dies on a different day in John's gospel than in Matthew, Mark, and Luke....

Whereas in the three synoptic gospels Jesus actually eats a Passover meal before he dies, in John's gospel he does not.

The last supper – LORD’S SUPPER – Communion – HOLY COMMUNION – Eucharist – AGAPE MEAL is actually eaten before the beginning of Passover.

So that the sequence of events leading up to the actual crucifixion are vastly different for John's gospel. And one has to look at it in say, why is the story so different?

How do we account for these differences in terms of the way the storytelling developed?

And the answer becomes fairly clear when we realize that Jesus has had the last supper a day before so that he is hanging on the cross during the day of preparation BEFORE the beginning of Passover.

So, here is the scene in John's gospel: on the day leading up to Passover, and Passover will commence at sundown with the evening meal, on the day leading up to that Passover meal is the day when all the lambs are slaughtered, and everyone goes to the temple to get their lamb for the Passover meal.

In Jerusalem this would have meant thousands of lambs being slaughtered all at one time. And in John's gospel that is the day on which Jesus is crucified.

So that quite literally the dramatic scene in John's gospel has Jesus hanging on the cross while the lambs are being slaughtered for Passover. DRAMA, DRAMA, DRAMA.

Save the drama for your mama!

John's gospel is forcing us, dramatically at least, through the storytelling mode, to think of Jesus as a Passover lamb.

Jesus does not eat a Passover meal, Jesus is the Passover meal, at least within the Christian mind in the way that John/the author/the authors tell the story.

Now this theme of the Lamb of God, the Passover symbolism, actually is shot through the entirety of John's gospel. From the very first scene of John's gospel when Jesus enters the story for the first time, he does so by coming to John the Baptizer to be baptized. And when Jesus enters, John sees him coming and looks and says, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." So, the whole story is now bracketed by this one motif, the Lamb of God.

And of course, that is the kind of symbolism that would eventually become one of the most profound and dominant in all of Christian theological tradition.

Later on we will find just that one image a lamb showing up in all kinds of Christian art from the catacombs to the great mosaics at Ravenna because in just that small little capsule form we have a whole theological tradition wrapped up.

It is a theological statement about the significance of the death of Jesus.

The symbolism of John's gospel while it is probably the most evocative of any in the Early Christian Writings, is also provocative. The language of John's gospel is intentionally antagonistic at times toward Jewish tradition and toward Jewish sensitivities. The idea of the Passover of course is very Jewish, but John tends to turn some of those ideas in a much

sharper way against Jewish tradition. At one point in John 6 Jesus says, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you will have no life in you." But the idea of drinking blood is absolutely abhorrent to Jewish dietary regulations. So, the very language and the symbolism that is so rich within John's gospel also has a decidedly political tone to it in terms of the evolving relationship between Jews and Christians.

John's gospel is witness to a Christianity that is moving farther and farther away from Jewish tradition. And in fact, it is seeing Jewish tradition often as actually hostile to the Christian movement.

Each of the gospel writers has certain concerns that he must address, certain questions that he must answer, and certain crises that he must negotiate.

In the fourth gospel, the gospel according to John, Jesus' relation to Jerusalem and the Jerusalem authorities is more of a concern. There are more people in the dramatis personae of John's gospel who hailed from Judea. We encounter some figures there that we do not encounter anywhere else in gospel traditions.

Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea.

These are Jerusalemite non-priestly elites. One of the things that this suggests is that the sources of the fourth gospel are closer to this social stratum of people and their concerns.

Not so, for Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Galilean traditions are the signal traditions there, and so Jesus' activity in the Galilee and among people in Northern Judea have pride of place....

When we look at the concerns of these differences, the concerns that are suggested or reflected in these differences, one of the ways of explaining [these] differences, is seeing that they are coming from different points and different strata of Palestinian society.

How does that affect the picture [of Jesus] that emerges?

Jesus emerges differently in these portraits.

Clearly those who identify more strongly with Northern Palestinian traditions and concerns and identify with problems that are characteristic of Galilee... are going to depict a Jesus who has more to say about those things.

Now, let us say such people who hail from Northern Palestine, have, in so many words, written off the priestly establishment in Jerusalem.

They have no "in" with those people.

They are alienated from them.

They are not going to be concerned with what went on in various strata [of] Judean society, how certain Judean people responded to Jesus, how certain people responded to the Jesus movement.

However, in John's gospel, there is some indication that among Jerusalemite elites there was [a] split.

There are some non-priestly elite types who sympathize with Jesus....

The priestly establishment, as a whole, are clearly the bad guys. John is truly clear about this. But this distinction between the priestly and the non-priestly elites is remarkably interesting.

It is a distinction which John is incredibly careful to make, that the synoptic tradition, as a whole, is not incredibly careful to make.

The word %SYNOPTIC+means similar and there are three gospels that are similar: Mark, Matthew, and Luke.

John is NOT SYNOPTIC.

That this decision to condemn Jesus and the machinations that were involved to send Jesus to the cross are blamed on a particular sub-set of Jewish leadership.

John shows us exactly who is responsible, within the Jerusalemite ruling elite, for Jesus' execution....

What is often said about John's gospel is you can place a beginning of outright hostility between members of the early Jesus movement and mainstream Judaism...

Well, I think the distinction that I just described rightly complicates that generalization because it is a dangerous one.

Historically, it is proven to be extremely dangerous. It is not just a misconstrued of the evidence that we have. It is a very tendentious misconstrue....

John's drama is at pains to show that a certain subset of Israelite leadership railroaded Jesus. That is particularly important for him.

Perhaps, as we move farther away from Judea, that picture, or at least the crispness of that picture, is compromised by other concerns.

And so, I would characterize the synoptic tradition, as perhaps a move away from the center of events, in terms of the juridical machinations that resulted in Jesus' execution.

And that focus is then compromised by other concerns that are mediated through the reporting of Galilean traditions.

Nonetheless, by now, the followers of Jesus, the early Christians, and the mainstream religion of the Jews are beginning to head off a separate track. Can you accept that? What is happening?

Well, this certainly is not as clear before the war.

I see the Jesus movement as yet another option within what we identify as Judaism, that complex of people and institutions and traditions of ancient Israel.

So, Jesus is a new option at the end of the first century.

It is not clear before the war that it is mutually exclusive from other options.

There are still some kinds of conversations going on with other parts of Judaism and those conversations are apparently substantive, even though they are not altogether unproblematic....

The Gospel of John, of course, stands apart from the other three gospels.

For one reason, simply because Matthew and Luke use common sources. They both use the gospel of Mark. YAY, Mark!

They both use the so-called “synoptic sayings” gospel, and therefore “great similarities are evident,” particularly the outline of the ministry of Jesus.

Now the Gospel of John has some relationships to the sources used by the other gospels....

The passion narrative in John is essentially the same as the passion narrative in Mark, Matthew, Luke and in the Gospel of Peter.

The other thing that is common with the other gospels is a chain of miracle stories...kind of.

What makes the Gospel of John different is another element?

And that is the element of Jesus' discourses and dialogues with the disciples.

These discourses (stories) go on forever. They are lengthy. They are wordy. The woman at the well. On and on it goes. The healing of the blind man...on and on and on it goes...these are major discourses, that is, what John is known for. Stories that go on, forever.

These discourses are not comparable to collections of sayings of Jesus that we have, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount. They are hugely different, because the collections of sayings string those sayings together with almost never a question of the disciples interfering. It is just a collection.

Now what we have in the speeches and dialogues of Jesus in the Gospel of John is not a collection of traditional materials but is ultimately a reflection on traditional materials.

That is, the Gospel of John constructs the speeches of Jesus (MAJOR SPEECHES) in an effort to interpret traditional sayings of Jesus.

I will give you a very obvious example, the story of Jesus and Nicodemus.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus and recognizes he is a great teacher, he has come from God, and Jesus now tells him something that is, in fact, the quotation of a traditional baptismal saying.

"Unless you're reborn, you will not enter the Kingdom of God."

This saying is found in other contexts; a second century apologist, Justin Martyr, quotes the same saying in his report of the Christian baptismal liturgy....

Now John takes that saying as the basis of the development of dialogue. He changes the saying somewhat, so that Nicodemus understands the rebirth not to be a rebirth by the spirit from above, but physical rebirth, and therefore says, "How can anybody who has gotten old now go back to his mother's womb and be reborn?" And this gives the occasion now for the explanation of what this saying of Jesus means. And that explanation fills the whole rest of the chapter...MAJOR SPEECHES.

Essentially all the major speeches of John are developed out of traditional sayings materials.

And what is interesting here is that some of these sayings have parallels in the sayings we find in the synoptic gospels.

But some of the sayings also have parallels which we now find in the Gospel of Thomas.

So, John draws on a different set of "traditional sayings" of Jesus than do the first three gospels of the Early Christian Writings...

Jesus in the Gospel of John is difficult to reconstruct as an historical person because his character in the gospel is in full voice giving very developed theological soliloquies about himself.

It is not the sort of thing that if you try to put in a social context would appeal to a large number of followers.

Because it is so much Christian proclamation and Christian imagery, and it is very developed.

It is a very developed Christology.

Jesus must have had some kind of popular following or else he would not have ended up killed by Rome.

All of this is just in the way of introduction to this gospel, but I am not finished yet.

Christology, Christian reflection, teaching, and doctrine concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

Christology is the part of theology that is concerned with the nature and work of Jesus, including such matters as the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and his human and divine natures and their relationship.

The underlying methodological assumption of Christology is that the Early Christian Writings contain the authentic and accurate record of Jesus, both explicitly and implicitly.

The Early Christian Writings are taken to convey that the earliest followers of Jesus were convinced that God was revealed in him and that they attributed a number of titles to him, such as “Messiah,” “Son of Man,” “Son of God,” and “Lord.”

Christian discourse uses the portrayal of Jesus in the foundational documents of Christianity as a point of departure.

Traditionally, Christological reflection has focused on two specific aspects of that portrayal—namely, the person and the work of Jesus.

It has also sought to clarify and systematize the meaning of the scriptural depiction of Jesus.

In the fourth and final canonical gospel the Christological statements about Jesus of Nazareth are quite formal and have been worked out over time as theological statements. You want to fight? Bring it on! We KNOW who Jesus was. There is NO DOUBT.

HERE, you are dealing with GOD IN THE FLESH. GOD COME DOWN. INCARNATION, baby!

The Prologue

A **prologue** or **prolog** is an opening to a story that establishes the context and gives background details, often some earlier story that ties into the main one, and other miscellaneous information.

“Romeo and Juliet,” William Shakespeare (1591-1595)

One of the most famous literary prologues of all time, this prologue takes the form of a sonnet that introduces readers to the setting and characters of the play, as well as the dire situation in which the two star-crossed lovers find themselves. The prologue begins as follows:

“Two households, both alike in dignity, In fair Verona, where we lay our scene, From ancient grudge break to new mutiny, Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.”

Shakespeare doesn't hold back on spoilers: the sonnet also reveals the play's tragic ending.

In literary works of art, a **prologue** is an introduction. And in legal works, a **preamble** represents the same thing.

So that makes this one of **our** most important prologues:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common

defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

But the prologue I am concerned with on this night, yep, it is 9:00 P.M. (I can tell because Hogan's Heroes is on!) is the infamous prologue to John's Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

But as you know, it does not stop there. What follows is the New Revised Standard Version, the Prologue's the first eighteen verses.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The

true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

This is John's Christmas Story. No angels, no wiremen, no manger, no star, no Joseph and Mary, no archangels, not even cherubim singing lullabies. There is no hasty trip to Bethlehem, no decree by Caesar, no enrollment, no Inns that are filled to capacity, no slaughter of Holy Innocents and no escape trips to Egypt.

We have the WORD becoming FLESHINGō the fleshing out of our God.+

INCARNATION we call it.

In Christian theology, the **incarnation** is the belief that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, also known as God the Son or the *Logos* (Koine Greek for "word"), "was made flesh" by being conceived in the womb of a woman, the Virgin Mary, also known as the *Theotokos* (Greek for "God-bearer").

The doctrine of the incarnation, then, entails that Jesus is fully God and fully human.

In the incarnation, as traditionally defined by those Churches that adhere to the Council of Chalcedon, the divine nature of the Son was united but not mixed with human nature^l in one divine Person, Jesus Christ, who was both "truly God and truly man". This is central to the traditional faith held by most Christians.

SO WE START OUT WITH CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
RIGHT FROM THE GATE.

The oldest intact text that we have goes back to the year 200.

The Bodmer Papyri are a group of twenty-two papyri discovered in Egypt in 1952.

They are named after Martin Bodmer, who purchased them.

The papyri contain segments from the Hebrew Bible and Early Christian Writings, early Christian literature, Homer, and Menander.

The oldest, P⁶⁶ dates to c. 200 AD. Most of the papyri are kept at the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, in Coligny, Switzerland outside Geneva.

In 2007 the Vatican Library acquired Bodmer Papyrus 14. 15 (known as P⁷⁵).

So, how much would you be willing to pay for some papyrus?

Each of the gospels begins with an account of Jesus's origins. Mark introduces Jesus to us as an adult, telling us that Jesus was a man from Nazareth whose advent fulfills the arrival of God's salvation as foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

Matthew and Luke's narratives begin earlier still, rooting Jesus's very conception and birth in the prophecies of old and God's will to deliver humanity.

John, however, pushes his account of Jesus, the Word, back to the beginning of time itself. Before anything else had been created, he was.

In fact, using language that adopts yet stretches Philo's imaginative ruminations, Jesus, as the divine *Logos*, was not only with God in the beginning, but *was* God.

To further stress the centrality of Jesus in God's identity and purpose, John's prologue also claims that creation itself originated through his life-giving agency: apart from the Word, "not one thing came into being" (verse 3).

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of this text in shaping Christian conceptions of Jesus' divinity, the incarnation, and the Trinity.

Indeed, one of John's concerns here is to emphasize Jesus' unmatched transcendence and authority as one who comes from the Father.

Jesus originates from God not only in an *apostolic* sense as one who is sent, but also in an *ontological* sense.

Ontology is the branch of philosophy that studies concepts such as existence, being, becoming, and reality. It includes the questions of how entities are grouped into basic categories and which of these entities exist on the most fundamental level.

To borrow from some familiar terminology, John presents Jesus here as "one of being with" God.

As his narrative unfolds, John will continue to stress that to see Jesus really is to see the Father.

Thus, when doubting Thomas finally comes to terms with the reality that Jesus is alive, his confession serves as a fitting *inclusio* with the Gospel's opening: "My Lord and my God!" (20:28).

Despite its significance for Christian reflection on the nature and person of Jesus, John's Gospel tends not to be a favorite among my more progressively minded clergy colleagues.

John's Jesus seems too aloof to them, too regal and removed from the vicissitudes of human life.

In the view of some, his personality comes across - to put it politely - just as transcendent as the exalted nature John claims for him.

Now, to be fair to these colleagues, Jesus may be more ~~in~~ control and a little less ~~in~~ earthy in John than he is in the Synoptics (though perhaps this point could be argued as well).

But readers who zero in on this dimension of John's characterization of Jesus must not neglect another equally critical dimension.

As do the prologues of the other Gospels, John's opening introduces several motifs that will dominate his narrative to follow.

In addition to his exaltation of Jesus as the Divine Logos, four interrelated motifs - all speaking to Jesus' purpose as the Word of God - are particularly prominent.

EXALTATION: the action of elevating someone in rank, power, or character - "the resurrection and exaltation of Christ."

First, as already noted, John stresses that %the world came into being through him+(verse 10).

Jesus was integral to the formation of the earth and all its creatures.

Though transcendent, Jesus is also intimately acquainted with every dimension of creation.

Second, John presents Jesus as the source of revelation and grace for humankind: he is %the true light which enlightens everyone+(verse 9), Reflecting God's glory, he is %full of grace and truth+(verses 14, 18).

Another key motif introduced here is the world's tragic rejection of Jesus:

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him (verses 10-11). THIS LATER BECAME AN ANTI-SEMITIC CRY!

Finally, John's prologue, with eloquent simplicity, reveals that the Divine Word became incarnate among and within humanity: %and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us+(verse 14).

Together, these themes help us to recognize that the extraordinary %ontological claims+John makes here and throughout his narrative about Jesus · while significant on their own terms · are inextricably connected to the

claims he makes about why Jesus is sent from the Father into the world.

John's exaltation of Jesus as the transcendent Word is only one side of story.

The other is his claim that the Divine Word becomes flesh and dwells *among us*.

John's exaltation of Jesus to unimaginable heights of transcendence serves his even more crucial interest of proclaiming that in Jesus, the barrier between the divine and human realms are breached to a degree never before realized.

TRANSCENDENCE - existence or experience beyond the normal or physical level. Jesus is "other-worldly!"

In the Word, John claims, God's mercy and truth now flow in measures never possible before: %from his fullness, we receive grace upon grace+(verse 16).

In Jesus, knowledge of God, *connection* to God, far transcends the wisdom and relatedness mediated through the law: %the law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (verse 17).

But in order for Jesus to serve as this conduit of God's grace and truth, he must be of God in the fullest possible sense.

And, in order for the Divine Word to serve as this conduit of grace and truth, he must also become en-fleshed within

a human being who could walk, talk, share table, laugh, and mourn with us.

More extraordinary still, he must suffer the rejection and bloody outrage of his own who choose not to know or accept him.

For John, the scandal of particularity is not just that in Jesus the Divine becomes incarnate and dwells among us.

The scandal is also that the transcendent Word becomes so deeply enmeshed in our twisted affairs, that he is even willing to endure the humiliation and hatred embodied in the cross.

The Word condescends to this, no, embraces this, to enlighten all those who would receive him. He comes to his own, and loses his life for them, that they too might become children of God (verses 12-13) and, like him, close to the Father's heart (verse 18).

For God so loved the world

Theological, Poetical, Transcendent, Ontological, Christological, sing-songy and people embrace it lovingly, without questioning, its rather late compilation and we are only talking about the first eighteen verses.

John is different. As is, each of our four gospels.

John beckons to us John calls to us and wants us to SEE as the author(s) see things

When John is written, the first believers, the first followers and indeed the disciples are dying off in droves— this is for a new generation of believers—

It is written for those who HAVE NOT SEEN, but may yet come to believe. In that sense, this gospel was penned for you and for me. That, and that alone makes it attractive to some.

What about you?

THEMES

When Jesus talks about ETERNAL LIFE, he does not mean that we will all be immortal. He is referring to a “spiritual life with God” that continues even after death.

Of course, in the Gospel of John, Jesus also shows death WHO IS THE BOSS by raising Lazarus and then coming back from the dead himself. Now that is living on a prayer...

The Raising of Jairus’ Daughter

The Raising of the Son of the Widow of Nain

The Raising of Lazarus

The Raising of Jesus himself...

When it comes to the Early Christian Writings...there is a whole lot of RAISING going on...

“And He will raise you up on eagle's wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His Hand.”

Come on, be honest, you know you started reading that, and ended up singing it...did you not? But could recall from memory any of the actual verses, or do you just know the refrain?

You of course know that Pontius Pilate was a real guy, right? He is an authentic historical character! Boom! You have just been truthed.

Can you tell truth from fiction? Always?

Truth [trooTH] NOUN

1. the quality or state of being true.

"he had to accept the truth of her accusation"

synonyms:

veracity · truthfulness · verity · sincerity · candor · honesty
· genuineness · gospel · gospel
truth · accuracy · correctness · rightness · validity ·

factualness · factuality · authenticity ·

(the truth)

that which is true or in accordance with fact or reality.

"tell me the truth" ·

synonyms:

the fact of the matter · what actually/really happened · the case · so · gospel · gospel
truth · God's truth · the honest
truth · fact(s) · reality · real life · actuality

a fact or belief that is accepted as true.

"the emergence of scientific truths"

synonyms:

fact · verity · certainty · certitude · law ·
principle

Hang on a bit...Truth as it is used in the Gospel of John is not only about listing off facts and figures. When Jesus tells us the TRUTH, he means that he has access to a spiritual reality that is ordered by God and that is unknowable by the ordinary world.

And you thought GOOGLE knew everything...or Wikipedia!
Hehehe...

The Truth shall set you free! But as Pilate said, "What is truth?"

Good question, right? Try sitting in a Court of Law and see if you can tell what is true or not!

According to the Gospel of John (and **Dante**), love is what sets everything in motion. "For God so loved the world," remember? Yeah, that is the 3:16 business. In this gospel, love is the essence of God, and those who love Jesus will get to share the prize. Those who do not love Jesus... well, let's just say things are not going to work out so well for them.

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus is the divine incarnation of God, come from above to share the truth of God's goodness and love.

Now Jesus just has to explain that to a bunch of silly mortals. How to describe the mystery and majesty of God using only human language?

Enter **figurative language**.

Jesus loves him some **metaphor** and uses all kinds of **figures of speech** to get his point across.

Yikes!

Jesus used images of his time to talk about God. If Jesus lived today, what kinds of language would he use to describe God? An iPhone? A **tall decaf cappuccino**?

You probably remember that little sacrifice Jesus makes to save, um, all of humanity.

And get this: he is more than happy to do it because he believes it is God's will for him. After the events of this story, Jesus' disciples would follow in his footsteps and give up their own lives in complete obedience to God.

We moderns may not be disciples, but the Gospel opens this question up to us, too: how far will we go for what we believe?

In case you did not catch it the zillion times it's mentioned, Judas betrays Jesus big time in the Gospel of John.

But he is not alone—there are a bunch of little betrayals along the way, you can be sure of that.

Peter fails Jesus when he denies that he knows him and Jesus' own people turn him over to Rome to be executed.

Thomas doubted his resurrection

But without these betrayals, the Gospel has no story.

Each little act of disloyalty brings Jesus closer to the cross and closer to achieving God's plan for saving the world.

Should we be thanking Judas? **YES!!!!!!**

There were more power struggles in biblical times than on an episode of *Survivor*.

The Roman empire had power over Judea.

The religious authorities had power over the Jewish people.

And for all intents and purposes, Jesus was at the bottom of the totem pole.

But according to the Gospel of John, Jesus—a poor, crucified criminal—shows us what “true power” is.

HERE IS: A ONE MINUTE SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL!

(See if you agree.)

The Gospel of John begins with a lovely little poem about Jesus. Here's what we learn:

He is God's word in human form.

He's come to earth to be a light to everyone.

He's going to destroy the evil of darkness.

All in a day's work for the savior of the world!

When Jesus appears on the scene, he starts to gather a nice little entourage of disciples. He travels with them around Judea bringing God's truth and racking up an impressive list of miracles. Turning water into wine? Check. Healing a blind man? Check. Raising a guy from the dead? Check. Jesus does it all without even breaking a sweat. Tons of people are starting to put their faith (trust) in him.

But not everyone is so thrilled with the coming of the messiah. The religious authorities in Judea are fuming at the idea that there's a guy walking around who can raise people from the dead. They hatch an evil plot to have Jesus killed and then, we assume, they start practicing their maniacal laughs for when that day comes.

They don't have to wait long. The next time Jesus is in Jerusalem, one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, conspires with the religious authorities to have Jesus arrested. He's taken to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and sentenced to death by crucifixion.

So, that's the end, right?

Not a chance. Three days after he dies, Jesus comes back to life.

He appears to some of his disciples and even gives out some pretty good fishing advice. Jesus tells them to keep spreading his story around.

The disciples oblige and the rest is the history. The history of the western world, that is.

And DONE! (Check your watch or your phone) One Minute, right?

For Your Consideration!

**Consider yourself at home
Consider yourself one of the family
We've taken to you so strong
It's clear we're going to get along
Consider yourself well in
Consider yourself part of the furniture
There isn't a lot to spare
Who cares? What-ever we've got, we share!**

**If it should chance to be
We should see
Some harder days**

**Empty larder days
Why grouse?
Always-a-chance we'll meet
Somebody
To foot the bill
Then the drinks are on the house!
Consider yourself our mate
We don't want to have no fuss
For after some consideration, we can state**

**Consider yourself
One of us!**

Consider yourself... At home?

Consider yourself...

One of the family

We've taken to you

So strong

It's clear... we're...

**Going to get along
Consider yourself...**

Well in!

Consider yourself...

Part of the furniture

There isn't a lot to spare

Who cares?

**Whatever we got we share
Nobody tries to be lah-di-dah or uppity--
There a cup-o'-tea for all**

**Only it's wise to be handy with a rolling pin
When the landlord comes to call!**

**Consider yourself
Our mate**

We don't want to have no fuss

For after some consideration we can state

Consider yourself

**Yes!
One of us!**

Consider yourself at home...

We've taken to you so strong
Consider yourself well in...
There isn't a lot to spare
If it should chance to be
We should see
Some harder days
Empty larder days --
Why grouse?
Always a chance we'll meet
Somebody
To foot the bill --
Then the drinks are on the house!

Consider yourself our mate
We don't want to have no fuss
For after some consideration, we can state...
Consider yourself...
One of us!

Consider yourself

At home

We've taken to you

So strong

Consider yourself

Well in
There isn't a lot to spare
Nobody tries to be lah-di-dah or uppity
There's a cup-o'-tea for all
Only it's wise to be handy wiv a rolling pin
When the landlord comes to call

Consider yourself our mate
We don't want to have no fuss
For after some consideration we can state
Consider yourself
One of us...

For after some consideration we can state
Consider yourself...
One of us!

If it should chance to be
We should see some harder days
Empty larder days
Why grouse?
Always a chance we'll meet
Somebody to foot the bill
Then the drinks are on the house

Consider yourself at home
Consider yourself one of the family
We've taken to you so strong
It's clear we're going to get along
Consider yourself well in
Consider yourself part of the furniture
There isn't a lot to spare
Who cares?
Whatever we've got we share

If it should chance to be
We should see some harder days
Empty larder days
Why grouse?
Always a chance we'll meet
Somebody to foot the bill
Then the drinks are on the house

Consider yourself our mate
We don't want to have no fuss
For after some consideration we can state
Consider yourself...
One of us!!

Everybody loves a musical...like "Oliver!"

Let's start out with the genre!

Gospel

The Greek word for "gospel" is *evangelion*, which roughly means "good news."

And that's what all four of the gospels claim to share: the good news that God has sent Jesus into the world.

A gospel is different from a standard **biography** because it isn't just a record of someone's life.

Nope, a gospel has a clear purpose: it wants to make you believe.

If you walk away after reading one of the gospels and your life hasn't been changed, then the gospels will hang their ~~paper-papyrus-goat-sheep-skin-substances-scroll-like-in-appearance-heads~~ in sadness because they've failed to do their jobs.

The early Christians borrowed the idea of a gospel; up until then, nothing like it had ever been written.

But ~~Good News~~ had long since been associated with victories won on the battle field. A runner would share the good news of victory.

The early Christians re-worked and re-claimed this kind of thinking it was now, **THEIRS!**

And their invention worked. Big time!

In the last 2,000 years, the gospels have helped convince billions of people all over the world that Jesus is someone worth putting your faith in.

It is indeed, GOOD NEWS!

What's Up With the Title?

This one's not too tough.

The title lets us know that the story we're about to read is a gospel and that it was written by someone named John.

Oh, except that this gospel was almost certainly *not* written by any one person named John.

P.S. Remember, there isn't ~~no~~ standard title+for this gospel.

You might see it called various things like "The Gospel According to St. John," "The Gospel of John," or, more simply, just "John."

THE SETTING!

Are you ~~no~~ setting down+for this? It is important because like I always say, the ~~no~~CONTEXT+is EVERYTHING!
1st-century Judea, that is important, too!

The Gospel of John is set entirely in the **Roman province of Judea** sometime between the years 27 and 32 CE. But it is written much, much later.

Who cares?

Well, Jesus and his disciples lived and worked right smack dab in the middle of what are disputed Israeli and Palestinian territories today.

Sadly, not much has changed since the 1st century: the people back then were pretty frustrated with their living situation, too. And, as we know, they still are today!

This gospel calls out three key regions within the province.

Judea itself, which is home to the big temple in Jerusalem, and where Jesus is ultimately crucified

Samaria, which is home to those enemies of the Jewish people, Samaritans (they're not *all* good apparently)

Galilee, where Jesus is born and raised— is the back country, where the hicks live and work.

The action of the story mainly alternates between Judea and Galilee.

And, naturally, Jesus runs into different types of issues in both places.

Jews and Romans

The people of Judea were mostly Jewish and had been conquered and occupied by the mighty Roman Empire.

This was no big deal to ROME they had more important things to worry about than some insignificant Jewish province but it was a huge issue for the people of Judea.

Many of them resented Roman rule.

After all, the Romans had complete control over the land, laws, and government, and forced everyone to pay tons in taxes.

The Jews were hoping (and praying) that God would send a messiah or "anointed one" to reclaim Jewish rule of Judea and to kick out the Roman occupiers.

Home and Away

Back home in Galilee, people aren't impressed with Jesus. Think about it, if the kid who grew up down the street from you starting telling people he was God's son, you would be skeptical, too.

*(That guy says he's **sent** from God?)*

I knew him when he used to eat paste in kindergarten!) So when he's in Galilee, Jesus isn't exactly treated like a hometown hero.

He was the last one picked for any sport activity. He was the nerd. The kid that was bullied. The “kid” had a “thing” for God.

He was always praying. Quiet. And, talking out loud, like he was talking to himself...

All of this, too, is a part of the context and the larger picture...

In Judea, he has another problem all together: he seems to reek of Galilean wherever he goes. He's got that accent thing going on ñ he sounds like a Texan in Illinois.

The people refuse to believe he's the messiah because he was born in Galilee. You know, the wrong side of the tracks.

The messiah is supposed to be born in Bethlehem (which is in Judea.)

That's probably why **Matthew** and **Luke** go through such trouble to get Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for Jesus's birth.

The Gospel of John, though, doesn't seem to care much about all that. The messiah was born in Galilee and the people will just have to deal with it.

OH NO, not GALILEE ã NOT THAT!

Jesus is also usually in terrible danger whenever he's in Judea especially Jerusalem. They just do not seem to like him ã he is a rabble rouser from you-know-where.

Though the religious authorities don't really like him in Galilee, it's the guys in Judea who are really gunning for him.

They finally succeed when they turn him over to Pontius Pilate, who actually was the Roman governor of Judea during the time.

Lucky for us, what happened in Judea did not stay in Judea. VEGAS IT IS NOT!

Ah, JUDEA! Home of the elite. Home of the High Priesthood. Home of the religious-elite. Home of the educated. Home of style and class. Home of the Temple!

LIGHT VERSUS DARKNESS

If you've ever searched for a flashlight or candle in a power outage, you can understand why the authors of John's Gospel feel the way they do about light.

Darkness can be scary.

After all, you can't see where you're going and anything or anyone could be out there waiting in the dark to gobble you up.

It always feels good to turn on that little beam of light and finally see.

Well, after a few pranks, that is.

This Little Light of Mine...I'm going to let it shine, this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine, this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine! (Did you sing?)

Light is one of the first images we get in the gospel, and it definitely doesn't stop there: The authors like this stuff ã it is so GREEK, so PHILOSOPHICAL, discuss ã

Light does battle with darkness and it totally wins (1:5). YOU GO, LIGHT!

Daytime is the only time to get anything important done (9:4). There was no florescent lighting in Judea. Hey, if it is not LED what good is it?

Jesus is "the light of the world" (9:5).

People who believe in Jesus love the light because it illuminates how amazing they are (3:19). But only get my right side, it is my best lookõ

Light brightens your path so you don't trip and fall (12:35). Makes sense. Or fall down a well, or step in dog . do-do, like a slip nqslide!

WEE!

The authors are trying to tell us that believing in Jesus is like a sunny day, like a candle lighting up the dark night.

Before you find Jesus, you're just groping around in the dark, unable to see, trying to figure out where you areõ and where you are goingõ

But, once you believe in Jesus, everything is illuminated.

Whether or not you buy it, it sure it poetic. I can still trip walking up a stairs, even with Jesus. Heck, I can trip on practically any rug made in America.

The Heart of Darkness

If light in the Gospel of John can show off what's true and good, darkness usually means something shady is happening.

It's no surprise that Judas's big betrayal happens at night (13:30).

It wouldn't quite be the same if the sun was shining down, illuminating the evil.

Darkness also seems to imply plain ol' ignorance; that is, people who have yet to step into the Jesus light:

Nicodemus comes to see Jesus at night because he is scared to admit he is one of his followers (3:2).

Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb "while it was still dark," showing her lack of understanding of what was about to happen (20:1).

Ironically, Peter denies Jesus at night while he's warming his hands by a fire (a source of light). Peter has rejected the light, even though it's right there in front of him providing him with warmth and security (18:25). Nice going, Peter.

The light is there, but the figures in the story seem to be expecting a bug zapper at the end of the tunnel. The authors probably highlight these actions to show their readers that they'll be okay. No bug zappers for Jesus.

Let There Be Light

It won't come as a surprise that in our world, light usually symbolizes %good+while %darkness+is often like a big arrow pointing towards villainy. Is that racist? Asking for a friend.

Examples abound.

Voldemort is always hanging around in the dark.

Lord Voldemort is a sobriquet for Tom Marvolo Riddle, a fictional character and the main antagonist in J. K. Rowling's series of Harry Potter novels.

Voldemort first appeared in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, which was published in 1997. Light sometimes kills the baddies +like in the movie ***Gremlins***.

Vampires also have a bit of trouble with sunlight (not **Edward Cullen**, of course; he just sparkles). Did you ever see **Buffy** hunting during the day?

Bad guys must not care about being able to see.

WATER

We are not talking Helen Keller, WAWA. This is pre-Helen.

There was no air conditioning in 1st-century Judea, which might be why the writers of the gospels talk about water a whole lot.

It figures that a group of people living through hundred-degree summers in the desert would appreciate a nice, cool drink every now and then, with lots of cubes...

Water was not only vital to staying cool and hydrated, but to staying clean, producing crops, and raising livestock.

Basically, water was life.

In the Gospel of John, water has three main functions:

Baptizing.

John the Baptizer does his baptizing in the Jordan River (1:31) and Jesus tells his followers that no one can have a life with God "without being born of water and Spirit" (3:5).

In other words, the authors are telling us that we have to be *physically* baptized in water

and *metaphorically* immersed in the "living water" that is Christ (4:10).

Drinking.

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman AT THE WELL that anyone who drinks the water he has to offer will never be thirsty again (4:13) a pretty amazing promise, given the fact that they were standing in the middle of a desert at the time. Heheheõ

For the authors of John's Gospel, this is how belief in Jesus is supposed to feel õ refreshing, satisfying, and fullõ moist lips and all.

Washing.

Water is also used for cleaning õ fancy that.

Jesus washes the feet of the disciples with water as a gesture of friendship and humility before he's crucified (13:5).)

He also turns water meant for purification purposes into top shelf hooch, when the booze runs out at a wedding in CANA of GALILEE. But I guess, you did not wash in that, you just got %soaked!+ %Buzzed!+ %High!+ %Feeling, mighty fine!+ Thank you, Jebusõ (Said with a slur)õ

Water, Water Everywhere

It doesn't stop there.

Jesus also uses water in some of his miracles.

He turned that water into wine at the wedding (2:9), then, he walks on the stormy sea (6:19), and heals the man born blind with just a little bit of spit and mud (9:6).

After his death, blood and water pour out of the wound in his side (19:34).

Why so much talk about WAWA?

Well, it is pretty crucial to our lives.

Babies grow and develop in the water-like amniotic fluid in their mother's womb (sorry, bear with me), which is why baptism by water is seen as a way to be "reborn" into a new life.

Effective cleaning with water helps kill germs and bacteria (meaning your mom was right all those times she told you to wash your hands before dinner and during a global pandemic).

And anyone, who's ever run a mile or more, knows how appealing the idea of never thirsting again is.

If you want to get people to dunk their heads in a liquid and feel spiritually cleansed, you might as well choose something they already know, need, and love.

Chocolate milk, anyone?

Raindrops Keep Fallin' On Our Heads

Where else do we see images of baptismal, drinking, and cleansing water?

Just about everywhere.

In ***The Awakening***, Edna allows herself to drown in the sea, effectively "freeing" herself from the constraints of society.

Huck Finn and Jim escape North to freedom on a raft along the Mississippi River.

The Wicked Witch of the West is killed when a bucket of pure, sweet, life-giving **water is thrown on her**.

And every time a couple stands out in the rain and kisses at the end of a romantic comedy, we're supposed to understand they they've entered into a "new life" together and that all the zany misunderstanding of the past two hours are being washed away down some New York City drain.

Anyone else feeling a little thirsty?

You got that all, right?

The Greatest Thing Since Sliced Bread

Way back in **Exodus**, God gave the people bread when they were starving out in the desert, and now we eat it with peanut butter and fluff and a tall glass of milk.

Yep, bread has been around for quite a while, and the Gospel of John doesn't forget it.

In fact, God is feeding people here, too ~~with~~ Jesus. It is ~~Wonder Bread!~~+ Builds strong bodies, twelve waysõ

That's right. Bread = Jesus:

Jesus tells us that he is "the bread of life" (6:48).

He is spiritual food for everyone who takes him in.

No one who believes in Jesus will ever hunger again.

EVER?

He also compares himself to the ~~man~~anna from heaven+that God gave the Jewish people, saying that he is "the true bread from heaven" (6:32).

We demand a taste test. Please tell me it doesn't taste like wafers, I hate Styrofoam and paper..

Then Jesus takes things a step further and says that whoever eats the bread (i.e., him) will live forever (6:51). Um, gross.

Jesus feeds the crowd from just a few pieces of fish and bread (6:11).

He eats bread and fish with the disciples after his resurrection (21:13).

Jesus also uses bread to indicate who will betray him. He dips a piece in a dish and hands it to Judas, as if to say, *My body is in your hands now* (13:26). Judas, who clearly didn't read this Shmoop guide, runs out into the night without ever understanding all this bread talk.

Our Daily Bread

Literature loves it some bread. Don't we all? CARBS!!!!

Examples?

Why, of course:

Special bread, called *lembas*, sustains the hobbits throughout their long journey in ***The Lord of the Rings*** trilogy (although Gollum chokes when he tries to eat it). Yep, another weird reference.

In ***The Hunger Games***, Peeta is the son of a baker, and once saved Katniss and her family from starvation by giving them bread to eat.

In the Holocaust memoir ***Night***, bread is used cruelly as the German soldiers toss it into the train cars filled with starving prisoners from the concentration camps and watch as they brutally fight with each other to get a piece so sad. So, inhumane! So typical, of us as human beings

So many references, so little time

Sheepherding was big business in the ancient world. Farmers weren't able to look after their sheep by themselves and still maintain the farm, so they hired out shepherds to do the job.

A shepherd would be expected to lead a large flock of sheep where they needed to go and protect them out in the pasture. Wolves, looking for a tasty snack, or thieves, looking to snag themselves some nice wool sweaters, might come by at any time, and a shepherd had to be ready.

Would-be prophets loved to use songs and stories with **pastoral** metaphors to brag about their flock-leading skills.

But not all "shepherds" were created equal and listeners had to be careful they weren't getting fleeced.

Leader of the Flock

**Which made me think of “LEADER OF THE PACK” –
No, not Aaron Rodgers...but rather the song!**

Is she really going out with him?
Well, there she is. Let's ask her.
Betty, is that Jimmy's ring you're wearing?
Mm-hmm
Gee, it must be great riding with him
Is he picking you up after school today?
Uh-uh
By the way, where'd you meet him?

I met him at the candy store
He turned around and smiled at me
You get the picture? (yes, we see)
That's when I fell for (the leader of the pack)

My folks were always putting him down (down, down)
They said he came from the wrong side of town
(whatcha mean when ya say that he came from the wrong side of town?)
They told me he was bad
But I knew he was sad
That's why I fell for (the leader of the pack)

One day my dad said, "Find someone new

"I had to tell my Jimmy we're through
(whatcha mean when ya say that ya better go find somebody new?)
He stood there and asked me why
But all I could do was cry
I'm sorry I hurt you (the leader of the pack)

He sort of smiled and kissed me goodbye
The tears were beginning to show
As he drove away on that rainy night
I begged him to go slow
But whether he heard, I'll never know

Look out! Look out! Look out! Look out!
I felt so helpless, what could I do?
Remembering all the things we'd been through
In school they all stop and stare
I can't hide the tears, but I don't care
I'll never forget him (the leader of the pack)

The leader of the pack - now he's gone
The leader of the pack - now he's gone
The leader of the pack - now he's gone
The leader of the pack - now he's gone
[fade]

Jesus calls himself "**the good shepherd**," because, unlike those minimum wage shepherders who take off at the first sign of danger, Jesus is willing to go to bat for his flock.

Since all his sheep personally belong to him, he's ready to defend them to the death if necessary. He also knows them so well that leading them is no big deal. Jesus can call every sheep by its name and they all recognize his voice and go where he asks (10:3).

Okay, let's un-**metaphor** ourselves for a moment. Hehehe.

The flock of sheep is made up of people who believe in Jesus, and it's a pretty inviting group. Anyone can be part of it as long as they put their faith in the Jesus. And Jesus is sure that he will be able to lead all of them toward a life with God (10:16). We are talking Eternal Life!

And in the final scenes of the Gospel, the sheep come back again. Peter redeems himself by affirming his love for Jesus, and Jesus gives Peter the job of taking care of his sheep (21:15-19). With Jesus soon to be gone, he will need some well-trained shepherds to lead and protect his flock i.e., his believers.

Really Woolly

- **Sorry, and I truly mean that, but I have to go where my teeny, tiny, little mind takes me...and from really woolly, I automatically went to "Woolly Bully," so my apology in advance.**

OMG, Sam the Sham the Pharaohs when was the last time you heard of them? If, ever?

Uno dos, one two tres quatro

Ay, wooly bully
Watch it now, watch it

Here he comes, here he comes
Watch it now, and he get 'cha

Matty told Hatty
About a thing she saw
Had two big horns
And a wooly jaw

Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Yeah drive
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully

Hatty told Matty
Let's don't take no chance

Let's not be L-seven
Come and learn to dance

Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully

Watch it now, watch it watch it watch it
Ay

Ay, drive, drive, drive

Matty told Hatty
That's the thing to do
Get you someone really
Pull the wool with you

Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully
Wooly bully

Wooly bully

Watch it now, watch it, here he comes
You got it, you got it

Shepherds aren't unique to the gospels, that's for sure. They're *everywhere* in the Bible. What can we say? The people of Judea loved them some nice wool sweaters. You've probably heard the phrase "The Lord is my shepherd," right?

Well, that's the Bible talking **Psalm 23** to be exact.

In that case, God is leading the psalmist like a sheep into calm and beautiful meadows.

JUST SO YOU KNOW!

Muhammad, the founder of Islam, **was also a shepherd** and ended up leading a pretty big flock himself— 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide and constantly growing, as a matter of fact, the fastest growing WORLD RELIGION. Yikes! Making us, chopped liver?

It's not always a worldwide-religion creating image, though. In the novel ***Animal Farm***, the sheep characters show the negative side of all this pastoral imagery.

They mindlessly bleat slogans in favor of their chief, a critique of human "sheep" who blindly follow a charismatic leader.

There.

That wasn't so baaaaad, was it? (Sorry, I had to.)

The cross has become one of the most enduring and well-recognized Christian symbols throughout the world. You'd

almost never guess that it started out as a way to kill people. (Kind of like the old electric chair.)

Imagine seeing a little girl with a pretty electric chair charm around her neck or watching your great aunt, Shelly hang a decorative noose on her front door with plastic flowers on it. That should give you an idea of how much the symbol of the cross has changed over the years. What was once an exceptionally cruel excruciating (you can see the word cross or crucifixion in the word excruciating) method of capital punishment has become a sign of hope and inspiration for billions.

Don't Cross the Romans

(And, Don't Mess with Texas, either!)

The early Christians didn't focus much on the cross right after Jesus died probably because they actually knew **what death on a cross would have looked like**. It was not a pretty sight.

Crucifixion was a particularly terrible and humiliating punishment used throughout the Roman Empire. A victim would be stripped naked, have nails pounded through their arms or feet (or both), be placed upright on the cross, and be left to die. Since the nails alone wouldn't kill you, the death was slow. Victims often died from starvation, suffocation, or shock, and depending on the method that was used, death could take hours or even days. Not exactly something you want to imagine your Savior going through or anybody else.

At a Crossroads

Within the Early Christian Writings, the authors attempt to reclaim the symbol of the cross.

Rather than being a humiliating method of execution, the cross comes to represent God's wonderful plan of salvation.

The Gospel of John is definitely on board.

At every step, Jesus's death is described as the glorious fulfillment of all God wants for the world.

Even the agony of crucifixion doesn't seem so bad in this particular version of the story. While hanging on the cross, Jesus says that he is thirsty not because he actually is, but to fulfill a prophecy from the Hebrew Bible (19:28).

Back to the Future

Starting with people like the writers of the Gospel of John, this new understanding of the cross caught on and crosses became a more popular and widely known symbol of Christian devotion.

For centuries, the death of Jesus has been a favorite subject for artists and authors around the world.

How about a few examples?

- In ***The Old Man and the Sea***, Santiago hauls the cross-shaped mast from the boat after his ordeal at sea.

- In *Crime*, crosses are frequently seen or referred to and indicate the suffering of the characters.
- In ***Native Son***, we see how the cross can hold different meanings depending on the context.

Because of its simplicity, the cross is often spotted in unlikely places. During the search for survivors at the site of the fallen World Trade Center, **two huge steel beams in the shape of a cross were found**. Many people interpreted this as a symbol of hope and solace. Two millennia later, and the cross is still going strong.

Sex Drugs And Violence Rating PG

- Peter cuts off a guy's ear.
- Jesus is beaten and whipped.
- Jesus is hung on a cross to die.

The Gospel of John doesn't actually give us any of the gruesome details, but the young'uns might be a little squeamish about the thought of having nails driven through their hands and feet. And by young'uns, we mean us.

Literary and Philosophical References

The Grapes of Wrath

It's no coincidence that Jim Casy shares the same initials as Jesus (JC) most readers do not necessarily catch that

fact! This former preacher turns himself in to save another man and is later killed while advocating for worker's rights.

Billy Budd

Billy = Jesus, Claggert = Judas, and Vere = Pilate in this Melville tale. Case closed.

The Old Man and the Sea

Santiago suffers at sea just like our friend Jesus does on the cross.

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Tom, an elderly slave, turns to his Christian faith to see him through the hardships of life on the plantation. He dies forgiving his murderers, and inspires others to become Christian as well. Sounds pretty Christ-like to me.

A Tale of Two Cities

Before he goes to his death, Sydney Carton quotes **John 11:25-26** to show that he's cool with dying in the place of someone else.

Lord of the Flies

When Simon tries to tell the truth about the island to the other boys, he's mistaken for "the beast" and killed. If only he'd held onto the conch.

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

Aslan sacrifices himself in order to save the life of a traitor and comes back in glory, proving once and for all that lions make the best Jesusq

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

Spoiler alert! Harry dies and rises again, but not before taking a quick trip to King's Cross. He could probably walk on water, too, if only he could find the right spell.

Pop Culture References

The Day the Earth Stood Still

Mr. Carpenter comes to earth to give the world an important message about peace, hope, and love. Later, he gets shot, but, being a Christ-like guy that he is, comes right back.

The Matrix

Neo is "the one" who will save humanity. We wonder if Jesus could dodge bullets in slow motion, too.

Doctor Who

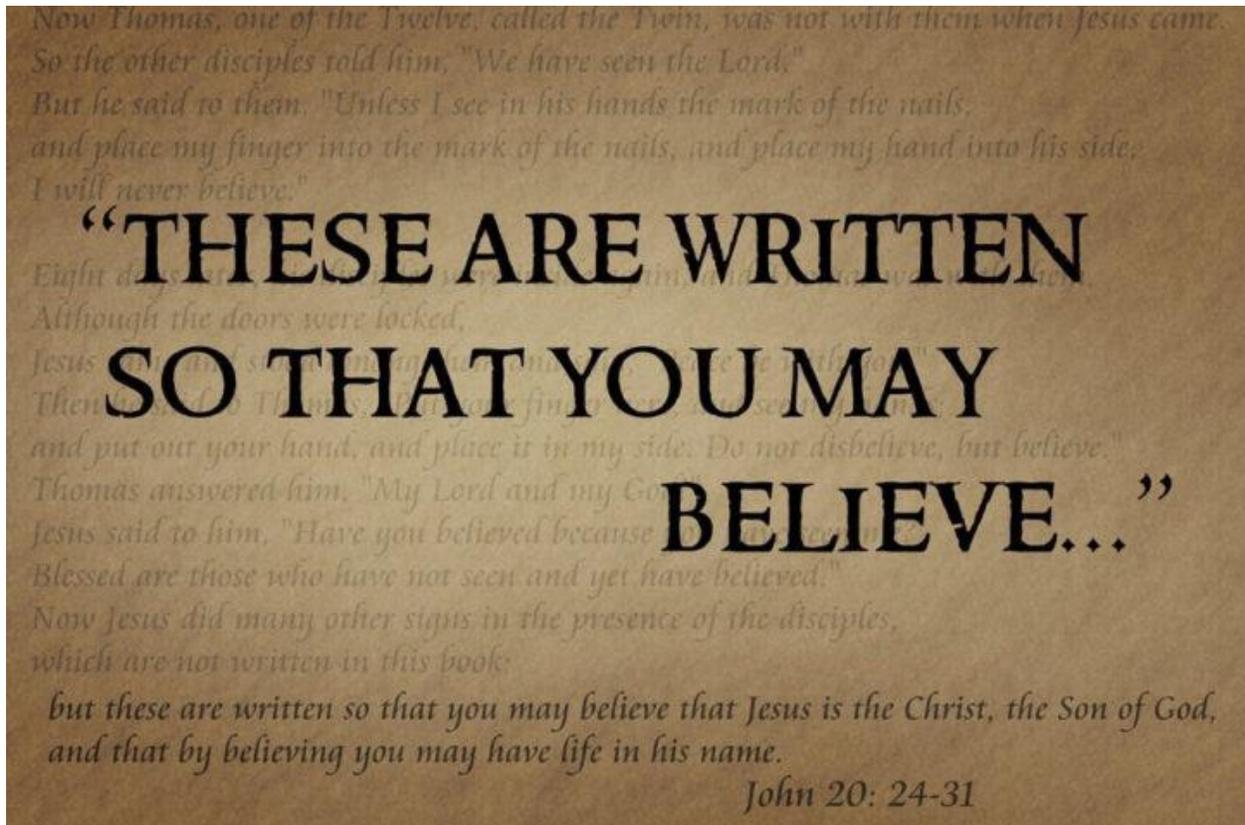
The Doctor never has to worry about dying while trying to save the universe because he can simply regenerate and come back to life in a new form. He's done it eleven times so far. Even Jesus doesn't have that kind of track record. I guess once was enough, right Lord?

Donnie Darko

Through the course of the film, Donnie slowly realizes he must choose to die in order to save the people he loves. But the creepy guy in the bunny suit is way scarier than the religious authorities.

Cool Hand Luke

Luke is a convict who inspires other sinners. He's shot while trying to escape from prison. I bet Jesus could eat 50 eggs on a bet, too. Lol



About Cholesterol

As cholesterol (plaque) builds up in the arteries, the arteries begin to narrow, which lessens or blocks the flow of blood.

Blood cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made by your liver. Blood cholesterol is essential for good health. Your body needs it to perform important jobs, such as making hormones and digesting fatty foods.

Your body makes all the blood cholesterol it needs, which is why experts recommend that people eat as little dietary cholesterol as possible while on a healthy eating plan.

Dietary cholesterol is found in animal foods, including meat, seafood, poultry, eggs, and dairy products. Learn more about preventing high cholesterol by making healthy eating choices. Who knows some day you may thank me for this addition! ☐