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Being Sure Of Heaven

(Help From John's Gospel)

Preface

This booklet has been produced to accompany our *Sound Words* radio programmes about being sure of heaven. I am extremely grateful for the help given by John Hawley and the Open Air Mission in the UK for their permission to use the material on their 'Sure of Heaven' CD. The talks on that CD have formed the basis of both the programmes and this book. John Hawley had a career in teaching but in more recent years has been called by God to be an evangelist. He has a passion for people to be really certain about going to heaven, which can only be known through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has much experience in this task and it is a privilege to work alongside him in making Christ known.

You will find parts of each chapter in John's Gospel in this booklet. Because of this we recommend that you get a copy of John's Gospel and read the whole of each chapter which we quote from.

It is our prayer that this book will help you to be really sure in your own heart and mind that there is a place in heaven for you, and if you are already sure, that your assurance will be strengthened. It is such an important issue and everyone in

the world needs to consider it carefully. Thankfully God has given us clear directions about this in the Bible, and in this booklet we concentrate on some of the teaching found in John's Gospel.

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Chapter 1: Jesus The Living Word

John Chapters 1 - 7

There are many things which we, as ordinary people, are very unaware of and perhaps the most obvious of these is the future. It is true that we often plan things as if we know what is going to happen, and there is nothing wrong in that of course, and do it all the time. Someone has helpfully said, "*We should plan our lives as if we were going to live forever, but live each day as if it were our last!*" But really the best we could ever say is that we hoped what we had planned was going to come to pass, but we could not be any more certain than that. None of us knows what may be around the corner in our lives. Everything is subject to the will of God and we always need to remember that (James 4:15). Having said that, the Bible is also quite clear that there are some things concerning the future which are not only certain, but which God wants us to know are certain. This is because these are things which he has planned and not us. And it is one of these we are going to explore in this book.

We are going to be looking through John's Gospel and our subject is being sure of heaven, that is having a certainty in your own heart and mind that one day God will bring you to heaven. Really there is surely nothing more important to know with a real certainty than to be sure you are going to heaven at the end of your life.

Towards the end of John's Gospel he wrote in John 20, verse 31,

"...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Similarly, in his first letter towards the end of the Bible John wrote this in 1 John 5, verse 13,

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

Now reader can I ask right at the outset, do you know, are you sure of heaven? Do you know that you have eternal life? That is something which surely faces all of us.

John was an eye witness of Jesus. He was one who saw him; he was there on the spot. He was there at the crucifixion. He was there at the resurrection. Because of this he writes as one who saw for himself first hand, and he also includes the testimony of others who met Jesus too. As you read John's Gospel it is like being in a court room and different witnesses were coming up into the witness box. You will discover there is someone from a wedding party and he says, 'Jesus turned water into wine.' There is a well respected counsellor and he speaks personally of a conversation with Jesus one night.

Another witness is a man testifying that Jesus healed him after he had been an invalid for thirty eight years. We see two ladies with a shady moral background coming and saying, 'Look he's changed me altogether on the inside.' We see two men, one after another coming to the witness box, one saying, 'I was blind from birth but now I can see', and the next one saying almost unbelievably, 'I was dead for four days and look here I am alive again.' Then we see John the Baptist coming to the witness box and he says, 'I saw and testify that this is the Son of God.' As we read through John's Gospel we meet these people who had seen and heard and come to know Jesus in a personal way and we need to weigh up the evidence they give us.

Part 1: John chapters 1 and 2.

a. Jesus comes into the world and we meet his first disciples.

Well, '*Jesus the living Word*' is the title we have given to the first section of seven chapters of John's Gospel. Here we see Jesus stepping on to the stage of human history, the Word becomes flesh and yet this same 'Jesus' comes as a Lamb for sacrifice. We start with John 1:1 - 17, and then verses 29 - 43,

"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. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that

light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, 'This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

"The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, "A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me." I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.' Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit." I have seen and I

testify that this is the Son of God.' The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!' When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?' They said, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' 'Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.' So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas,' (which, when translated, is Peter). The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.'"

In John's first chapter we see Jesus the Word, the living Word of God. This reminds us of the opening chapters of the Bible. God was there, the sovereign God in creation, the living God and yet we see here not only phrases like 'Jesus was with God', 'Jesus was God' but this stupendous statement: Jesus, God, the Word became flesh, God amongst men, Emmanuel. Someone once described this Word as God revealing to us a living picture of himself. It goes on in this chapter to say whoever receives this Word, this person, becomes a child of God, becomes part of his family. My dear reader, would you say that you are part of God's family in that personal way? We go on to see another John, not the writer of this gospel but John the Baptist, an austere figure, the cousin of Jesus. Twice

we see John the Baptist looking at Jesus and saying ‘Behold’ or “*Look, the Lamb of God.*” The second time he adds, “*...who takes away the sin of the world.*” Has Jesus taken your sin away? It might seem a somewhat pointed question but that is at the base, at the heart of really knowing God in this personal way, the heart of being sure of heaven.

We see excited disciples, Andrew and Philip saying amongst themselves, ‘*We have found the Messiah*’, ‘we have found the Saviour.’ But you know we read Jesus giving a little balance to that comment for he says to Philip, ‘I have found you’ and when anyone comes to know God in this personal way it is both ways. God finds us and we find the Lord Jesus Christ.

b. Jesus’ first miracle.

We come now to John 2:1 - 11,

“On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no more wine.’ ‘Dear woman, why do you involve me?’ Jesus replied, ‘My time has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’ They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the

bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”

In the ancient east the whole town would have turned out for the wedding feast and here was Jesus with his disciples and his mother in the crowd like any other, and yet we read in this chapter that Jesus revealed his glory (v11). He appeared outwardly to be like all the rest, but something about the person and the purpose of Jesus coming to earth was revealed here. As the feast went on an embarrassment arose, the wine ran out! This was a big problem for the host and Jesus was called in. His mother said to the servants, ‘*Do whatever he tells you.*’ Are we willing to do whatever the Lord Jesus tells us? Well, that was his mother’s comment so Jesus told them to fill up those great big jars with water. Then as the jars were poured out it was not water that came out but the best vintage wine. Jesus took what was ordinary and turned it into something extraordinary. Reader there is a picture here for you and me. We might think we are not anything special but God takes an interest in us and he takes ordinary lives like ours and turns them into something special and something extraordinary. He delights to give the amazing gift of eternal life to people just like us and change us into his own children, children of the living God.

In verse 11 of this chapter this changing of water into wine by Jesus is called a miraculous sign that revealed his glory. It was pointing to the fact that Jesus is God.

John rounds off his second chapter by telling us of another incident in Jesus' life and of the way the people were attracted to him, but his response to them is very searching in verses 24 and 25,

“But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.”

Now, do you find that a threatening or a comforting thought, that God knows all about you? He knows all about me. It is not just that he knows all men but that he also knows what is in a man. He knows what is in you and me. He knows what we are really like. He is aware of those parts of our lives that we try to hide from other people. He knows every thought we have had, every word we have spoken, every act we have done, whether good or bad. Yet amazingly the Bible tells us that although God knows all about us, even the very worst parts of our lives, he delights to set his love upon ordinary people like us in mercy and grace. It is when we ask Jesus to change us on the inside; to forgive those things we know have been wrong, that he not only forgives us but assures us that there is a place in heaven reserved for us.

Part 2: John chapters 3 to 5.

a. A night time visitor.

In this section we are going to look at three people who met Jesus. We begin with a very well known part of this Gospel which records for us a meeting Jesus had with someone who came to talk with him in the secret and quiet of the night time. It is what Jesus had to say to him that is important for us to grasp. We are in the third chapter of John's Gospel and we are considering verses 1 to 21 and verses 35 and 36:

“Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no-one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.’ In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’ ‘How can a man be born when he is old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.” The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.’ ‘How can this be?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘You are Israel’s teacher,’ said Jesus, ‘and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven - the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into

the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

"The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

Nicodemus came to Jesus during the night; he sought him out privately, secretly. Nicodemus was a very religious and respectable man, and in fact the Bible says he was both a Pharisee and a ruler in Israel. Jesus went right to the heart of the matter with Nicodemus because he knew what he needed most. Jesus simply told him he needed to be born again. Something altogether new must happen in his life, in fact the word 'again' means 'from above'. He told Nicodemus he had to have a spiritual birth that comes from above, from heaven, from God. It says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17 that:

"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

Jesus made it clear that the key to this new birth is belief. Seven times in seven verses Jesus said to Nicodemus, that he must believe. It is belief, trust, faith in Jesus that is the

evidence that we know the birth that comes from above. We read in John 3, verse 16:

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God so loved this world that he gave. When we are given a gift, perhaps at Christmas or when it is our birthday, do we say, 'Let me get my wallet out to pay for this'? No, we receive it and say, 'Thank you so much.' God wants to give us a gift, a gift of new life, a gift of a clean heart. Yes, a gift of a sure place in heaven. We read in John 3:18 that we stand condemned already because we love darkness rather than light. But are we willing to come into the light of the gospel, to allow Christ to expose what is wrong in our life, put it right and to know that spiritual new birth from Christ himself? Those who are willing and do come to him in humble repentance and faith are given eternal life and an assurance of heaven.

b. An immoral woman.

We come now to John chapter 4 and another moving meeting that Jesus had, this time with a very needy woman. Again it was when Jesus was alone, but this time the reasons are a bit more obvious. You see this woman was of dubious character and would have been shunned by the people in her town. But again, it is what Jesus had to say to her that is of the greatest importance. This is what John 4:1 - 14 and verses 25 - 30 say:

"The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptising more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptised, but his disciples. When the

Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Will you give me a drink?' (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?' (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.' 'Sir,' the woman said, 'you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?' Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

"The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Then Jesus declared, 'I who speak to you am he.' Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no-one asked, 'What do you want?' or 'Why are you talking with her?' Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town

and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?'"

What a remarkable story! We read that Jesus had to go through Samaria. Most Jews would have given the Samaritans a wide berth and avoided going through Samaria entirely, but Jesus had to because he wanted to meet with this lady. This lady was what we might call 'a loose living Samaritan woman' whose life was really in quite a mess and yet Jesus spent time with her. There was a 'must' about Jesus meeting this woman, and reader there is a 'must' about Jesus meeting with you. It is no accident that Jesus went to Samaria and it is no accident that you are reading this book about Jesus. He wants you to listen to what he has to say, to come to him for true spiritual and everlasting life. Jesus offered this needy woman a gift and that gift was living water. The woman could not understand but Jesus was talking about spiritual life that he came to give and which would quench her thirsty soul, cleanse her from the dirt of her sin, and sustain her spiritual life from then onwards. So Jesus began to help her see how much in need of this spiritual life she really was, and he did this by showing that he knew all about her past and he brought this out into the open in verses 16-18:

"He told her, 'Go, call your husband and come back.' 'I have no husband,' she replied. Jesus said to her, 'You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.'"

Jesus knows all about you and me too, and yet he offers us that living water also, whereby he will come into our lives

and change us completely. Well this woman left her water pot and ran back to the town's people and shared with them this good news. Reader are you willing to leave the mundane, the water pot as it were and just know that joy of sins forgiven, of peace with God. She could not help telling others to come and see the man, Jesus, who told her everything she ever did and yet loved her and forgave her.

c. An invalid.

The third person whom Jesus met is described in John 5. This was a very needy man with no one to help him. There were certainly others nearby when he met Jesus, but even so this man was very much alone because he had no friend who could assist him and he tells Jesus about that as you will read. These verses are John 5:1 - 15:

“Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie - the blind, the lame, the paralysed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’ ‘Sir,’ the invalid replied, ‘I have no-one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, ‘It is the

Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.’ But he replied, ‘The man who made me well said to me, “Pick up your mat and walk.”’ So they asked him, ‘Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?’ The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.’ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.”

Again we meet someone in real need, a lame man, an invalid for thirty eight years. He would almost certainly have been a beggar and in those days a beggar would have been a social outcast. What a wretched existence he must have had and yet Jesus loved the unloved and the unlovely. That is the same today; Jesus loves the unloved and the unlovely. He asked this man, ‘Do you want to get well?’ It is like asking a blind person, ‘Do you want to see?’ Jesus was drawing out faith from this man. The man was no doubt hoping against hope that perhaps Jesus would help him to get into this pool of Siloam to benefit from its supposed curative power because he was an invalid and could do nothing to get himself there. Jesus, however, had much more in mind than simply giving him a helping hand. But let us just pause for a moment and consider this. In a real sense we are all like this man spiritually speaking. By that I mean we are like the lame and paralysed before God. There is nothing that we can do to bring ourselves to God. However, this incident gives us great hope, for Jesus came to him and healed him and the man got up and walked. And Jesus continues to give spiritual life to all who truly commit their lives to him. He brings us to God.

Significantly Jesus met the man a little later on and said to him:

“See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”

That is exactly what Jesus would say to us. He wants to make us whole and then he would say to us, ‘Live a life that is clean before me.’

Part 3: John chapters 6 and 7.

a. Jesus feeds a great crowd.

Have you noticed how often we use words to describe something that we do not normally mean by them? Now that might sound rather strange so let me give you an example. Imagine two men in a boxing competition who up to now had not shown themselves to be very good boxers at all because they had both lost their previous fights. They begin their contest and one soon overpowers his opponent and is the easy winner. Describing the events after the match the commentator says, ‘The winner was really hungry for a victory.’ Now we normally think of food when we speak of someone being hungry, not boxing, so what was meant when we hear the winner was really hungry to win? It simply means that boxer truly wanted to win. He longed to win. He wanted this so much he was like a starving man who longs for food. Now I chose that illustration of hunger quite deliberately, and we will come back to that.

In this book we have been seeking answers to the question, ‘How can I be sure of heaven?’ It is probably one of the most important questions we can ever ask and find the answer to. In fact I would go so far as to say it is the one question

everyone needs to answer personally. To know and have the assurance of going to heaven when your life comes to an end, as it surely will one day, is really of major significance and vital. Indeed, for some people the longing to have that assurance, to have that question answered in their own hearts, is like a gnawing hunger deep down inside them and there is a longing for that hunger to be satisfied, not with food but with solid factual proof.

Well, let us keep this in mind as we turn to John’s Gospel again. We are going to consider John 6: 1 -15, verses 25 - 29, and verses 35 - 37:

“Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?’ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. Philip answered him, ‘Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!’ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ‘Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?’ Jesus said, ‘Make the people sit down.’ There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they

had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.' So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.' Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself."

"When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, 'Rabbi, when did you get here?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.' Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'"

"Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.'"

Here we see a lad who comes in a vast crowd. There were five thousand men and if we add the women and children there may have been twenty thousand there for this meal this day. They were hungry so Jesus said to his disciples, 'Where

shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' One of the disciples, Andrew, directed Jesus to a little lad with his lunch box. What had his mum put in that day? Just five loaves and two small fish. How insufficient we would say to feed such a crowd. But it was brought to Jesus and he had to feed that vast crowd. It says that all had enough to eat. Isn't that wonderful? What is the lesson we need to learn from this passage? Those who truly come to Jesus are satisfied in their innermost being. Jesus went on to say, "*I am the bread of life*", the first of seven 'I am' sayings in John's Gospel. It does not come over to us in the English but 'I am' was used only to refer to God. It was the word used way back in the Old Testament when God told Moses to go and lead his people Israel out of Egypt in Exodus 3. This is what we read in verses 13 -14:

"Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you.'"

Here in John's Gospel Jesus says, '*I am God, the bread of life*'. He was declaring that he was God. Many of the people wanted to make him king by force, a Messiah that made no real demands, a Messiah that would push the Romans out, but Jesus had not come to build an earthly human kingdom but a spiritual one. They wanted Jesus to join their cause but Jesus wants us to join his cause, his kingdom. Those people who had fed on that miraculous food and had listened to Jesus teach asked him, '*What must we do to do the work of God?*'

Jesus made this tremendous answer, he said, *‘The work of God is to believe the one that he has sent.’*

b. Quenching spiritual thirst.

Another similar metaphor to being hungry is thirsting for a drink. Now where I live we rarely have a water shortage as we get rain all the year round, and even on the rare occasions when the use of water is restricted there is always enough to drink. But in the Middle East where Jesus lived and in many other countries, long periods with many hot sunny days with little rain was and still is a regular experience. In those conditions being really thirsty was an all too familiar experience. Well, just as hunger is used to describe a spiritual need, so is thirsting and many people have a longing to be sure of heaven that is like an unquenchable thirst. We come now to John chapter 7 in our search for the answer to how we can be sure of heaven, and Jesus uses this metaphor of thirsting to help us. This is what we read in John 7:1 - 9, verses 14 - 19 and verses 37 - 38:

“After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus’ brothers said to him, ‘You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No-one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.’ For even his own brothers did not believe in him. Therefore Jesus told them, ‘The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go

to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come.’ Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.”

“Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews were amazed and asked, ‘How did this man get such learning without having studied?’ Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. He who speaks on his own does so to gain honour for himself, but he who works for the honour of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?’”

“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’”

Jesus’ unbelieving brothers wanted to join the fan club that we read of in the last chapter, the hero worshippers. They were telling him to go to Jerusalem, do a few mind blowing miracles, (you notice not signs), which will grab people’s attention. What did Jesus say? Three times he said that his time had not yet come. Significantly we read that phrase seven times in this Gospel of John. In fact in verse 8 of this chapter we read, *‘The right time for me has not yet come...’*. What was Jesus talking about? The purpose for which Jesus had come was to go to the cross to pay the penalty for sin, to

die on that cross to pay the punishment that sinners really deserve. It was this time that had not yet come, but it surely would at the time appointed by God. Jesus did go to Jerusalem but a little later and he slipped into the proceedings half way through the Feast of Tabernacles. It was like a harvest thanksgiving and Jesus started teaching. He said, *'My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.'* There was a 'Thus says the Lord' about the teaching of Jesus, like the prophets of old. *'Yet not one of you keeps the law'*, Jesus said. Reader, have you realised that not one of us has kept God's law. Take a little look at the Ten Commandments and think. You will find them in the Old Testament in Exodus 20. Well, how do you stand in the light of those? Honesty compels us to say what we read in Romans 3, verse 23, *"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..."* Returning to John 7:30 - 31, we are told some tried to seize Jesus but others put their faith in him. What a difference there was. Well, Jesus stood up on the greatest day of the festival. On this day the High Priest went through the streets of Jerusalem with an urn of water and then poured it out. Although this was not required in the Old Testament law this simple act was acknowledging that rain was a gift of God absolutely essential to produce a fruitful harvest. It was the climax to the festival and Jesus stood up on that last and greatest day and said, *'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink'*. Are you thirsty for true meaning in your life, for meeting God, for having a clean life, for being sure of heaven? Jesus says *'...come to me and drink'*.

Again John is telling us that the answer to our question lies in Jesus himself. It is he who satisfies the deep longings of the human heart. It is he who can make us sure of heaven with

complete assurance. We simply have to go to him with the thirst in our souls, that longing to know definitely that there is a place in heaven reserved for us, and ask him to quench that thirst, to satisfy it, and he will. He said, *'...come to me and drink.'* It sounds almost too simple an answer, but it is God's answer because the Bible is God's Word, his message to us. It is here that Jesus tells us trusting in him will give us real peace about our future destination. But you may be saying to yourself, why is Jesus able to give us this certainty? Let me suggest two reasons. First he came down from heaven, John chapter one tells us that and secondly he dealt with the one thing that will keep us from heaven, and that is sin. Through his death on the cross he has suffered the penalty which sin incurs. He shed his blood, without which there can be no forgiveness. In his first letter towards the end of the Bible John tells us it is the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son which cleanses us from all sin. So Jesus really is the answer to how anyone can be sure of heaven. All that is required of us is that we humbly pray to him to forgive us, and that we entrust our lives into his loving care. Then why not do that now?

Chapter 2: Jesus Changes Lives

John Chapters 8 to 16

Part 1: John chapters 8 and 9.

I wonder if you have ever seen someone you know mixing with other people you had never thought they would be seen with? Well, Jesus certainly did, sometimes to the great delight of those who watched, especially the ordinary people.

But on other occasions Jesus was viewed with shock and disdain and disapproval by others, particularly the religious elite of the time. We are going to see two people whom Jesus met who were themselves despised by many. One was an immoral woman and the other a man born blind and what is wonderful is that Jesus gave both of them the assurance of a place in heaven.

We are working our way through John's Gospel and we are examining the question, 'How can I be sure of heaven?' Again and again John's Gospel has pointed us to Jesus as the answer, and urges us to trust in him as the one who can most certainly make us sure of heaven. John was quite clear that he wanted his readers to be assured they have a place in heaven and that God would bring them there one day. He did not write with a 'perhaps we might have eternal life' but which he could not really be sure about. No, he was certain, he was sure of heaven and he wanted us to be also.

This section of John's Gospel, chapters 8 to 16, we have entitled 'Jesus changes lives.' We will see when someone comes into a real relationship with Christ he will dramatically change their lives, and he is still doing that today just as he did for many named in these next nine chapters. God is more interested in the real 'me' on the inside than the 'me' that others see. God looks at our heart. He sees our motives and our desires. He sees if we have genuine faith or belief in him. He knows what our real response to him is, and he looks to see if we desire to live to please him not ourselves.

a. Another immoral woman.

We turn to the first of our two individuals whom Jesus not only met but whose lives he transformed completely. We are in John 8:1 - 11, and verses 31 - 36:

"But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered round him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no-one condemned you?' 'No-one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin.'

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that

we shall be set free?’ Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.’”

Here, like the woman at the well, we see Jesus meeting a woman with a shady moral record and yet unlike that woman in John 4, we read that she was caught in the very act of adultery. You know every time any one of us sins Almighty God catches us in the very act. That is an awesome, searching and in many ways frightening thought. It says in Matthew 10:35 that there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed or hidden that shall not be known. Well, this woman was brought by her ‘religious accusers’ to Jesus and he did not answer them but stooped down and wrote in the sand as if he had not heard them. They were really desiring her death. Precisely what Jesus wrote we are not told. One commentator suggests that it was the Ten Commandments that Jesus was writing out. Others have suggested he wrote names and dates and places where these religious leaders, the woman’s very accusers, had themselves done wrong. But we really have to say as plausible as these suggestions are, we really are not told. But we are told of the response of this woman’s accusers to what Jesus wrote. They went away. The King James translation of the Bible describes their response to his statement. *‘If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her’* and his further writing in the sand like this in John 8, verse 9:

“And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest,

even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”

This all points us toward the awesome Day of Judgment that God has said will come. On that day each one of us will stand before Jesus alone and on that day Jesus will either be our judge to condemn us or our Saviour to deliver us. When all the accusers had gone and Jesus and the woman alone were left, Jesus wonderfully and graciously told her he did not condemn her, and commanded her to go and to leave her life of sin.

Effectively those religious leaders were calling out that she was a sinner and wanted to publicly shame her. We find when we sin our own God given consciences cry out ‘I’m a sinner’, and we feel very exposed and guilty. Even the Devil himself accuses us and rubs it in. But Jesus does the very opposite. He says to us, ‘You are a sinner but I want to rub it out and forgive you.’ What a different attitude from Jesus compared with those who brought that needy woman to him. All they wanted to do was to expose and shame the woman and use her as a trap to catch Jesus out, but he wanted to pardon her! Some words we find later on in the Bible teach us that true love covers over a multitude of sins, and that is exactly what Jesus delights to do, to pardon and cover up our sins so that we may be able to enter heaven. In the last book of the Bible we read that *“Nothing impure will ever enter it, - that is heaven - nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”* And both the Bible and honesty from us demands that we say that will exclude everyone because we have all done shameful and deceitful things in one way or another, and certainly this woman had. But this is the good

news that Jesus brings, he delights to forgive those who bring their sinfulness to him to pardon and cleanse, and by so doing Jesus makes us fit for heaven, and he is the only one who does this.

b. A blind man.

Our second individual whom Jesus changed is a man who had spent all of his life in darkness because he was born blind. We have come to John chapter 9 and this is how John recorded the events in verses 1 - 11, 13 and 24 - 25:

“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no-one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ Having said this, he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ‘Go,’ he told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam’ (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, ‘Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?’ Some claimed that he was. Others said, ‘No, he only looks like him.’ But he himself insisted, ‘I am the man.’ ‘How then were your eyes opened?’ they demanded. He replied, ‘The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.’”

“They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.”

“A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. ‘Give glory to God,’ they said. ‘We know this man is a sinner.’ He replied, ‘Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!’”

Here we see Jesus restoring sight to a man who had been blind all his life. Jesus did a creation miracle. He took the clay or the dust of the ground and put it on the blind man’s eyes, and when the man washed it off he could see! Well, this was amazing and yet we see the blindness of those around, that is their spiritual blindness, because they did not want to believe in Jesus. What is this spiritual blindness that Jesus went on to talk about? It is that blindness of wilful unbelief, stubbornly holding on to my opinions. It is a hardening towards that small voice of conscience within, that God given voice. It is that pride which refuses to admit its guilt in the sight of God and leads to convincing ourselves that we are right when we know we are looking only at what we want to believe. Spiritual blindness is wilful unbelief and it is sinful. It will send us to a lost eternity unless we change. Those religious leaders desperately did not want to believe in Jesus despite all the evidence in front of them. Jesus said to them three times over in the last chapter, ‘You will die in your sins’ but they did not want to face up to that and here we see the testimony of this man, blind from birth, receiving sight. He courageously told them that they could think and say what they liked about Jesus, but one thing was certain Jesus had lovingly changed him. To use his own words, ‘I was blind but now I see!’

Reader, are you willing to come like that blind man and admit that you are blind and dead to spiritual things? Will you not seek that new life from the Lord Jesus? Will you not own up to your sin and trust Jesus as your Lord and Saviour? All who come to Jesus and trust him to be their Saviour and Lord can say like that blind man, 'Once I was blind to spiritual truths, to the Lord Jesus, but now I can see.'

The great lesson we learn from these two people whom Jesus blessed is that however unlikely or unworthy we may know and feel ourselves to be, he can forgive us and make us ready to live with him in heaven. The immoral woman and the man born blind would have been written off by many people of their day and despised and disregarded. Indeed, most people would have avoided them as much as possible and they would have been left to their own devices to live lives that would have been so impoverished. Humanly speaking they were two great tragedies. Sadly, we live in a world where all too often that kind of misery is repeated in the lives of many. Oh, their misery might not be caused by immorality or blindness, but so many are despised by others and abandoned without hope. They are made to feel their worthlessness on a daily basis, as people avoid them, pass them by, insult them or do worse. But the help that others failed to bring to the woman and the man in John's Gospel, Jesus did bring. He cared for them immensely. He reached out to them in all their need and transformed their lives. What is so good is that that love and compassion in his heart for lost, needy men and women is still available from him today. Then let us go to him and trust him to forgive us and make us ready for heaven itself.

Part 2: John chapters 10 to 12.

a. The good shepherd.

In our search for the answer to the question 'How can I be sure of heaven?' we have come to John chapter 10 where again we learn that it is Jesus who is the answer. He is described as the good shepherd. This is what is written in John 10:7 - 8 and verses 27 - 30:

"Jesus said again, 'I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No-one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.'"

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

Here we see two more of the seven ‘I am’ sayings found in John’s Gospel. Both relate to the agricultural scene in Jesus’ day. He declared *‘I am the gate.’* Just as sheep have to come through the gate to be in the safety of the fold, we also need to come through Jesus to be saved. Jesus is the door to eternal life because of his death on the cross, the means whereby we can come into the sheep fold, the kingdom of God. A few verses later on he makes it so much more personal as he declares, *‘I am the good shepherd.’* Do you remember that ‘I am’ means he is God, as we saw earlier in this book. Jesus is God the good shepherd. We are told three times over by John that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. We see Jesus opening up this pastoral illustration, *‘My sheep listen to my voice, I know them, they follow me, I give them eternal life’.* Dear reader, have you come via the gate? Have you come to the good shepherd, the one who gave up his life on that cross for sinners? We read in John 15, *“Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”* As remarkable as that statement is, Jesus went further than that because he gave up his life for his enemies. He died for people like us who are rebelling against him in our sinful lives. Jesus gave up his life as the good shepherd, the one who lays down his life for the sheep. If we become true followers of him we shall be sure of heaven.

b. A dead man raised to life.

Another way that John shows us that it is Jesus who prepares people for heaven, is his triumph over death. We have come to John chapter 11 and the scene is one of a tragedy that came to one family and how Jesus intervened. Here are a selection of verses from John 11, namely verses 1 - 4, 17, 25 - 27 and 38 - 44:

“Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love is sick.’ When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.’”

“On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.”

“Jesus said to Martha, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ she told him, ‘I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.’”

“Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ‘Take away the stone,’ he said. ‘But, Lord,’ said Martha, the sister of the dead man, ‘by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.’ Then Jesus said, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked

up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go.'"

If any chapter is filled with emotion, drama, tears and sensation, here it is. Well, if the blind man could say, 'Once I was blind but now I see', here was Lazarus shouting, 'Once I was dead but now I'm alive again.' The one who created living things at his word, can he not raise the dead at a word? This is a fitting climax to the seven miracles or signs in John's Gospel. The build up is nail biting, Jesus declared at the outset of this whole episode that this is intended to reveal God's glory. He even declared to his disciples, *'I'm glad I was not there, so that you may believe.'* This reminds us that God orders circumstances in our lives so that we might come to believe and trust in the Lord Jesus. There was a majestic serenity, a divine authority, a sovereign unfolding of God's perfect plan on that awesome day. Jesus pronounced in the midst of this bereaved family's grief, *'I am the resurrection and the life'*, the title given to God alone, God the resurrection and the life. We see Martha blurting out in her grief, *'I believe that you are the Christ.'* Again Jesus returns to the big picture with this statement, *'... that if you believed, you would see the glory of God.'* As one translation puts it, Jesus uttered those majestic words, *'Lazarus, come forth!'* In a similar way Jesus calls us to come forth and to come alive from our sinful condition. The Bible pronounces us dead in

our relationship with God because of our sin and yet by his death on that cross Jesus calls out to us by name, 'come forth!'

c. Different responses to Jesus.

Our final passage from John's Gospel in this part is from chapter 12 and challenges us to have a right response to Jesus. This is what we find in verses 1 - 8, 12 - 13, 20 - 28:

"Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'"

"The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the King of Israel!'"

“Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus.’ Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me. Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour”? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’”

What is our heart’s response to Jesus? We see Mary having paid a year’s wages to buy the best and costliest perfume she could put her hands on and all in one go she pours it out over Jesus’ feet, and wonder of wonders, uses her hair as a towel and yet we see in contrast Judas thinking ‘what a waste of money’. You see the contrast comes from their heart. Jesus says, ‘out of our heart comes the real you and me.’ Well, Jesus saw the devotion and the worship of Mary’s heart. It was like announcing and commemorating his death before the event. God looks at my heart; God looks at your heart right now. What is the desire of your heart towards Jesus? What is the response of your heart towards what Jesus did when he died on that cross? Ask yourself, ‘Am I responding in the right way?’

Shortly after this expression of Mary’s devotion to Jesus we meet many Jews. Their response was to praise Jesus. We see his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. People like Mary shouting “*Hosanna*”, that word ‘Hosanna’ means ‘save now’. Well, that was what Jesus was about to do five days later by dying on a cross. There were also some Greeks. This is the first time we read of non Jews coming into the picture in John’s Gospel. Their response was so clear, ‘*Sir, we would like to see Jesus.*’ You will remember that we have noted that on seven occasions previously in John’s Gospel Jesus declared that his hour had not yet come. That is the time appointed for him to go to the cross. When Jesus was told that these Greeks wanted to see him he said, ‘*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*’ Jesus was glorified as he died on the cross, and Jesus is also glorified when I put my trust in him. Jesus added, “*...it was for this very reason I came to this hour.*” Jesus came to this world not just as a good teacher but as a Saviour to save men and forgive men all of their sin.

How important it is for us to respond to Jesus in the right way. To ignore him is very unwise; to delay may mean we are too late. No! We need to respond to him now and ask him to make us ready for heaven. The wonderful thing is that Jesus never turns anyone away who genuinely turns to him.

Part 3: John chapters 13 to 16.

a. Jesus washes the disciples’ feet.

We turn now to John chapter 13 where the need for cleansing is stressed again. This is what John wrote in verses 1 - 15:

“It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to

the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus replied, 'You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'No,' said Peter, 'you shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.' 'Then, Lord,' Simon Peter replied, 'not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus answered, 'A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.' For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean. When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. 'You call me "Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.'"

We read elsewhere in the Bible that *"Jesus made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant; he humbled*

himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Well, Jesus showed that here. He performed the job of the lowest servant or slave in the Jewish Roman world. What a contrast to the various times when we see the twelve disciples squabbling amongst themselves as to who was the greatest. Maybe just like those twelve disciples we like the praise of men; pride comes to the forefront, the position before others. As Jesus came to Peter we hear Peter blurting out those words, *'...you shall never wash my feet.'* Was this a sense of self sufficiency, was this pride? Jesus made it clear, *'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.'* Dear friend, that is exactly what Jesus would say to you. *'Unless I give you a clean heart you have no part with me.'* Then Jesus said to his disciples that they were clean. That is, they were made right with God. You see, once and for all Jesus gives us a clean heart when we follow him. We read elsewhere that God exalted Jesus to the highest place, gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Can I ask, does your knee bow to the Lord Jesus in love, in devotion, in worship, in thanksgiving for what he has done on that cross? You need personally to trust him to cleanse you and then you will love him as you should.

b. Jesus teaches his disciples.

We look now at sections of the next three chapters of John's Gospel, namely chapters 14, 15 and 16, and we see how God's Holy Spirit works in the conscience to show us our sinful guilty position before God. He shows us the seriousness of our sin before a holy God in order to bring into sharp focus the reality of God's judgment and hell. He opens up the heart and mind to the truth that only through Christ can our sin be dealt with. The question arises, can I be truly

forgiven? And Jesus answers 'yes' in these verses. Chapter 15 goes on to show us how God's Holy Spirit can work in our hearts if we are truly born again. He comes into our lives to change us in thought, in word and in action to make us new people in Christ. These next sections of what John wrote are John 14:1 - 11, 15 - 17, 25 - 27, John 15:1 - 10, John 16:5 - 16:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.’ Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.’ Jesus answered: ‘Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.’”

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love.”

“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”

This ends our second section of John’s Gospel which we have called ‘Jesus changes lives.’ We need to pick up on just one or two points. Jesus made that stupendous claim in chapter 14 as he declared, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to God the Father except through me.”* Jesus was very clear. He was telling us he is the only way to God, and no other way will do. Remember that this is our creator speaking who knows his creation. This is the living God declaring truth about himself and us. This is the sovereign Lord God before whom one day every knee will bow. How

comforting to know if I am resting in who Christ is and what he has done for me to forgive my sin, that he will bring us to God. John, or rather, Jesus goes further and gives us that lovely horticultural picture in chapter 15 that much fruit will result from my life: the fruit of love, goodness, a wholesome thought life and godly desires. In other words a genuine, not a make believe Christian life.

We have seen that to be sure of heaven we need to have a changed life, a life where Jesus is at the centre and where loving and serving him is our delight. Now some people have thought they could change themselves and have been so frustrated to discover they simply could not do it and this is because sin is too hard for us to overcome. But this is where the good news about Jesus is so wonderful because he has overcome sin through his death on the cross, and his resurrection proves to us that he was completely successful. He has both the power and the desire to make people just like us ready for heaven by changing us on the inside and giving us a fresh clean start. Jesus pardons all our past mistakes and disobedience. Jesus gives us a new heart capable of loving and serving God. Jesus comes to live within us by his Holy Spirit to strengthen us to live for God instead of living for self. He enables us to please God, and he watches over us constantly until he brings us safely to heaven. Of course to enjoy this great salvation requires us to humble ourselves so that we seek his help and pardon. If in pride we consider ourselves good enough for God we shall never be sure of heaven. Only Jesus is the way to God we have seen. Then let us go to him urgently and plead for his mercy, and he will abundantly pardon us.

Chapter 3: The Way Of The Cross

John Chapters 17 to 21

Part 1: John chapters 17 to 19.

We have already seen that again and again, with amazing regularity, John's Gospel tells us the answer to being sure of heaven lies in a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is through knowing him, through trusting in him, through following him that the assurance of heaven becomes a reality in the believer's life. The question we have to answer ourselves is, 'Have I believed in Jesus myself?' It is so important to be able to answer 'Yes' to that question and that we think seriously over these matters.

The day on which Jesus was crucified has been given the name Good Friday. When we consider those awful events we might think it could more aptly be called 'Bad Friday'. However, we need to remember that those terrible events which John covers in the remaining chapters of his Gospel are the means that God himself has graciously chosen to bring the goodness, mercy and the peace of God into the heart of all who will follow his Son, Jesus Christ.

We consider these closing chapters of John's Gospel and the tremendous events they describe.

a. Jesus Prays.

We begin with what has been called 'the high priestly prayer of Jesus' which is found in John 17. Below are two short sections taken from that prayer, verses 1 - 5 and verses 13 - 17:

"After Jesus said this, he looked towards heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

We see here the heart of Jesus laid bare as he prays to his father for himself, for his disciples and all believers everywhere. Truly this could be called 'The Lord's Prayer'. The glory of God was Christ's sole desire and is so different from our self-centred agendas and selfish desires. Note those precious words of certainty and promise as Jesus declares as he prays to his Father, 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.' Are you beginning to see that to become a real Christian is to come into a wonderful, personal relationship with God through what Jesus Christ did on the cross? When we truly trust in and follow Jesus we are able to say, 'I know

my sins are forgiven. I know the change he brings about in my life by his Holy Spirit. I know that I'm 'sure of heaven'. Jesus prayed for his disciples with these words *'that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.'* Reader do you have that joy? David, way back in the Old Testament, in Psalm 51 pleaded with God for a clean heart and a right spirit. He said, *"Restore to me the joy of your salvation."*

In verse 17 Jesus prayed *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."* If you have repented of your sin and trusted Christ as your Lord and Saviour, do get into the habit of reading God's word, the Bible, each day to help you grow as a Christian.

b. Jesus is arrested.

We move now to John 18 which describes Jesus' betrayal by his disciple Judas, his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, and his trial. The following are selections from what John wrote and are verses 3 - 8, 25 - 30 and 37 - 40:

"So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, 'Who is it you want?' 'Jesus of Nazareth,' they replied. 'I am he,' Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, 'Who is it you want?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' 'I told you that I am he,' Jesus answered. 'If you are looking for me, then let these men go.'"

"As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, 'You are not one of his disciples, are you?' He denied it, saying, 'I am not.' One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, 'Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove?' Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a cock began to crow. Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked, 'What charges are you bringing against this man?' 'If he were not a criminal,' they replied, 'we would not have handed him over to you.'"

"'You are a king, then!' said Pilate. Jesus answered, 'You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.' 'What is truth?' Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, 'I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release "the king of the Jews"?' They shouted back, 'No, not him! Give us Barabbas!' Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion."

Jesus had already used the title 'I am' seven times to describe himself in the previous chapters. Now we see Jesus using this title clearly declaring himself to be God. At least two hundred Jewish troops, it may have been a lot more, fell to the ground as Jesus used this phrase, 'I am'. A Jew would never have used this name or title of God on their lips. That

would have been blasphemy. They knew Jesus was claiming divinity. Then we see Jesus, who appears as the victim, was bound by the soldiers and Jewish leaders. However, we must always remember that Jesus was not the victim, he was the victor. We read in Isaiah's prophecy 700 years before, "*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*" You know men counted him as of no worth and yet even the cowardly Pilate in this charade of justice declared three times over in John 18 and 19, "*I find no fault in him.*" Even his wife said, "*Have nothing to do with this righteous man.*" Yet in all the horror of his arrest, trial and crucifixion the plan of a sovereign God was being unwrapped so that man's sin might be paid for once and for all.

c. Jesus is crucified.

Our third section is from John 19. The verses below are verses 1 - 6, 14 - 18, 28 and 30

"Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' And they struck him in the face. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.' When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify! Crucify!' But Pilate

answered, 'You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.'"

"It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. 'Here is your king,' Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, 'Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!' 'Shall I crucify your king?' Pilate asked. 'We have no king but Caesar,' the chief priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others - one on each side and Jesus in the middle."

"Later, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.'"

"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

Only five days before we heard of the crowd shouting 'Hosanna', that is 'save now', but now the crowd shouted 'Crucify him, crucify him.' Barabbas, a condemned terrorist was set free. Jesus the sinless Son of God was condemned to die and be taken out for execution. Pilate asked rather pathetic questions, 'Where are you from?' and 'What is truth?', but he did not really want to hear the answer. Then they mocked Jesus. They spat on him. They flogged him thirty nine times with a whip laced with nails. They put a crown of thorns on his brow. They drove nails through his hands and feet. It seems that men were in control and were having their way with Jesus, but we read again from Isaiah 53, verse 6, '*...the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*'

What an awesome statement. It was not men but God who was in control. God the Father was laying on Jesus the sins of his people. Jesus died on that cross to pay sin's penalty. It reminds me of a verse from an old hymn that goes like this,

*“Because the sinless Saviour died,
my sinful soul is counted free.
For God the just is satisfied,
to look on Christ and pardon me.”*

When Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth he put it like this in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21:

*“God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of
God.”*

Jesus died on that cross that sin might be forgiven. Are you not willing to repent and put your trust in him? Do think seriously about this because it is Jesus who gives eternal life to all who trust him so that they may truly be sure of heaven.

Part 2: John chapters 20 and 22

Jesus is alive!

We come now to our final search in John's Gospel for the answer to the question, 'How can I be sure of going to heaven?' Throughout this book we have repeatedly said this is one of the most important questions we can ever consider and really comes at the top of the order of priority. And this is because it is a question that affects every one of us. It deals with issues that each human being has to face and of which many are acutely aware. It is a question that makes us face up to the realities of death and what follows, and failure to consider the issues at stake is very unwise.

The Bible teaches us that God is the great Creator and we read in Ecclesiastes 3, verse 11 that God *“...has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men...”* In other words, God has deeply rooted the concept of eternity in the heart of every individual. There is, if you like, almost an instinctive awareness in men's minds that there is more to life than the very short time we spend on earth. Now admittedly many people try to suffocate that idea or smother it with other distractions because they do not like to consider the options, but if we are wise then we will consider them. In addition we must add that in the Bible God has made it very clear that death is not the end of us. Consider these words from the book of Hebrews towards the end of the Bible. They are found in chapter 9, verse 27. This is what is written:

*“...man is destined to die once, and after that to face
judgment...”*

Clearly death is not the end, there is more to come, and we must confess that the thought of having to face judgment is quite a chilling prospect, because if God is going to judge us who will ever be good enough for heaven? And the answer we have to give is that none of us would ever be good enough for heaven. None of us could survive God's searching, penetrating, all knowing judgment because every one of us has failed to love God as we should have done and we have disobeyed God on so many occasions, so from a human perspective we could never be sure of heaven ever, if it was left up to us.

But something John has made plain to us in his Gospel is that what is impossible with man is not so with God. And this is

because of his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he sent into the world. We have seen that it is Jesus who forgives people who have failed God and disobeyed God and who turn to him for forgiveness and life everlasting. Jesus is able to do this because he died on the cross as the great sin bearer. Right towards the beginning of his Gospel John records the words of John the Baptist who pointed to Jesus as the one who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. What we cannot do for ourselves, that is make ourselves sure of heaven, Jesus can do for us because he pardons and cleanses all who trust him. It is his death on the cross and the shedding of his precious blood which makes this a reality for all who look to him for mercy. Again and again, John's Gospel has told us the answer to being sure of heaven is Jesus. It is found in him. To use his own words in John chapter 14, verse 6, Jesus said:

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me."

Now if what we have considered already in John's Gospel is not enough to convince us that Jesus really is the answer, that he is the one who can make us sure of heaven, John adds one final thing to convince us. Jesus did not only die on the cross to deal with sin, but he also rose again to demonstrate he really is able to make us know with certainty that there is a place prepared in heaven for us if we but trust him.

Below is a selection of verses. John 20:1 - 8, 19 - 22, 24 - 31 and John 21:1, 4 - 7:

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came

running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed."

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

"Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.' A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas,

‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’ Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

“Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias.”

“Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. He called out to them, ‘Friends, haven’t you any fish?’ ‘No,’ they answered. He said, ‘Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.’ When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’”

You might remember that a man named Joseph of Arimathea gave up his tomb for Jesus (Matthew 27, verses 57 – 60.) We read in Luke’s Gospel that he was looking or waiting for the Kingdom of God, and yet in John 19:38 it talks of Joseph as a disciple of Jesus. He had come to trust in Jesus himself.

Well, if a week before this day we saw Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem we now see Jesus’ triumphal exit out of the tomb. John witnessed both the crucifixion and the empty tomb. We read of Peter and John running excitedly to that tomb on that first Easter Sunday morning and we read that

John saw and believed. The risen Jesus spoke to Mary by name. Jesus declared peace to his disciples. Jesus invited Thomas to stop doubting and believe. What a wonderful finale to this gospel, this message of good news. And Jesus calls us by name to follow him. By God’s grace we too can be like John and see and believe. We can know the peace of God which Jesus offered to his disciples because by trusting in Jesus we can know our sins are forgiven. The victorious Christ can rise and bring new life within the human heart. Thomas fell down before Jesus with the words, *“My Lord and my God.”* It became personal for him. Even Peter with a broken heart having disowned Christ three times over was forgiven and restored back into useful service.

Let us finish with John’s own words in John 20, verse 31:

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

All that Jesus did and why he came is that by believing in him we may have eternal life. In a world where people would say, ‘Life is what you make it,’ John in his Gospel would say, ‘No, it is what Jesus makes it.’ Peter’s testimony comes like this in John 6, verse 69:

“We believe and know that you are the holy one of God.”

Do you remember those people from that town of Samaria in John 4 where that woman was changed on the inside? They listened to Jesus’ teaching for two days and then they declared:

“We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.”

Dear reader, can you say that Jesus really is your Saviour? God calls us to repent of our sin and to put our trust in what Jesus did when he died on that cross.

Conclusion

How clearly John’s Gospel has helped us in our quest to discover how we can be sure of heaven! It all lies in our relationship or otherwise with Jesus. We have seen he was the one God the Father sent into the world to be the way to him. We have seen some of the different people whose lives Jesus transformed when he was here on earth and whom he prepared for heaven. We have been reminded of one of his own disciples, Thomas who at first was sceptical about Jesus’ triumph over death with whom Jesus was so patient and gracious; resulting in Thomas’ wonderful declaration about Jesus that he was his Lord and his God. These were people who needed nothing more than Jesus to make them sure of heaven.

Indeed, as we continue to read through the rest of the New Testament we discover this same message was proclaimed by all of the Lord’s servants. Let me share some examples. Consider first the events of the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Peter had preached powerfully under the enabling of the Holy Spirit and the people who heard him were brought under a deep conviction of their sin and need. They

began to cry out, *“Brothers, what shall we do?”* Peter’s answer was brief and unmistakable. *“Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so your sins may be forgiven.”* Later on in Acts, Philip met a man returning to Ethiopia from a visit to worship God in Jerusalem. He was reading from the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53 but he was not sure whom Isaiah had written about. Philip joined him and this is what we read, *“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.”* We could continue like this right through the New Testament and again and again we would discover the Bible is unswerving in telling us the way to be sure of heaven is through faith in Jesus Christ. Well, what was true for them is the same for us. Then if you have never done so before, turn to him. Pray and ask him to take away your sin and rebellion against God and to make you his child, and he will. Jesus has promised never to turn away anyone who truly comes to him and then you will be sure of heaven too.