



The First 40 Days

Seek God and Restore Everything

A 40-Day Journey with Glenn Beck

STUDIES 31-35

THIRTY-ONE

WAY, TRUTH, LIFE

John 13:31-14:6

We read in these verses that Jesus was telling his disciples things that they did not understand and did not expect to hear. Even though they had spent almost three years walking with Jesus, sitting at his feet and learning from Him, they still did not truly understand what was about to happen. How could they? They were expecting Him to soon rise up against Rome and take his place as the rightful king of his earthly kingdom. But here, Jesus is telling them that he is about to go away.

Where? And why?

It must have been a frightful statement, even when Jesus promised He would come back for them. Thomas didn't want to be "left behind." He wanted to know "the way" to wherever Jesus was going.

Jesus replied with words that would have brought comfort to Thomas, even if Thomas still did not fully understand them.

Jesus said, “I AM the Way — and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me.”

JOHN 14:6

Jesus described himself as the “way, the truth, and the life.” For Thomas, who knew the holy scriptures, these words would have comforted him because of their familiarity.

As a student of the scriptures, Thomas could have immediately recognized the connection that Jesus was making. Jesus was describing Himself with the very same words used to describe the instructions of God, known to most modern Bible believers as “the Law.”

For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are **the way** of life.

PROVERBS 6:23

You should also teach them the laws and the teachings, and show them **the way** in which to live their lives and what work they should do.

EXODUS 18:20

Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your Law is **truth**.

PSALM 119:142

Take to heart all the words of my testimony against you today, so that you can use them in charging your children to be careful to obey all the words of this Law. For this is not a trivial matter for you; on the contrary, **it is your life!**

DEUTERONOMY 32:45-47

If to what they had known since they were children—God’s instructions. They would have known very well Psalm 119 where David extols the beauty and goodness of God’s instructions, His law. Now, Jesus was connecting himself with these instructions they knew were eternal. And while they soon would mourn His death, at His resurrection, they would joyfully remember these comforting words:

“You know where I’m going; and you know the way there.”

Jesus was the word—the word they had studied and memorized since childhood—made flesh.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

JOHN 1:1-2

Jesus was telling Thomas that He was “The Word”—not a new word, but a word he already knew—a “way” he already knew. He was The Word itself made flesh—a living embodiment.

They had been reading and studying the word (the way, the truth and the life) all of their lives; but with Jesus they could watch The Word and learn.

Jesus went to great lengths to connect Himself to The Word that his Jewish disciples knew very well. By calling himself “the way, the truth and life,” He was showing the straight line from God’s instructions, through Him, and towards the Father. It was not a totally new way that was detached from The Way to that point. It was and is one continuous Way that we all must walk together.

▶ **TOMORROW: Blood**

Journal Your Response

Then, if you can, discuss your response with a friend.

Consider the latter part of John 14:6: “No one comes to the Father, except through me.”

What does it really mean to go “through” Jesus? How does that play out in this earthly life?

THIRTY-TWO

BLOOD

During the time of his public ministry, Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and took the Word of God, which had been flipped upside down, and set it right again. He was beloved by many, but also hated by many. He knew it was his destiny to die, and the hour was growing nearer.

 **Matthew 26:17-29**

Throughout the Bible, blood is seen opening the channel between man and God.

In the story of the Exodus, God asked his people to paint their door frames with blood to avoid the slaughter coming to the first-born of Egypt. The blood served as a covering of protection.

 **Exodus 12:1-13**

The temple sacrificial system was also a bloody affair, and the priests regularly splashed animal blood upon the altar of God.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.

LEVITICUS 17:11

The Israelites understood well that the way to God was often paved with blood.

Biblical covenants, too, were often inaugurated in blood. The covenant with Noah came after the death of almost every living creature. Animals were sacrificed to perform the ritual for the covenant made with Abraham. So it would have come as no surprise to the disciples of Jesus to hear that the new covenant would also be ratified in blood, though they did not expect it to be the blood of their Messiah.

Blood was also associated with the covering of sins. The Biblical holiday Yom Kippur is translated into English as the ‘Day of Atonement.’ It is still the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. The word “kippur” means “to cover.” The sins do not vanish, but they are covered—for the price of innocent blood.

At Yom Kippur, it was animals. The animals were required to be “without defect.” They had to be perfect.

Similarly, Jesus had to be perfect.

...knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb **unblemished and spotless**, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.

1 PETER 1:18-20

The animals were physically without blemish. Jesus was without sin (See Day 10 for the biblical definition of sin).

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

HEBREWS 4:15

Yet, he became sin for us.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

That means he became death for us. For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Leviticus 17:14 says, “For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life.”

The blood of Jesus was his life, and his life was sinless—in perfect harmony with the Father. But the pouring out of his blood was his death. It was the blood—the death—that ratified the covenant. His sinless life—his blood—made him a suitable sacrifice before God.

The symbol of life—blood—when it is spilled becomes death. On the edge of the two, was Jesus.

▶ **TOMORROW: Serpent on a Pole**

Point, Counterpoint

Answer the question below using the Bible to make your case.

Then, also using the Bible, make the opposite case.

Was it the life or death of Jesus that saved us from sin?

THIRTY-THREE

SERPENT ON A POLE

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

JOHN 3:14

 **Numbers 21:1-9**

Why did God ask Moses to put a serpent on a pole?

Translated in our Bibles as “snake” or “serpent” is the word “saraph.” It translates best as “fiery serpent”—more like a dragon.

In multiple cultures snakes and dragons serve as antagonists. Evolutionary theorists suggest that humans evolved to recognize snakes in the grass. Those who could pick them out survived. Still today, ophidiophobia—fear of snakes—is one of the most common phobias.

Snakes are an embodiment of fear. They come out of nowhere, they strike, and, in the worst case, it's lights out.

But the snake was also associated with Israel's previous oppressor—Egypt. Ancient artifacts depict pharaohs with snake iconography on their heads as a symbol of the pharaohs power. Pharaoh had controlled the lives and deaths of the Hebrew people. He was the powerful, crafty serpent that threatened their lives.

But now, that same symbol of fear and death was transformed into a symbol of healing and life. God overcame the symbol of death and raised it up. If the people were willing to look upon it, they would be saved.

The serpent was not elevated because it itself was the anti-venom against death, but because it pointed to the one, true God—the one who saved them.

Yet, the people became transfixed on the serpent and forgot what it pointed to.

In Second Kings we read that the people were making offerings to the bronze statue until King Hoshea did “what was right from Adonai's perspective” (2 Kings 18:3).

He removed the high places, smashed the standing-stones, cut down the Asherah, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; because in those days the people of Israel were making offerings to it, calling it Nechushtan.

2 KINGS 18:4

The people remembered the symbol, but they forgot the message.

Like the serpent, Jesus was raised up on a pole.

He was crucified on a cross—the Roman symbol of their power over life and death. Like the serpent on the pole, when Jesus was raised up on the cross, a symbol of death was transformed into a symbol of healing. By looking upon death—like they looked upon the snake—the fear of death lost its grip.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself partook of the same things, that through death, he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

HEBREWS 2: 14-15

The cross, like the serpent on the pole, was a sign that no man, no spiritual being, no otherworldly force, has power over life and death but God.

See now that I, yes, I, am he;
and there is no god beside me.
I put to death, and I make alive;
I wound, and I heal;
no one saves anyone from my hand!

DEUTERONOMY 32:39

Thus we were freed from the “lifelong slavery” brought on by a fear of death. The Egyptians would not prevail. The Romans would not prevail. Only God prevails.

Matthew 28

Jesus dedicated his life to His Father—our Father.

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

JOHN 6:38

His life, death, and resurrection were all to point us to God—some back to God, and some to God for the first time. Like the serpent on the pole, the cross points us to the One, True, God from whom flows eternal life.

▶ **TOMORROW: Paul’s Defense**

Examine Yourself and Pray

Do you fear death? Do you live like you fear death?

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:55

Consider the words of Jesus.

Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.
Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

MATTHEW 10:38-39

What does this verse mean to you, and how does it connect to our being set free from the fear of death?

THIRTY-FOUR

PAUL'S DEFENSE

The story of the apostle Paul has penetrated the human psyche for many generations. He is remembered for his role in bringing the “good news” to the Gentiles and facing extreme persecution because of it. He was not always a follower of Jesus. In fact, he hunted and killed followers of “the way” until the infamous moment on the road to Damascus where God woke him up to his sin and set him on a path that would change the world.

Paul was a formally trained Rabbi under the tutelage of the esteemed Rabbi Gamliel in the order of the Pharisees. At the time, there were two major factions within Judaism—the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees denied the possibility of resurrection from the dead and the existence of angels and spirits, whereas the Pharisees believed in both. This discrepancy was of extreme importance in the case of the resurrection of Jesus.

Multiple times Paul was asked to prove his allegiance to the “Torah”—the Hebrew word for “instructions,” commonly translated as “law” that referred to the commands of the Scriptures. Each time, he declared that he was a follower of Jesus and a follower of God’s law. Paul believed in the resurrection and argued that the coming of Jesus was the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Thus, his belief in Jesus did not mean abandoning the law of God. Quite the opposite; through Jesus, he clung firmly to both.

Acts 21:18-24

But despite his best efforts to clear his name, Paul was smeared as an apostate.

Acts 21:37-22:22

Finally, the case against him brought by the religious leadership was tried before the Governor.

Acts 24:1-21

But I confess this to you, that in accordance with the Way, which they call a sect, I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In view of this I also do my best to maintain a blameless conscience both before God and before other people, always.

ACTS 24:14-16

Paul argued that following “the way” was the natural progression of the faith of their forefathers. He drew a straight line from the covenants made with Abraham, Moses, and David, to Jesus. It was the faith of his youth that pointed to Jesus. But, like many theological disagreements, not everyone saw it the way he did.

Paul was tried again—this time with the King and Queen watching.

Acts 26:1-29

Again, he asserted that everything he proclaimed was in keeping with the teachings of his ancestors.

So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place...

ACTS 26:22

The accusations being hurled against Paul—that he was teaching people to disregard the Law and Prophets—he passionately argued were false. He stood trial multiple times for the crime of believing that the story of Jesus was a continuation of the story of God. He believed that the law, the prophets, and the Messiah were all the story of God and His people.

His people were never defined only by bloodline. It was their lives that defined them: it was the way they lived their faith in accordance with the Word, love, and wisdom of God.

Many only wanted half of the message he was proclaiming.

Now some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla his wife, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and responded, “Go away for now, and when I have an opportunity, I will summon you.

ACTS 24:24-26

It was the message of judgment, righteousness, and self-control that frightened Felix, and it was the message of Jesus that frightened the religious leaders. Paul came with both messages.

Jesus sent Paul throughout the world to teach both grace and obedience.

I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me....First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the It Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.

ACTS 26:17-20

You are sanctified by faith in Jesus and demonstrate your repentance through your deeds. This is the single story Paul was preaching. Grace and obedience—Moses to Jesus—it's all the same story.

► **TOMORROW: The Bare Minimum**

Statement of Faith

Paul was repeatedly required to defend his faith. On one of these occasions he declared:

But I confess this to you, that in accordance with the Way, which they call a sect, I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and is written in the Prophets; having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In view of this I also do my best to maintain a blameless conscience both before God and before other people, always.

ACTS 24:14-16

This was a clear and concise declaration of Paul’s faith. Today we sometimes call these “Statements of Faith.”

Write your own statement of faith below based on your understanding of God and the Bible as it stands now. Then, if you’re able, share it with a friend.

Remember: Your statement of faith may evolve as you gain new understanding. Don’t let the words you write down today prevent you from receiving new revelations tomorrow. **God’s word never changes**, but God willing, our understanding of His word will.

THIRTY-FIVE

THE BARE MINIMUM

What should you do as a follower of God? What is required of you? Is anything required? “Faith is required,” you may suggest. But what then are the requirements of faith?

From our study of the Sermon on the Mount, you may remember Jesus saying,

Therefore, whoever nullifies one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:19

Greatest and least? I don’t think Jesus is talking about tiered accommodations in the afterlife. Remember, the Kingdom of Heaven isn’t restricted to life-after-death. When Jesus was in their midst, He told His disciples, “The kingdom of heaven is among you” (Luke 17:21).

Jesus also taught us to pray for God's will to be done on earth "as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). So how are we to deal with the idea of the "greatest" and "least" in the Kingdom?

In yesterday's lesson we read right up to an interesting verse.

However, in regard to the Gentiles who have come to trust in Jesus, we all joined in writing them a letter with our decision that they should abstain from what had been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled and from fornication.

ACTS 21:25

This verse is a reference to an earlier story in the book of Acts. Gentiles were coming to faith in God through the work of disciples like Paul and Peter. Absorbing and teaching all these people who were raised with a very different way of life presented challenges to the disciples of Jesus.

Acts 15:1-28

According to the letter sent to the new believers, the requirements for them at that time were to not eat food sacrificed to idols, not eat blood, not anything strangled, and stay away from fornication.

Why these requirements?

We know that those four behaviors were associated with pagan worship, which ran rampant in that time. Many of these new believers were coming straight out of paganism. They couldn't bring those practices into their new community. They had to leave those old ways at the door.

This was both a spiritual and practical requirement.

In their deliberation, right after the declaration of these four requirements, Peter said,

For from ancient generations Moses has those who preach him in every city, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

ACTS 15:21

After stating the four requirements, why did Peter start talking about Moses and synagogues?

There were no “churches” as we understand them at this time. The places of worship these new believers would be flooding into were synagogues filled with observant Jews. As a practical community requirement, the new believers could not be streaming into the places of worship, eating blood and sacrificing to idols. That would have caused far too extreme of a social disruption between the groups. Thus, these four requirements made it possible for new believers to join the community.

From there, they would learn about the word of God. That's why Peter brought up Moses. He was essentially saying, "Once they do the bare minimum to separate themselves from their paganism, they will come to worship with us, and there they will learn how to follow God."

The same is true today. No one enters faith with perfect knowledge and obedience. We come in with our baggage, misconceptions, and bad habits. But overtime, we are transformed.

Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

ROMANS 12:1-2

Before they knew almost anything about the faith, God, through Jesus, adopted many Gentiles as His children. It was the grace of God that saved them—that saves us all. As a response to the miraculous gift, the Gentiles poured in to learn about their new heavenly Father and transform their lives. But the transformation did not happen overnight.

The transformation, although a spiritual miracle, happened in the practicalities of the everyday.

That is what Peter and the other disciples were managing. The question being addressed in Acts 15 is not, “What is the minimum requirement for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven?” If so, then, presumably, those four rules would be the only rules applicable to believers today. Murder, lying, adultery—these would all be on the table. We know that’s not the case.

It was not a question of salvation or a heavenly question at all. It was a question for earth about human relationships and how to support the quickly growing family of the community of God.

But this brings us back again to the “least” and the “greatest” in the Kingdom. Like entrance into the earthly community, what are the bare minimum requirements for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven?

Now ask yourself, do you only want to do the bare minimum?

In the Word

Therefore, whoever nullifies one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:19

Jesus said the least in the Kingdom are those who “nullify” the commandments of God. What does it mean to nullify a commandment?

What does it mean to keep a commandment?

Challenge: Teach someone—anyone—a commandment of God today!