

connect360

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

The Beauty of Restoration

THE FINAL DAYS OF JESUS

A STUDY OF JOHN

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**GC2
PRESS**

Dallas, Texas

The Beauty of Restoration: The Final Days of Jesus
Connect 360 Bible Study Guide

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 13-14 and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date each lesson will be studied.
 - If all your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.gc2press.org under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- C. After you’ve studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
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Introduction to GC2 Press

We've Changed Our Name!

BWP has now become **GC2 Press**. The name change reflects the alignment with our state convention's (BGCT) recently updated mission statement. **GC2** is a movement of God's people to share Christ and show love. Our driving passion is to follow the Lord's call to fulfill the Great Commission "to share Christ" and the Great Commandment "to show love." The Great Commission and the Great Commandment form the two "GCs," or GC2.

GC2 Press will continue to publish the undated **CONNECT 360** quarterly Bible study curriculum. **Connect 360** has gained a reputation for solid biblical teaching and will continue to be published as an undated quarterly study available in book form and/or digital downloads. **Connect 360** is currently being distributed in 38 states and 16 countries and has been translated into seven different languages.

For more information, please go to our website at www.gc2press.org.



GC2
PRESS

Introducing

The Beauty of Restoration *The Final Days of Jesus*

A STUDY OF JOHN

Restoration Defined

Restoration. By definition restoration means the act of returning something to a former owner, place, or condition. To the object of the fallen state, being restored means to be returned to an original state. In this light, let me say I thank God; we as a royal priesthood, and holy nation have been restored (1 Peter 2:9-10). I thank God, He gives us chance, after chance, after chance to get it right. From Peter's frail view of forgiveness being seven times (Matthew 18:21), to fully understanding that God confirms to us His grace toward our forgiveness, and our ultimate restoration is uncountable, unimaginable, and incomprehensible. God has shown us through the love of Christ that the well of His grace never runs dry, and there is always another chance for a repentant soul to come back into proper fellowship with Him.

As a Christian, we must understand that failing is a part of life. Failing is a part of being human. Failing is a part of missing the mark set by God. Many of us love Christ so much we promise we will not fail Him, but being that we are sinners saved by grace, that assessment of ourselves is faulty, and a standard that is practically impossible to keep. Even the statement "Christ, I will never sin. I will never fail you. I will never leave you" is saturated with pride. Remember, when it comes to the character of humanity, Isaiah said even on our best days, "our righteous acts are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). So beloved,

please understand, from the moment of our birth, within our flesh we are conditioned to fail.

Remember, we often mess up. In truth we mess up daily. But even though we mess up daily, God gives us new mercies every morning. Even though we sin daily, God's grace and mercy restore us back to being useful vessels of God (2 Timothy 2:21).

Dr. Rayford Malone

Restoration in Our Day

Was there a time you were committed to Christ?

Was there a time you actively served the Lord with gladness?

Was there a time you met the Lord each day for a quiet time of prayer and study?

But not now.

Have you wandered away in your walk with Jesus? Here's the good news. Jesus will restore you if you meet Him at the Cross. That's what happened to the Apostle John. He ran away. He deserted the Lord, but he met Jesus back at the cross. Jesus restored John... Jesus also restored Peter...and Jesus can restore you too.

Do you want to be restored? Like John, you may have known the Lord for a long time, but something caused you to slip away from the side of Jesus. It's time for you to come back. The Bible says, "Come near to God and He will come near to you" (James 4:8, NIV).

Come to the cross. It is only there you can witness how wide and long and high and deep is the love Christ has for you. And when you meet Him there, the first thing Jesus says to you is, "I'm glad you are back. I've missed you. I want to restore you to a place where you lean on me. Now, I have a job for you.

Take care of my people. Serve me again. I have a cross for you. Take it up and follow me” and discover The Beauty of Restoration.

Lesson 1	Hitting Rock Bottom	John 18:15-18, 25-27
Lesson 2	What Is the Truth?	John 18:33-40
Lesson 3	The Day He Wore My Crown	John 19:1-5
Lesson 4	Here Is Your King	John 19:5-16
Lesson 5	Standing by the Cross	John 19:17-27
Lesson 6	The End of the Beginning	John 19:28-30
Lesson 7	The Blood and the Water	John 19:31-37
Lesson 8	The Burial of Jesus	John 19:38-42
Lesson 9	Death Was Arrested	John 20:1-18
Lesson 10	Breath of Heaven	John 20:19-23
Lesson 11	The Only Scars in Heaven	John 20:24-29
Lesson 12	Breakfast With Jesus	John 21:1-14
Lesson 13	Jesus Restores Us	John 21:15-25
Christmas	When Your Heart Is Full	Luke 1:39-56

Additional Resources for the Study of John¹

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NOTES

¹ Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writer or GC2 Press with all its comments.

The Beauty of Restoration

The Final Days of Jesus

A Study of John

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lesson 1

Hitting Rock Bottom

MAIN IDEA

We never drift toward holiness; we drift toward unfaithfulness. That is why it is vitally important for us to align our lives with God's Word.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Have I ever denied the Lord?

STUDY AIM

To understand that pride is an attitude that causes us to think we are incapable of sin

QUICK READ

Peter drifted away from the Lord and failed Him but was later restored to fellowship and service to the Lord.



Introduction

Have you ever noticed that our spiritual walk is never “as the crow flies,” an idiom used in measurements for the shortest distance between two points? When we look at our route on a GPS map, we sometimes must travel north or south, and sometimes even west, in order to get to our destination in the east.

Using another illustration, if we charted our spiritual journey, it might look like a stock market graph. We have daily, hourly, or even more often fluctuations up and down in our journey with our Lord, but generally, we have periods of growth, both forward and backward. Hopefully, our growth going forward outpaces our steps of going backward.

In this study of restoration, we see that all of us can relate with the following passages from John. Even more than that, we will see that Jesus knows and expects us to have ups and downs in our spiritual walk, and with our relationships with others. Even in His own earthly ministry, Christ experienced times of great success, lackluster results, and times when He simply took time to rest, reflect, and grow closer to His Heavenly Father in prayer.

John 18:15-18, 25-27

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, ¹⁶ but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.

¹⁷ “You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?” she asked Peter. He replied, “I am not.”

¹⁸ It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself.

²⁵ Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, “You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?” He denied it, saying, “I am not.”

²⁶ 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 garden?” ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Following Jesus to a Fall (18:15-17)

Most likely, John, the disciple and author of this gospel, was the one with Simon Peter as they followed Jesus to the court of Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests. This father-in-law and son-in-law duo served jointly as high priests. However, Simon must have been following further back than the other disciple. Or, he may have come to the gate and was reluctant to go in, due in part or in whole to fear because he had been the one that cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant to the high priest. That fear would later be proven to be well-justified (John 18:26). It could have been that the other disciple went in first to make sure all was safe and then came back to take Simon in.

Whatever the reason for the two to become separated, when the other disciple came back and spoke to the servant girl to let Peter in, it seems clear the girl knew the first was a disciple and then asked if Peter was “also” a disciple. However, the wording of the question seems to lead Peter to answer in the negative: “You’re not one of His disciples too, are you?” His reply is short, “I am not.”

Our offenses, like Peter’s first denial, can often come about quite innocently. Surely this young girl did not pose a threat to Peter. After all, she apparently knew that the first man who spoke to her was a disciple, but Peter wanted to come in quickly and, being in no mood for a long discussion, simply said, “I am not.” Whether Peter’s first denial was intentional, accidental, or incidental, it shows a lesson to us to always be prepared to give a witness. Later, this “restored” disciple wrote, “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

Can you recall a time in which you did something small, but later proved to be a bigger denial of Christ than you intended? Maybe you had a missed opportunity to witness or share your faith, and it slipped away before you had a chance to do so. Even though Jesus had foreseen Peter’s denials, and even though Peter had promised he would never do such a thing, Peter was not prepared to testify for Christ. In his case and often in our own cases, a failure to plan to witness is a plan for failure in our witness.

Peter could have easily avoided the first of his three denials. He was not yet in the courtyard. Peter was with John, who was a disciple known to the young servant girl.

Jesus was not surprised about Simon's failure. He had already predicted it, a prophecy contained in all four gospels (John 13:38; Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30; Luke 22:34). Likewise, when we fail, it is no surprise to our Lord. Yes, failures and sins grieve the Holy Spirit, but God knows ahead of time what we will do, even though we do not. God is omniscient.

What is more, our sins are sometimes a result of demonic influence. Jesus told Simon, "Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). This does not excuse our sin, but sometimes our "little" failures come because of a great spiritual warfare. Just as a little leaven will leaven the whole lump, our first failure can set us on a downward spiral. We should avoid the small and seemingly insignificant spiritual battles. God is our defender.

Third, Jesus is on our side, before and after our failures. Luke 22:32 goes on to say, "But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Jesus did not say, "If you deny Me, I am forever done with you." Jesus foresees our failures and has a plan to restore us, as long as our faith does not fail. Despite your sin, do not let your faith fail. His faith in us never fails and He has instructions for us when we turn back to Him. God is faithful.

Following Jesus to a Fire (18:18, 25)

Several Bible commentators have noticed that twice in John, there are references to a charcoal fire. In fact, the word, *anthrakian*, is never mentioned anywhere else but here, in John 18:18, and again in John 21:9, when around the fire of coals Jesus restores Simon, son of Jonas, back to being Peter the Rock.

Whether it is coincidental or intentional, today's lesson highlights the fall of Peter but also gives a foreshadow through the coals of fire to Peter's restoration. To be sure, Simon was hardly the Rock yet, and his denials were the latest in a series of missteps, failures, emotional outbursts, and errors this disciple would make. But none of his blunders are quite as memorable as his three denials of Christ. Perhaps it is Simon's frailties and human qualities that make this disciple the most relatable to us all.

Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and crucified in the beginning of spring, shortly after winter's grip begins to loosen. In Israel, the early springtime nights can still be cold and as a result, the servants and officers had made a fire.

Ordinarily, the home of the high priests of Annas and Caiaphas (who apparently lived in proximity of one another, perhaps even joined by a mutual courtyard) would be quiet and asleep by this time. But tonight, despite the timing of *Pesach*/Passover and despite the prohibition of trials at night, there was a night court going on.

That Peter and John would be there at all is, to say the least, remarkable. There, around the fire of coals, were the "officials from the chief priests," the same word used in John 18:3 and 18:12, who were dispatched, along with soldiers and their commander, to arrest Jesus.

Our own steps to failures can be seen in Peter's progression to his denials. At first, Peter followed from a distance (Matthew 26:58; Mark 14:54; Luke 22:54). Then he stood with the soldiers, warming himself not only to fight off the chilly air, but also, he was unintentionally warming himself up for his second and third denials. Then, the other gospels describe Peter sitting at the fire, getting cozier with the glow of temptation.

Occasionally, temptations with sin hit us blind-sided, with no warning. Most of the time, however, we approach sin cautiously at first, then casually and before we realize it, we have gotten "too close to the fire."

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

Sometimes drivers are pulled over by law enforcement officers and genuinely had no clue they were exceeding the speed limit. But let's be honest. Most of the time we pass by numerous signs of warning, sometimes with lights flashing, giving us signals of "a way out" when we are tempted to violate God's laws and regulations, yet we ignore these signs.

Like Jesus' words to Simon Peter the night before, God's laws and examples in Scripture gives you fair warning to help you "be careful that you don't fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Following Jesus to Sin's Fruition (18:26-27)

You think it strange that “following Jesus” can lead to a fall, the fire of temptation, and even to sin’s fruition, but it can. Years ago, a woman told me she was having Bible studies alone with a married man when his wife was not there. Even though she said he was “the godliest man I have ever known,” I cautioned her against being alone with him. Later, it came out that they not only had an affair, but both left their spouses to be with each other.

People often put lipstick on the pig of sin, hiding sinful temptations in the disguise of “godliness.” A father spends too much time at the office, neglecting the needs of his wife and children. A single woman gets emotionally involved with an unbeliever convincing herself she will win him to the Lord. Too many believers neglect their tithes and offerings and instead “they buy things they don’t need with money they don’t have to impress people they don’t like.” Jesus cautioned His disciples not to parade good deeds, which may be motivated by sinful pride.

Peter followed Jesus, but not in obedience. Perhaps he was morbidly curious to find out what would happen to Jesus, but too cowardly to “die with Him,” as he promised. Perhaps he was so arrogant that he would not fall, he did not notice he had denied Christ twice.

The King James poetically quotes in Mark’s gospel, “Before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” It is possible that a rooster already crowed once before Peter’s third denial, giving him a warning not to do so again. The disciple who swore he would never deny Christ called down curses, and swore to the accusers, “I do not know the man” (Matthew 26:74).

Luke records there was about an hour between Peter’s second and third denial. John, an eyewitness to the event, adds a vital detail: Peter’s third accuser was a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off.

Notice the progression: Peter first drew nearer to the soldiers, stood with them, sat with them, and then talked with them to the point they detected a Galilean accent. He showed his face enough to be recognized as Peter being in the garden. Simon had become so careless and comfortable in his closeness with sin that it led to his third denial.

Luke 22:61 reveals that Jesus “turned and looked straight at Peter.” Was it a look of condemnation? Was it a look of compassion? Were the eyes of our

Lord full of pain, of hurt, of sorrow? None of the gospel writers say, but His locked gaze, combined with the cock's crowing proved too much for Peter. Too late was the fisherman's conviction to recall His Lord's prediction. Simon tried too little to resist the temptation.

Therein lies our common ground with Peter. Too much, too little, too late, do we resist our struggles in temptation, resulting in a fixed gaze from the Holy Spirit of Christ in our hearts. The other three gospels state that Peter went out and wept bitterly.

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

Implications and Actions

Peter did not see his denials coming, but Christ did. We may not deny Christ as Peter did, but our words and actions do not truly reflect our life's confession of Jesus as they should. Our denials of Christ can be rooted in our self-confidence and lack reliance on Christ.

Think of some proactive steps you can take now so you can give a defense for your faith and a full confession of Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Remember God's omniscience, that He knows what is coming around the corner. Remember God's omnipresence, that He at any moment can spiritually lock eyes with you as Christ did with Peter. Remember God's omnipotence, that He can give you strength and power to provide an escape in your times of temptations.

Questions

1. Are you prepared to give a defense and confess your faith in Christ to those you meet?

2. Are you truly following Christ in your walk, or could there be some disingenuous, selfish, or even sinful motivations in what you are “doing for Christ”?

3. Are there any warning signs in your life you are ignoring that could be provide a way out from a future failure?

4. Take the focus off Peter for a moment and think about the other disciple who was with Peter in the courtyard. Were there things he could have done to help Peter? Do you know some who are facing temptations right now with whom you could intervene?

5. The closer we get to sin, the harder it may be to turn around. But it is never too late. What steps can be taken “before the rooster crows”?

6. How does knowing that your sin is not a surprise to God make you want to seek reconciliation with God after a fall?

7. No matter how much your sin disappointed you, it is not a road-block to restoration.