

# Lessons from John Chapters 12 - 21

## Chapter 12

### 1. Extravagant Devotion: Mary's Anointing (vv. 1-8)

- **The Lesson:** Mary's act of pouring costly perfume on Jesus' feet demonstrates complete, unselfish surrender and true worship.
- **SDA Perspective:** Ellen G. White highlights Mary's deep faith, noting that she recognized Jesus as her Savior when others did not. In contrast, Judas's criticism of the "waste" reveals how harboring secret sin and greed blinds a person to the beauty of divine grace.

### 2. The Triumphal Entry (vv. 12-19)

- **The Lesson:** Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey to deliberately fulfill messianic prophecy (Zechariah 9:9).
- **SDA Perspective:** While the crowd shouted "Hosanna," they largely misunderstood His mission, expecting an earthly king to overthrow Rome. Jesus accepted the praise but redirected their focus to His spiritual kingdom and impending sacrifice.

### 3. The Grain of Wheat: The Cost of Salvation (vv. 23-26)

- **The Lesson:** Jesus states, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (KJV).
- **SDA Perspective:** This symbolizes Christ's willingness to lay down His life to secure salvation for humanity. It also serves as a model for Christian discipleship, calling believers to "die" to self-centeredness to bear spiritual fruit in the Great Controversy.

### 4. The Lifted Savior and the Power of Choice (vv. 31-36, 42-43)

- **The Lesson:** Jesus declares that being "lifted up" on the cross will draw all people to Himself.
- **SDA Perspective:** Adventists emphasize the urgency of walking in the "light" (truth) while it is available. The tragedy of the religious leaders—who believed but would not confess Him because they "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (v. 43)—serves as a warning against compromising truth for social or worldly acceptance.

## Chapter 13

### 1. The Ordinance of Humility (Foot-washing)

- **The Action:** Jesus, knowing He had all power, laid aside His garments, took a towel, and washed the disciples' feet (John 13:4-5).
- **SDA Explanation:** SDAs practice literal foot-washing (the Ordinance of Humility) as a preparatory service before Communion. It symbolizes the laying aside of pride, mutual forgiveness, and a commitment to serve one another as Christ served us.

### 2. The Need for Daily Cleansing

- **The Action:** When Peter objected, Jesus replied, *"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me"* (John 13:8). Later He stated, *"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet"* (John 13:10).
- **SDA Explanation:** The initial "washing" represents the complete cleansing from sin at baptism or conversion. The "washing of the feet" represents the daily need for confession and forgiveness as we walk through a sinful world. It reminds believers to continually allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse them.

### 3. The Reality of Betrayal and Human Frailty

- **The Action:** Jesus predicts that one will betray Him (John 13:21) and that Peter will deny Him three times (John 13:38).
- **SDA Explanation:** This shows that being close to Jesus doesn't guarantee an unconverted heart, as seen in Judas. Furthermore, it highlights the contrast between Peter's sincere but weak human nature and Judas's hardened rejection. It serves as a warning for self-examination and reliance on God's grace rather than human strength.

### 4. The New Commandment of Love

- **The Action:** Jesus says, *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another"* (John 13:34).
- **SDA Explanation:** As frequently outlined in the writings of Ellen G. White, this love is not a mere emotion, but an active, unselfish principle. It is the "golden chain" that binds believers together and the ultimate proof of true discipleship to the watching world.

## Chapter 14

### 1. The Blessed Assurance of the Second Coming (vv. 1–3)

- **The Promise:** Jesus promises not to leave them orphaned, but to return and take them to His Father's house.
- **SDA Perspective:** These verses are foundational to Adventist theology (the very name "Adventist" is rooted here). The focus is on the literal, visible, and glorious return of Christ. The "many mansions" (translated as "dwelling places" or rooms) indicate a secure, eternal home prepared for the faithful, ending the tragedy of sin once and for all.

### 2. Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life (v. 6)

- **The Promise:** "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
- **SDA Perspective:** Jesus is not just pointing toward a doctrine; He is the living embodiment of salvation. Access to God is exclusive to Christ, won by His perfect life, death, and resurrection. Truth in the Bible is not just a concept, but a personal, transformative relationship with our Creator.

### 3. The Deity and Oneness of Christ (vv. 9–11)

- **The Promise:** "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

- **SDA Perspective:** SDA theology points to this as strong biblical evidence for the full deity of Jesus and the reality of the Trinity. When we look at Jesus' character, compassion, and works, we are seeing the exact character of God the Father.

#### 4. The Holy Spirit as the "Comforter" (vv. 16–18, 26)

- **The Promise:** Jesus promises to send "another Comforter" (*Parakletos* / Helper) to dwell within believers.
- **SDA Perspective:** The Greek word for "another" (*allos*) means "another of the exact same kind". This affirms the full divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. He is sent to guide us into all truth, bring to remembrance Christ's teachings, and provide inner peace amidst a troubled world.

#### 5. Love as Demonstrated Through Obedience (vv. 15, 23)

- **The Promise:** "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
- **SDA Perspective:** Adventists emphasize that obedience does not earn our salvation, but rather naturally flows out of a loving, genuine relationship with God. Keeping God's commandments—including the seventh-day Sabbath—is the evidence of our affiliation and faith.

#### 6. Christ's Peace vs. The World's Peace (v. 27)

- **The Promise:** "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you..."
- **SDA Perspective:** The peace Jesus offers is not the absence of trouble, but a deep, unshakeable inward peace that sustains believers even when facing the fiercest trials and opposition.

### Chapter 15

#### 1. Christ is the "True Vine"

- **The Lesson:** In the Old Testament, Israel was frequently called God's vine, but the nation consistently failed to produce righteous fruit. By declaring Himself the "True Vine," Jesus positions Himself as the authentic, ultimate source of life and righteousness.
- **SDA Perspective:** We are completely dependent on Jesus. Any attempt to be saved or do righteous works independent of Him results in spiritual failure.

#### 2. The Nature of "Abiding"

- **The Lesson:** Jesus commands His disciples to "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). A branch can only produce grapes if it remains physically connected to the vine.
- **SDA Perspective:** Abiding is an intentional, daily choice to stay connected to Christ. According to the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, we do not produce fruit *to* belong to Jesus; rather, we remain in Jesus, and fruit is the natural result of that living relationship.

#### 3. The Purpose of Pruning

- **The Lesson:** Jesus explains that "every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it [prunes it], that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2).
- **SDA Perspective:** Pruning is often viewed as God's loving correction or discipline. Rather than being a sign of God's displeasure, pruning is God's way of removing habits, intellectual pride, or worldly distractions that stunt our spiritual growth.

#### 4. Friendship with Christ

- **The Lesson:** Jesus elevates His followers from mere "servants" to "friends" because He has shared the Father's purposes with them (John 15:15).
- **SDA Perspective:** God values a personal, intimate relationship with you over mere mechanical obedience. This friendship is rooted in love and sustained through joyful obedience to His commands.

#### 5. The Reality of Persecution

- **The Lesson:** Jesus warns that if the world hated Him, it will also hate His followers (John 15:18-20).
- **SDA Perspective:** The Christian journey will not be universally accepted. Seventh-day Adventists understand this as the cosmic conflict between truth and error; when we reflect Christ's character, we will face opposition, but we are empowered by the Holy Spirit (the Comforter).

### Chapter 16

#### The Work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-15)

- **The "Comforter" as a Divine Person:** Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, whom SDAs recognize as the third person of the Godhead. The Spirit's presence is so essential that Jesus stated His departure was to the disciples' advantage.
- **Conviction of Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment:** The Spirit convicts the world of its **sin** (specifically, the rejection of Jesus), reveals true **righteousness** (found only in Christ's perfect life, not our own external obedience), and confirms **judgment** (assurance that Satan, the ruler of this world, stands condemned).
- **Guide Into All Truth:** The Holy Spirit leads believers to understand God's Word and fortifies the church against error and deception.

#### The Reality of Persecution (John 16:1-4)

- **Prepared for Hostility:** Jesus plainly tells His followers they will be cast out of synagogues and hated by the world because the world does not know Him or the Father.
- **SDA Context:** This is viewed as an integral part of the **Great Controversy** between Christ and Satan. The persecution early Christians faced mirrors the historical and prophetic warnings of tribulation for God's remnant people before the Second Coming.

#### Sorrow Turning to Joy (John 16:16-22)

- **The Transformation:** Jesus tells the disciples they will weep and lament while the world rejoices, but their sorrow will ultimately turn to joy.
- **Theological Meaning:** This points primarily to the pain of the crucifixion turning into the triumph of the resurrection. In the Adventist worldview, this is an assurance that present worldly suffering and waiting will yield eternal joy at Christ's return.

### **The Privilege of Prayer and The Overcoming Life (John 16:23-33)**

- **Praying in the Name of Jesus:** Jesus instructs believers to ask the Father directly in His name. This removes the need for earthly mediators and establishes that prayer is our direct lifeline to access God's grace and experience "full" joy.
- **The Ultimate Promise:** John 16:33 is the pinnacle of the chapter: *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* (KJV)
- **SDA Application:** Followers of Christ are not promised an easy life or escape from worldly suffering, but they are assured of an inner, supernatural **peace** and the victory already won at Calvary.

## **Chapter 17**

### **1. The Nature of Eternal Life (John 17:3)**

- **The Lesson:** "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."
- **SDA Explanation:** Eternal life is not just a future reward but an active, daily, and experiential relationship with God. According to Ellen G. White, true knowledge of God is contrasted with mere intellectualism or traditional religion; it is a life of practical godliness and character transformation.

### **2. Sanctification Through the Truth (John 17:17)**

- **The Lesson:** "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."
- **SDA Explanation:** Sanctification is a lifelong process. Adventists believe that God's Word (the Bible) exposes error and guides believers into a holy lifestyle. Truth must not just be mentally accepted, but it must be applied to every aspect of daily life, business, and character development.

### **3. Unity of the Church (John 17:21)**

- **The Lesson:** "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee..."
- **SDA Explanation:** Jesus prayed for a perfect, supernatural unity among His followers. In Adventism, this is considered a direct reference to the unity of faith required of the end-time remnant. It is viewed as a living witness to the world that God's love and power are real.

### **4. Christ's Intercession (John 17:24)**

- **The Lesson:** "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am..."

- **SDA Explanation:** Chapter 17 is seen as an illustration of Christ's present ministry as our High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary. This demonstrates to the believer that Christ is constantly pleading their case, shielding them from the evil one, and preparing them for translation at His return.

## Chapter 18

### 1. Christ's Sovereign Control (John 18:4-8)

Jesus was not a helpless victim manipulated by the mob, but the Sovereign actively laying down his life.

- **The "I AM":** When the soldiers arrived, Jesus identified himself with the divine name "I am he" (a direct reference to Exodus 3:14). His authority caused the armed guard to fall to the ground.
- **Lesson:** God's redemptive plan is always in control. Christ willingly surrendered himself to protect his disciples and fulfill the divine purpose of the cross.

### 2. The Danger of Self-Sufficiency (John 18:10-11)

Peter, attempting to fight a spiritual battle with physical weapons, severed the ear of the high priest's servant.

- **Rebuke:** Jesus told Peter to put his sword away and declared, "the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).
- **Lesson:** We cannot advance God's kingdom through worldly force or carnal zeal. The chapter provides a contrast between Jesus, who boldly and obediently claimed his mission of suffering, and Peter, who relied on reckless self-confidence.

### 3. Human Failure and Grace (John 18:15-27)

While Jesus was testifying boldly inside, Peter was outside denying his Lord three times, exactly as Jesus prophesied.

- **The Slippery Slope:** Peter's failure did not happen instantly; it began with following Jesus "afar off" and warming his hands with enemies at the fire of the world.
- **Lesson:** This is a stern warning against spiritual overconfidence. However, it also illustrates Christ's enduring grace—despite Peter's tragic failure, Jesus ultimately restored him and used him as a pillar in the early church.

### 4. The Kingdom of Truth (John 18:33-38)

During his trial, Jesus clarified the nature of his ministry to Pontius Pilate.

- **"Not of this World":** Jesus stated, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight" (John 18:36).
- **Lesson:** The Christian's primary allegiance is to Christ and his unselfish way of love. While worldly kingdoms rely on coercion, power, and politics, Christ's kingdom operates entirely on truth and self-sacrificial love.

## Chapter 19

### 1. The Agony of the Sin Bearer

When Jesus cried out from the cross, the physical torment was secondary to His mental and spiritual anguish. The SDA perspective stresses that Jesus was experiencing the total separation from God that humanity would otherwise endure because of sin. He could not see through the portals of the tomb and feared that His separation from the Father would be eternal. He tasted the absolute wrath of God against sin as humanity's substitute, which literally broke His heart.

## **2. The Trap of Worldly Alliances (Verses 14-15)**

When the chief priests shouted, "We have no king but Caesar", they formally renounced the theocracy of Israel and openly allied with the secular Roman power to destroy the Son of God. SDA commentary teaches that this tragic cry warns believers against the danger of allowing worldly values, ambitions, or human authorities (represented by Caesar) to take precedence over God's kingdom.

## **3. The Great Controversy and "It Is Finished" (Verse 30)**

The phrase "It is finished" holds massive theological weight in SDA doctrine. It signifies the completion of the earthly mission of Christ as our substitute. Through His perfect life and sacrificial death, He forever secured the victory in the "Great Controversy" between Christ and Satan. It assures believers that God's justice is fully satisfied, meaning our salvation rests entirely on what Christ accomplished, not our own efforts.

## **4. Sovereignty Amidst Human Injustice (Verses 10-11)**

When Pilate boasted of his power to crucify or release Jesus, Jesus gently but firmly reminded him that he could have no power at all unless it were given to him from above. The lesson is that human authorities, whether just or unjust, operate under the sovereign control of God. Jesus remained fully in control of His destiny, never yielding His ultimate authority.

## **5. Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets**

John meticulously records elements like the soldiers casting lots for Jesus' seamless tunic (verse 24) and the piercing of His side without breaking His bones (verses 36-37). SDA scholars view this as absolute proof of God's sovereign plan. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the Levitical sacrificial system and Old Testament types and prophecies.

## **Chapter 20**

### **1. The Empty Tomb and the Reality of the Resurrection**

John 20:1-10 details the disciples finding the empty tomb.

- **The Neatly Folded Graveclothes:** The napkin that was about His head, neatly folded and separated from the linen cloths, signifies that Christ's resurrection was not a hurried event or the result of grave robbers. It highlights divine order and Jesus's absolute mastery over death.
- **Physical Resurrection:** SDA theology upholds a literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus, affirming that His physical body was transformed but recognizable.

### **2. Mary Magdalene: Grief Transformed to Mission**

In John 20:11-18, a weeping Mary mistakes the resurrected Jesus for a gardener before He calls her by name.

- **Personal Encounter:** Her realization demonstrates that Christ knows His sheep personally. Hearing her name turns her sorrow into immediate joy.
- **The "First Apostle":** Jesus tells her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). He entrusts her with the very first proclamation of the risen Lord to the disciples, a role often highlighted in SDA studies as a model of faithful evangelism for all believers.

### 3. The Commission and the Gift of the Holy Spirit

In John 20:19-23, Jesus appears to the disciples, says "Peace be unto you," and breathes on them, saying "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (KJV).

- **Divine Peace:** His presence dispels the fear and shock that had gripped the disciples following His crucifixion.
- **Empowerment for Mission:** In SDA teaching, the "breathing" represents a powerful symbolic anticipation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, equipping the church for its redemptive mission of reconciliation.

### 4. Doubting Thomas and the Blessedness of Faith

John 20:24-29 addresses Thomas, who demanded physical proof to believe in the resurrection.

- **A Compassionate Savior:** Rather than condemning Thomas for his doubts, Jesus graciously meets him at his point of need, inviting him to touch His wounds.
- **The Ultimate Lesson:** Jesus states, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). This is central to the Seventh-day Adventist worldview of faith—trusting in the prophetic and historical testimony of Scripture despite the absence of physical sight.

### 5. The Purpose of the Gospel

John concludes this chapter (vv. 30-31) by stating these miracles are written so that readers may "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name".

## Chapter 21

### 1. Recognition of the Risen Lord (Verses 1-14)

- **The Barren Night:** The disciples returned to their old occupation as fishermen and labored all night without catching anything. In SDA theology, this represents human effort without divine direction. Ministry or life pursuits disconnected from Christ ultimately yield no spiritual harvest.
- **The Call from the Shore:** Jesus directed them to cast their net on the other side, resulting in a miraculous catch. This teaches that true success comes through **obedience** to Christ's commands.

- **The Provision:** Jesus already had a fire burning and breakfast prepared. This illustrates Christ's constant care for the physical and emotional needs of His followers before He even asks them to work.

## 2. The Restoration of Peter (Verses 15-17)

- **The Charcoal Fire:** In John 18, Peter denied his Lord while warming himself by a charcoal fire. By bringing Peter back to a similar charcoal fire, Jesus intentionally triggered the memory of his betrayal. The intention was not to shame Peter, but to allow him to fully confront the root of his failure so true healing could begin.
- **The Threefold Confession:** Just as Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to affirm his love three times. This "probing of the soul" strips Peter of his prior over-confidence (which caused him to brag in chapter 13) and establishes him on the foundation of **humility**.
- **Understanding Agapé vs. Phileo:** In the original Greek of the KJV, Jesus first asks Peter if he *agapáō* (sacrificial, unconditional love) Him. Peter responds that he *philéō* (deep, brotherly affection) Him. By ultimately accepting Peter's honest measure of love, Jesus demonstrates that God meets us exactly where we are in our spiritual maturity.

## 3. The Call to Ministry (Verses 15-17)

- **Feed My Sheep:** Following his restoration, Jesus gives Peter a direct commission. This shows that genuine love for Christ manifests in practical service and care for the church. In the SDA worldview, every redeemed soul is called to be a shepherd, nurturing and evangelizing those who need to know God.

## 4. Complete Surrender (Verses 18-25)

- **Follow Me:** Jesus reveals that Peter's future will involve intense suffering and eventual martyrdom. This final command is a call to total **consecration**. It teaches that following Christ requires surrendering control over our own destinies to glorify God.