

Master of the Water
Sunday School Lesson
John 6:16-25
May 11, 2025

The Jesus Seminar was a group of about fifty biblical criticism scholars and one hundred laymen founded in 1985 by Robert Funk that sought to separate the historical Jesus from the Jesus found in the Gospels. The seminar was very active in the 1980s and 1990s but had started winding down its work after the turn of the century. It completely disbanded a year after the death of its founder in 2005. Members of the Seminar used votes with colored beads to decide their collective view of the historicity of the deeds and sayings of Jesus of Nazareth as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They produced new translations of the New Testament and apocrypha to use as textual sources. They published their results in three reports: *The Five Gospels* (1993), *The Acts of Jesus* (1998), and *The Gospel of Jesus* (1999). They also ran a series of lectures and workshops in various U.S. cities.

Needless to say, I was not a fan and my biblical professors at Perkins School of Theology were not fans either. Timothy Luke Johnson, a well-known biblical scholar at Candler School of Theology was an exceptionally vocal critic. I had many friends that loved the Jesus Seminar and were especially fond of Marcus Borg, a biblical scholar that was a major player in the Jesus seminar.

Since the period of the Enlightenment, many have sought to apply scientific method to our faith beliefs. In our lesson today, we learn the story of Doron Nof who tried to prove how Jesus walked on water. Really? The Jesus Seminar rejected almost all the miracle stories. I do believe Jesus walked on water. How? I have no idea but it is a mystery just like the resurrection, just like the transfiguration, just like the Trinity, and just like turning the water into wine. You cannot prove mystery or miracles. It takes faith to believe. I do not have faith in Jesus because he performed miracles; I have faith in Jesus because I have experienced his love and grace.

Let us pray

O Holy God, transform our lives as we follow you. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and most of all, hearts that do not judge. Amen.

Our Purpose Statement: **To rejoice in the knowledge that Jesus is in charge**

Jesus is the Lord of Creation

For the writer of the Gospel of John, Jesus is the Incarnate Word of God. Now think about that for a minute – God’s true word became human flesh. The good news is we do not have to explain how that happened. It is God the Creator of the universe we are talking about and God can do whatever God desires. If you go back to Genesis and read the first three verses, you discover that the light came into being when God spoke the words, “Let there be light.” This is why John believed Jesus was there from the beginning. He was a part of the creation story and as such, he is the Lord over the creation.

Luke is the only Gospel that does not have a story of Jesus walking on the water. In addition to Jesus walking on the water, Jesus also commanded the water to be still in the Gospel of Mark. There are other changes in nature – Jesus turned water into wine, Jesus made five loaves and two fish a banquet for 5,000 with plenty of leftovers, Jesus raised Lazarus and Jairus' daughter from the dead, he delivered loads of fish to some weary fishermen, and he hasten the death of a fig tree. Certainly, while in human flesh, Jesus' abilities were part of God's divine will. Jesus used his powers on earth wisely. Some believe these stories were exaggerated but I am not one of them. I believe that they happened and that there is no need to prove they happened.

Jesus is the Lord of the Church

Jesus spent his three-year ministry forming a church with his followers. They did not look much like a church on the day he died nor did they look much like a church on the Day of Resurrection. They needed the guidance of the Holy Spirit to become the church. Without it, they would have continued to act as individuals who had encountered Jesus and lived the remainder of their lives doing their own thing. Sometimes we forget this in the modern church. Many churches have emphasized a personal relationship with Jesus to the point that they have forgotten that church is not a place to go to hear inspiring music and an inspiring sermon and you judge your participation by those two factors only. The church is a community of faith whose mission is a collective endeavor.

The church is messy because humans are messy but the Holy Spirit binds us together in Christ to bring the Kingdom of God to earth. The church is called to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. A church that is clear in this understanding has a better picture of what God is calling them to do. Our church has been very clear eyed about our core values in the present time. We serve our neighbors in helping to build community. We do that through our food ministries, our worship, our children's program, our youth program, our adult discipleship classes on Sunday morning and during the week. We do that through men's ministry, women's ministry, prayer ministry, and grief ministry. We do that through visitations, notes, phone calls, and cards.

Every church will go through difficult times and there will be disagreement in what course needs to be taken to move forward. This is where you need the leaders of the church to be Spirit driven and committed followers who are active in many church ministries. They will be guided by the Spirit to lead the church when many outside influences and self-interests might want a different outcome. When the boat is rocking, Jesus can calm the waters but only if we listen. God brings order out of chaos.

Let us pray:

Holy Jesus, our living water, meet us where we are and offer us your life-giving presence and Spirit. May your grace overflow to all we meet this week. Bring your healing and wholeness to our community today. Amen.