



GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Purpose of John's Gospel

John 20:30-31

November 19, 2006

- I. **The Purpose of Jesus' *Unrecorded* Signs**
- II. **The Sufficiency of the Written Word**
- III. **The Purpose of the Written Word [specifically, John's Gospel]**

I. **The Purpose of Jesus' *Unrecorded* Signs**

- ❑ John begins this section by informing the reader that there are 'many other signs' which Jesus performed which are not recorded in this Gospel.
- ❑ Now, this passage comes immediately after John records two accounts of Jesus miraculously appearing to His disciples.
 - This is why John begins the section with 'Therefore.'
- ❑ Yet, what is also very significant about John's words is that he not only says that Jesus performed 'many other signs'; but, that these signs were '**in the presence of the disciples...**'
- ❑ This, once again, reveals the truth of Ephesians 2:19-22:

'So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.'

- Also, 1 John 1:1-3 states:

‘What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life – and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us – what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.’

- In other words, the written word of God is based upon the testimony of the Apostles. Further, it was the miracles and signs that Jesus performed **in the presence of His disciples** that authenticated the truth of His message, claims and identity.
- As Calvin writes, ‘[I]t does not follow that they [the unrecorded signs] were performed in vain, for they profited that age. Secondly, though at the present day we have not a minute knowledge of them, still we must not suppose it to be of little importance for us to know that the Gospel was sealed by a vast number of miracles.’

Herman Ridderbos: ‘This is why it is specified here that Jesus did signs ‘before’ or ‘in the presence of His disciples. Here again we see the distinction made in Verse 29 [‘Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed’] between those who have ‘seen’ and those who have not. The disciples constitute the salvation-historical link between Jesus and those who will believe in Him through their word, which they speak as those authorized by Jesus to speak it.’

II. The Sufficiency of the Written Word

- Then John, after noting that Jesus performed ‘many other signs...in the presence of the disciples’, wrote, ‘**but these have been written so that you may believe.**’
- These words demonstrate a powerful truth: the Written Word is **sufficient for what it was intended for, it’s purpose: FAITH.**
- It is important, as always, to look at the context of this verse. John speaks of ‘many other signs’; then, he says, ‘but **these** have been written...’
 - In other words, John is comparing the *recorded* signs of the Gospel of John to the *unrecorded* signs. Both have a purpose.
 - Yet, the significance here, which should never be overlooked, is that the signs in the Gospel of John, and the Gospel of John as a whole [and certainly all of Scripture as a whole] are **sufficient for belief!**

In other words, there is a reason why the Holy Spirit inspired John to include the signs that He did [and leave out the ones that He did].

- ❑ The recorded **Signs** are central to John's Gospel.
- ❑ Leon Morris writes, '...I do not see how the purpose of the Fourth Gospel is to be understood without reckoning with the signs.'
- ❑ A Sign in the Gospel of John is *significant*, because it not only demonstrates that the authority and power of Jesus transcends the laws of physics and nature; but, they reveal something about the essential nature and redemptive mission of the Jesus Christ [that was previously hidden.]

The Seven Signs in the Gospel of John

- 1.) Jesus turns water into wine (John 2:1-12)
Significance: Jesus is the source of life.
- 2.) Jesus heals a nobleman's son [from a distance] (John 4:46-54)
Significance: Jesus is the master over distance.
- 3.) Jesus heals a lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-17)
Significance: Jesus is master over time.
- 4.) Jesus feeds 5,000 (John 6:1-14)
Significance: Jesus is the bread of life.
- 5.) Jesus walks on water, stills a storm (John 6:15-21)
Significance: Jesus is master over nature.
- 6.) Jesus heals a man blind from birth (John 9:1-41)
Significance: Jesus is the light of the world.
- 7.) Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:17-45)
Significance: Jesus has power over death.
[Jesus has the authority and ability to create life, for He has **life in Himself.**]

In a very real sense, the 'signs' of Jesus in this Gospel are the basis of the church's faith. However, it must be said that it is the **written account** of the signs that is God's instrument of imparting faith to us.

- ❑ In other words, what is **written** is sufficient for **faith** – we need not look any further.
- ❑ This is why Paul tells the Romans Christians, 'So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.' Romans 10:17

III. The Purpose of the Written Word [specifically, John's Gospel]

- Therefore, the purpose of the Gospel of John is quite clear in this passage: BELIEF. (‘but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.’).
- Yet, the words, ‘so that you may believe’ can be translated two different ways, depending on the original tense of the phrase:
 - First, it could be a present subjunctive (*hina pisteuete*). This would be properly translated, ‘in order that you may continue to believe.’
 - If this is the case, then, what John is saying is that the primary purpose of his Gospel is ‘discipleship’ or ‘sanctification’ – the continuation and deepening of an already existing faith.
 - There are a good number of conservative scholars who hold to this interpretation.
 - Secondly, the phrase could have also been an aorist subjunctive (*hina pisteusetete*). This would be correctly translated, ‘that you may decisively believe.’
 - If this is the case, then, what John is indicating is that the purpose of his Gospel is primarily **evangelistic**.
 - Many scholars believe this to be the primary purpose of John’s Gospel (evangelism), as 1 John, also written by John the Evangelist is rather clearly intended for discipleship purposes, as it is written to existing believers.
 - However, it is rather clear that John’s Gospel can be used for both evangelism and discipleship [as if the two are really distinguishable].
- Therefore, if John’s primary purpose is **BELIEF**, then what is the essence or the object of such belief?
- Believing / faith in John’s Gospel is not some vague trust, but rather, **it is belief with a specific object / content** – the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - John clearly states, ‘that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...’
 - These words echo the confession of Peter in Matthew 16:13-20:

‘He [Jesus] said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”
Simon Peter answered, ‘**You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.**’

- ❑ Both Peter’s and John’s words attribute to titles to the Person of Jesus Christ: (1) Christ; and (2) Son of God.
- ❑ First of all, John says that ‘these have been written so that you may believe that **Jesus is the Christ...**’
 - In other words, what John has written is sufficient to lead one to embrace Jesus as the Christ.
 - The word Christ [Greek: *Christos*, Χριστος] is derived from the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *Meshiach*, or Messiah.

For the Jews of the first century, to attribute the name Christ to Jesus would mean to embrace Him as the long-awaited Messiah – the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Davidic King!

- ❑ Secondly, John attributes the title, ‘Son of God’ to Jesus.
 - The title ‘Son of God’ is used throughout Scripture to indicate various truths.

Leon Morris writes, “Son of God’ is, of course, an expression that might mean much or little. The term was used of Solomon (2 Samuel 7:14) and in the plural of all Israel (Hosea 1:10). People who believe and are thus admitted to the heavenly family address God as ‘Father’ and are said to be ‘sons of God’ (though John never uses that term of them). But here the expression will have its fullest force; it will point to the closest personal relationship to the Father. It will be an assertion of the deity of the Messiah.’

With respect to the title ‘Son of God’ theologian Robert Duncan Culver writes: ‘On occasion Scripture refers to an ordinary human being as a son of God, or in plural as sons of God. Adam is listed in Jesus’ genealogies as ‘the son of God’ (Luke 3:38). There is no ambiguity about Luke’s meaning – created by God. But as used in the Land of Israel in Jesus’ time, ‘the Son of God’ or ‘the Christ, the Son of God’ meant ‘God’ as in Peter’s confession. To use it of one’s self was considered blasphemy (Matthew 26:63-66; John 5:18; 10:33-36; 19:6-7).’

- ❑ Although the title, ‘Son of God’ is not unique to Jesus, its manner of usage is. For, Jesus is the **eternal** Son of God. One must consider that if Jesus is not the eternal Son, then the Father is not the **eternal** Father; for the term ‘Father’ necessarily indicates that He is the Father of another, that is, the eternal Son.

John Calvin echoes this truth: ‘[A]s the name, Son of God, belongs only to Christ, it follows that he is a Son, not by adoption, but by nature; and, therefore, under this name is comprehended the eternal Divinity of Christ. And, indeed, he who, after having received those striking proofs, which are to be found in the Gospel, does not perceive Christ to be God, does not deserve to look even at the sun and the earth, for he is blind amidst the brightness of noonday.’

- ❑ In this Gospel, the uniqueness of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is more powerfully revealed than any other Gospel. This ‘uniqueness’ is revealed in the phrase ‘only begotten’ or ‘one and only’ [Greek: *monogenes*, μονογενης].

Robert Culver, again, comments:

‘John 1:18 states, ‘No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.’ The same is the case in John 3:16 [‘...gave His only begotten Son...’ King James Version]. Culver correctly writes, ‘In recent times it has been proposed the word *monogenes* is derived from *mono* (only, one, etc.) and *genos* (family, kind kindred, race, etc. – where we get the word gene or genus). Hence, ‘only one of his kind,’ i.e. unique... Jesus Christ then, according to this widely accepted view is God’s unique Son. Angels are His sons by creation, as is also Adam (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38). In the sense of mediate creation all men are God’s *genos* (family, kindred, Acts 17:38). Jesus, however, is the Son of God in a sense that no other is... this use of the word *monogenes* in this sense [‘one and only’; ‘unique’] is confirmed by Hebrews 11:17 where Isaac, brother of Ishmael, is called *monogenes*. He was not an only begotten son, for Abraham begat Ishmael several years earlier and begat several more later (Genesis 25:1, 2; 1 Chronicles 1:32), but he was a special son, enjoying a unique relationship to Abraham not shared by his older brother or his younger brothers.’”

- Lastly, the combination of the titles Christ (Messiah) and Son of God is not only unique, but it is powerful.

As Leon Morris writes, ‘We take these [Son of God and Messiah, Christ] two as more or less identical, but the Jews of the day did not. The Messiah was not expected to stand in that very close relationship to the Father of which John speaks. John’s conception of messiahship is fuller and richer than that of contemporary Judaism. **The combination of terms indicates the very highest view of the person of Jesus, and one that it must be taken in conjunction with the fact that John has just recorder the confession of Thomas that hails Jesus as ‘My Lord and my God.’ There cannot be any doubt but that John conceived of Jesus as the very incarnation of God.**’

- ❑ What is certain is that John, in revealing Jesus as ‘the Christ, the Son of God...’ is demonstrating that Jesus is FULLY GOD! Indeed, this truth is revealed throughout the Fourth Gospel.
- ❖ More than any other Gospel writer, John emphasizes the deity of Jesus Christ [that He is fully God]:
 - He is God, the Creator of the Universe, without beginning (1:1-3)
 - He is God come in human flesh (1:14)
 - He is vastly greater than John the Baptist, the greatest prophet (1:19-28)
 - He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (1:29-36)
 - He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of Israel (1:40-51)
- ❖ As listed before, the Seven Signs of John’s Gospel reveal the deity of the one and only Son of God.

❖ Another powerful manner in which John reveals the deity of Jesus Christ is through the Seven 'I AM' statements, whereby Jesus reveals that He is one in essence with the I AM of Exodus 3:14 ("Tell them I AM sent you").

- "I am the bread of life" (6.35)
- "I am the light of the world" (8.12)
- "I am the door for the sheep" (10.7; cf. v. 9)
- "I am the good shepherd" (10.11, 14)
- "I am the resurrection and the life" (11.25)
- "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14.6)
- "I am the true vine" (15.1; cf. v. 5)

❖ And, finally, the Great "I am" in John's Gospel:

- "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.'" (John 8.58)

- ❑ Yet, the chief purpose of John's Gospel is not that we will simply believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but that **'that believing you may have life in His name.'**
- ❑ In other words, it is through faith that we are saved, and have eternal life.
- ❑ As J.I. Packer writes, 'In the New Testament, faith (believing trust, or trustful belief, based on testimony received as from God) is crucially important, for **it is the means or instrumental cause of salvation.**'
- ❑ However, the Bible is clear that even faith is a gift and the Father does not grant us faith in a vacuum. He always uses the instrument of the Word of God as the means by which He imparts faith to us. [Romans 10:17]
- ❑ Let us never forget why Jesus Christ is the only means of Salvation – He is fully God, the revelation of the Father, and there is no revelation apart from Him!
- ❑ Not only this, by believing, we 'have life in His name.'
- ❑ The name of Jesus is nothing other than His very essence, His character, His nature.
- ❑ Therefore, eternal life is found nowhere else except **in Christ.**
- ❑ The reason for this is because Jesus, being fully God, has life in Himself [John 5:26]! This is the aseity of God, that the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is self-existent, equal in essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit!

- Thus, if eternal life is knowledge of God (John 17:3), and Jesus Christ is the revelation of the Father (John 1:18), then to know Jesus is to know the Father is to know God. Therefore, it is only through the Person of Jesus Christ that we can have eternal life.
- We have come full-circle in the Gospel of John.
- As John 1:1 states, 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'
- ❖ Commenting on this Verse, C.K. Barrett once wrote, 'John intends that the whole of the gospel shall be read in the light of this verse.'
- ❖ How true this statement is, for it is **in Christ** that we have eternal life: that is the knowledge of the one true and living God!