

**THE LIVING WORD OF GOD**

Johm 1:1-5, 14-18

**Intro:** I am beginning today a series on “The glory of Christ.” When we speak of the glory of Christ, we are speaking of His absolute Deity. And yet we are speaking of even more than that. We are speaking of the manifestation of His Deity, the shining forth of His glory. The same is true of the glory of God. It is God manifesting Himself as God. That is what the Apostle Johm had in mind when he wrote the words we find in Johm 1:14. (Quote.)

Sometimes that divine glory was visible, as when the presence of the Lord was manifested by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night when the Lord led His people out of Egypt and into the promised land. When the Lord Jesus was born, we are told in Luke 2:8 and 9,

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And then after the angel of the Lord told them about the birth of “a Savior, which is Christ the Lord,” then Luke recorded the following event:

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:13-14).

One had been born in “the city of David” Who was “Christ the Lord.” And this brought forth from the angels glory **and** praise to God for the coming of the promised Savior.

However, to most of us there has been no appearance of angels, nor the actual appearance of the Lord Jesus so that we can say that we have seen Him with our physical eyes. But the Spirit of God has revealed to our minds and hearts the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God Who came in human flesh, and we believe that truth with all of our being. That truth, the glory of Christ, is fully supported by the book which God has given us, our Bibles, which we are equally convinced is the infallible, verbally inspired, unchanging and indestructible Word of God. We firmly believe that the Bible teaches the glory of Christ, the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that in becoming Man, His glory was veiled, but not changed.

The only difference was in its manifestation.

— This doctrine is supremely important because it is inseparably linked with the other great doctrine of Scripture – the doctrine of salvation. And I say that it is “supremely important” because if Jesus Christ was not God, then He had to be just another human being, and we are left without a Savior! But we can be eternally thankful that God has given us His Word, and that He has not left even the slightest doubt concerning who Jesus of Nazareth was, and still is. The Apostle John in stating the purpose of just his Gospel, said concerning the miracles which he recorded,

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31)

So you see that believing that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” is foundational to “believing that ye might have life through His Name.”

— We all know that down to this very day there have been and still are people who deny that Jesus Christ was the Son of God Who came to the earth, born of the virgin Mary. But the Bible, the Word of God, stands as a living testimony that Jesus Christ was, always had been, and forever will be, the eternal Son of the living God.

So, in the weeks to come, in our Sunday morning service, as the Lord is pleased enable me and teach me, I want to share with you the great truths of *The Glory of Christ!*

In my reading I want to give you a quotation that I hope will enable us, not only to see how very important this doctrine is, but that it will also help us to profit from our survey of the Scriptures during our Sunday School hour. Listen to what one writer has written concerning the glory of Christ:

— The personal glory of the Lord Jesus is to be Bible what the sun is to our planet. In the deep and dark recesses of nature, as well as scattered upon its broad surface, there are many objects of great intrinsic value, whose beauty and fitness remain undiscovered and unnoticed until, placed in a proper position, the sun’s rays are made to fall upon them, as with focal power, thus revealing both their nature and properties. It is so with the Word of God. In

itself of infinite worth and transcendent value, –containing no type, revealing no doctrine, enjoining no precept, unfolding no promise, and recording no fact, which does not occupy a position of importance and beauty of surpassing magnitude; yet, until the Sun of righteousness shines upon it, –until seen in the relation which it sustains to Jesus, –it remains a “hidden mystery,” its worth and beauty shaded from the eye. The doctrine of the incarnate God invests with light and radiance every essential difficulty and truth of the inspired Word. Infinitely mysterious itself, it yet explains every other mystery. It solves what is inexplicable, fathoms what is profound, illumines what is obscure, and reconciles what is discrepant. And yet, while thus irradiating every other doctrine, and elucidating every other mystery, it remains, as it ever will, enshrined in its own unapproachable light, the most wonderful incomprehensible, and sublime of all—the great mystery of godliness. With the Psalmist, we may truly exclaim, “In thy light we shall see light” [Psa. 36:9]. May the Eternal Spirit of truth give a personal and sanctifying perception of the glory and sweetness of this great subject! (Winslow, Octavius, *The Glory of the Redeemer*, pp. 2, 3).

This all means that Christ is the Key to all of Scripture. As I have said many times before, the Bible is not only a revelation from God, but it is a revelation of God, and the greatest, most complete, and final revelation that it gives us of God is to be found in what it tells us of our Lord Jesus Christ and His glory. As Oswald Chambers used to tell people in his messages and in his books, when you read the Bible, always be looking for the Lord. What the Bible tells us about Christ, is the key to all of Scripture.

Now with such a grand subject, where do we begin, since Christ is everywhere in Scripture? I have chosen to begin before the beginning of the world. The people of the world don’t even know what the beginning was, and so they certainly couldn’t be expected to go back before the beginning. And so let us start with the verses with which the Apostle John began his Gospel. They are very, very familiar words, but words rich in what they tell us about our Lord Jesus Christ. If we believe what John wrote, we are not going to have any trouble with the rest of Scripture. And we must believe it because it is the truth of God. It was the Holy Spirit Who directed John to write what he wrote.

(Read John 1:1-5, and also verses 14 and 18.)

— Notice the Name that the Apostle John gave to our Lord. We know He was speaking of our Lord because of verse 14. John is the only writer in Scripture who called the Lord, “the Word.” See also 1 John 1:1-3 and Rev. 19:11-13.

## **I. WHY “THE WORD”?**

— This is the Greek λόγος. In fact, you will find it in most of our English dictionaries as *logos*. It can mean a word, or a group of words by which a message is conveyed. Thayer in his lexicon says that properly it means *a collection*. The Apostle John did not give our Lord this Name or Title, however you want to describe it, but it was given to our Lord by the Holy Spirit. It indicates that when the Son of God came into the world, He came, not merely to give a message, but that He Himself was that message. And He was a message by the Names He carried, but the words which He spoke, and by the mighty works which He did. But who was the message from? He was a message from God. And it would appear that “the Word” is singular because He, more than anyone else, was the embodiment of God’s message to people on the earth.

The writer of the book of Hebrews indicated this in the opening verses of that great epistle. Although most of you are familiar with the words I am referring to, let me read them to you:

- 1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
- 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;
- 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
- 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they (Heb. 1:1-4).

— In the past God spoke through Moses, through Joshua, through Job and David and Solomon, just to name a few. But He “hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” God has always been concerned that people

understand Who He is – the mighty God, a holy God, an infinitely wise God, present everywhere, a God of love and grace, but also a righteous God Who cannot and will not tolerate sin. The prophets of the OT helped to convey that message about God. But now God has spoken in the clearest possible way, and in a final way. He sent His Son as “the Word” from heaven.

## II. WHAT ARE HIS QUALIFICATIONS?

Note how the Gospel of John begins.

### A. “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1).

This pre-dates Genesis 1:1. Genesis 1:1 tells us what happened in the beginning of time, when God created the heaven and the earth. But the use of the word “was” here in John 1:1 indicates that all through eternity before there was any time, the Word existed. In other words, we have a statement here that “the Word” had no beginning. He always has existed. He is eternal.

But look at the second statement:

### B. “And the Word was with God” (John 1:1).

This suggests that “the Word” and “God” were not, and are not, the same Person, but that there always had been an equality between them, and an abiding, perfect fellowship. This was long before there was an angel, and long before there was man or creation itself. There is a clear suggestion in this statement of perfect oneness between God and the Word.

Now look at the third statement:

### C. “And the Word was God” (John 1:1).

This is not in contradiction of the second statement, but a clear statement of the Deity of the Word. This is why the Lord was able to tell Philip, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

This is where the battle has raged over the Person of Christ. The Jews were not satisfied until they had succeeded having Him crucified because

— for Him to claim to be the Son of God, meant that He was making Himself equal with God in Deity. But this is exactly what the Holy Spirit wanted to convey to the readers! And the Apostle John, an old man at the time this was written, was firmly convinced in his own mind that “the Word was God”!

And then in verse 2 the Apostle John combined the first two statements of verse 1 to make sure that his readers were getting the point of what he had written.

And then in verse 3 we move ahead in this revelation of the Word.

## **II. THE WORD WAS ACTIVE IN ALL OF THE CREATION (John 1:3-5).**

Nothing was made without Him. Therefore we are to see “the Word” along with God in everything that was made in the six days of creation.

— More than this, “in Him was life.” “The Word” gave life to the grass, to seed plants, to fruit trees, to the sun, moon, and stars, and all of the heavenly bodies. He gave life to all creatures living in the seas, to birds flying in the air, and to all creatures living on the earth. This means that “the Word” not only created, but that He continues to sustain all life. In the words of Heb. 1:3 He is “upholding all things by the word of His power.” Our scientists and politicians and environmentalists need to know this.

And it would seem that when the Apostle John said that “the life was the light of men,” it would seem that in the context of creation John was saying what David said in Psalm 19:1, that “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.” And just as darkness follows the light of the day, the darkness does not succeed in putting out the light because the light is given by the life of the Creator.

In these verses before we get to the Gospel at all in John’s Gospel, we are told about the work of the Word in creation and in what He does day after day to sustain what He has created.

— This is a most powerful testimony as Paul indicated in Romans 1:20:  
For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are

clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:  
— Read Psalm 104, and you will see the work of the Godhead in creation day after day, year after year, and from one generation to another. In Psa. 145:15 and 16 we read this:

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

We are learning today about the glory of the Lord Jesus. But now let me take you to verses 14 and 18 where we have the proof that the Apostle John was speaking of our Lord.

### III. “THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH” (John 1:14 and 18).

Here the Apostle John was speaking from his own personal experience, and the experience of all of the apostles.

— In the first five verses of the chapter the Apostle John was speaking of eternity past plus what the Word has been doing all through time, and what He will continue to do. Now we come to the incarnation, the birth of the Word as He became a Man.

When the Apostle John said that “the Word was made flesh,” he was saying that “the Word” became what He had not been before. He *became a Man*.

But notice that the Apostle John was still calling Him, “the Word.” Now this means that when the Lord Jesus became a Man, He continued to be all that He had been from all eternity. He became a Man without ceasing in any way to be “the Word.” ***This is a most powerful statement of the real humanity of our Lord, and of His absolute Deity!***

And notice, if you will, the two times the word “glory” appears in verse 14. (Read.)

— But then look at verse 18 again. No one has ever seen God “at any time.” But His “only begotten Son” has “declared Him.” “The only begotten of the Father” (v. 14) and “the only begotten Son” are terms which mean

that God has no other Sons in the same sense that Christ is His Son. His Sonship is unique. We are brought into God's family as children and as sons, but not as Christ is God's Son. And so Christ has "declared" the very Person of God. Jesus Christ alone perfectly shows us "Who God is and what God is" (Robertson, V, 18). Christ is the perfect revelation of God, the Father.

**Concl:** Doesn't this truth make you want to bow down to worship the Son? Don't have anything to do with people, however religious they may appear, who would tell you that Jesus Christ is less than God. If He is, then He cannot be our Savior. But we can thank God that He has taught us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that the better we know Christ, the better we will know God, and the more we will delight ourselves in the Father and the Son.

The glory of Christ is that His Deity, before, during, and after His time on earth, is identical with the Father. "Jesus Christ" is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).



**THE LAMB OF GOD**

John 1:19-37

**Intro:** When we speak of “the glory of Christ,” we are thinking not only about His Deity, but of the manifestation of His Deity. But we can also take it a step farther and say that it includes the truth that our Lord’s glory was identical with and equal to the glory of God, the Father. This is brought out in that marvelous introduction to the book of Hebrews where we in verse 3 of chapter 1, referring to Christ, “Who being the brightness of His glory,” that is, *the Father’s glory*, “and the express image of His Person,” that is, *the Father’s Person*.

So keep those three things in mind:

- 1) The Deity of Christ.
  - 2) The manifestation of His Deity.
  - 3) The total similarity between the Deity of Christ and the Deity of God.
- All of this was involved every time the Lord Jesus claimed that God was His Father. We see this very clearly in John 5:17 and 18:

17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:17-18).

There was no question in the minds of the Jews but that when our Lord claimed that God was His Father, He was claiming an equality of Deity with the Father.

Last Sunday I considered with the title of our Lord, or Name, which only the Apostle John used. He called the Lord Jesus, “the Word.” He not only did this in his Gospel, but also in his first epistle, and then again in the book of the Revelation. In 1 John 1:1 and 2 we read:

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

Notice the words “for the life was manifested.” That is an important part of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It means that there was evidence of His Deity.

The other verse in which the Apostle John referred to our Lord is in Rev. 19:11-13. This is what we read as the Apostle John described the Lord's second coming which Matthew described as "with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30). This is what we read in Rev. 19, beginning with verse 11:

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

As the Word the Lord Jesus came as a message from God, but we can also say that *He was the message! He came as the final and complete revelation of God the Father.*

Today I want to consider with you another title having to do with the glory of our Lord. It was a title given to Him by John the Baptist. But that title did not originate with John the Baptist; it was revealed to Him by God, the One Who sent John to baptize with water.

The day after John the Baptist had been examined by a group of priests and Levites, we read this in John 1:29:

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

And then the day after that we read similar words in John 1:35-36:

35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

There is no way that we can tell how many times or to how many people John the Baptist gave this message, but I believe that it is safe to assume that he gave it over and over again. This was the heart of the message which John the Baptist preached. But it did not originate with John the Baptist. It was revealed to him by God that the Lord Jesus was "the Lamb of God." However, the importance of the lamb in God's relationship with His people goes as far back as Genesis 3. Let me remind you of some of the passages that apply to the message which John the Baptist preached, identifying the Lord Jesus as God's Lamb.

## **I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LAMB IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.**

### **A. The animal used to provide a covering for Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:21).**

This is what we learn from Gen. 3:21:

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

We are not told that this animal was a lamb, but it seems that we are safe in assuming that it was a lamb since the lamb was the animal that was used all through OT times for such sacrifices.

### **B. Abel's offering (Gen. 4:4).**

This is the verse that I am referring to:

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

### **C. God's command for Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2).**

Here is what God commanded Abraham to do:

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of (Gen. 22:2).

But they did not take a lamb with them. And so when Isaac asked his father about the lamb for a burnt offering, this was Abraham's answer:

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together (Gen. 22:8).

And you know that that was exactly what God did.

### **D. The Passover lamb (Ex. 12:3ff.).**

(Review the requirements, and tell what was to be done with the lamb and its blood.)

### **E. Sheep in the offerings required under the Mosaic Law.**

— Sheep were not the only animals that were sacrificed, but they were surely the main animals. Read the opening chapters of Leviticus, and you will see how important the lambs were in the offerings made by fire unto the Lord.

When Solomon dedicated the temple that he had built as an house of God, it is recorded that he sacrificed 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep! And in connection with our present study on *the glory of Christ* it is interesting that when the temple was completed, and the sacrifices had been prepared, fire came down and consumed the sacrifices, and “the glory of the Lord filled the Lord’s house” (2 Chron. 7:1).

Many of the sacrifices were offered as a dedication to the Lord, but many others had to do with the forgiveness of sin. And yet we are told in the book of Hebrews that all of those OT sacrifices, whether of lambs, or bulls, or goats, could not take away sins. And as evidence that they were not the answer to the problem of sin, the animals were offered again and again, year after year.

— What was their value then? People were forgiven of their sins by those offerings. Do we have a contradiction here?

Absolutely not! The value of those sacrifices was that they were offered in faith that ultimately a sacrifice would be made that would take away sins. This was the hope held out to the people of God in Israel in such a passage as Isaiah 53 (which really begins with Isaiah 52:13 where the Messiah is addressed as God’s “servant” (Isa. 52:13)).

I want to read a portion of this great passage because it has to do with the message John the Baptist preached. Please turn to Isaiah 52:13.

(Read Isa. 52:13-53:6, and then Isa. 53:10.).

Now all of this takes us to our text in John 1:29, part of which is repeated in John 1:36. They both have to do with:

## **II. GOD’S LAMB – THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (John 1:29, 36).**

— In Exodus 12, the chapter which gives the instructions for the first Pass-over, you have at the beginning of verse 5 an expression which is in

contrast with our text. I am referring to the words, “your lamb.” That was the lamb that any family would choose to protect them from death. Their hope for deliverance from death, and ultimate deliverance from Egypt, rested on their lamb, or, as the text says, “Your lamb.”

All through history that is what the lambs were, the lambs which the people of God had chosen. But when John the Baptist came on the scene, he was divinely commissioned to speak of God’s Lamb, “the Lamb of God.” And his words were introduced with the word,

**A. “Behold.”**

This word is found hundreds of times in both the Old and New Testaments – actually 1,326 times. So it is an important Bible word. It is used to denote an element of surprise, to call attention to something that is very important. And the word basically means, “See.” But that can mean two things, and in the way John the Baptist used it, it did mean two things. It meant that they were physically to look at the Lord Jesus Christ. But it also meant that they were to be intent on what it meant that our Lord was “the Lamb of God.” The Apostle John combined both of these when he said as he wrote in John 1:34, “And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”

Let all of us obey this simple word today. We can’t see the Lord like we can see each other, but we can read from Scripture to see what John the Baptist said, and to understand what the Apostle John learned. There was no moment in all of history more important than the day when the Lord Jesus was born. Do you remember that the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds when he came upon them?

10And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, **behold**, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10-11).

The Scriptures are full of this word “behold,” and yet how few there are who even give a moments thought as to who the Lord Jesus Christ is. And yet there is absolutely nothing that is more important! Eternity itself is involved in our response to this word, “BEHOLD!” It is a command from God Himself issued over and over through His servants in every generation. And once we see Him as He is revealed in the Word, we never want to take our eyes off of Him.

What did John the Baptist want people to see in the Lord?

**B. "The Lamb of God."**

They saw Him first as a Man. But He was God's Man. He was a divine Lamb. He had to be, or He could not adequately do the work of God's Lamb. He was without blemish. He was "without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He "did not sin" (1 Pet. 2:22). "In Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). There never had been a man like Him, and there never will be another like Him.

But the fact that He was a Man speaks to us of His deep humiliation. The Creator appeared as a creature, a man. None of us can adequately understand what it meant to our Lord to become a Man, and for multitudes then and now to think of Him as only a man. He was made, as Scripture tells us, "in the likeness of men." Upon Him was the full approval and blessing of God. His life showed that He was God. His teachings showed that He was God. And His miracles gave added proof that He was the Son of God in human flesh. He alone, among all people who have ever been born, or will ever be born, could justly be called, "the Lamb of God."

But as wonderful as His life was, one of absolute perfection. And as wonderful as His teachings were. And even though He performed miracles like no one ever did. The fact that He was "the Lamb of God" meant that *He had come to die!* And He would not die because He deserved to die, but He would die as every other sacrificial animal had died: He would die as a sacrifice for others, taking their penalty upon Himself, setting those for whom He died forever free from the penalty of sin, eternal death!

It meant that all of the hopes of the OT saints for the forgiveness of their sins were fulfilled in this One Who had finally come.

And notice that He was not just one of many possibilities for salvation. Both John 1:29 and John 1:36 say that He was "**the** Lamb of God," *the One and only Lamb of God.*" There will be no other; there could be no other!

What did He come to do? He "taketh away the sin of the world." By this John the Baptist did not mean that the whole world would be saved from

— the penalty of sin, but what He did mean that wherever people are throughout the world, in any generation, regardless of the color of their skin, or the language that they might speak, and regardless of the sins they have committed, if they are to be saved, Jesus Christ will have to save them! He alone is the way to God. He alone is the Savior from sin. There are going to be people in heaven from every tribe and language and nationality and country – and we all will have one thing in common: it will be Jesus Christ Who got us all there! By His death He has taken away our sins. They are gone. We are cleansed, and forgiven.

— And remember that what the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God did, was not done as an afterthought on the part of God. Revelation 13:8 speaks of our Lord as “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” And who is our Lord saving? He is saving those who were “chosen . . . in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). And how do you know if you are one of the chosen. If you are chosen, God will be calling you. You will be concerned about your salvation. Your heart will be open to the truth of God’s Word. And when you are told to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to put your trust in Him to save you, you will know that there is no other way that you can be saved. And you will come to Christ. Perhaps some — have come to Christ this morning before I have told you what to do because God has already spoken to you, and you are right now seeing by faith Him Who is the Lamb of God Who died to take away your sins.

**Concl:** A major part of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ is that He, and He alone, is “the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin” of sinners throughout the whole world. No one else qualifies because we are all sinners by nature and need to be saved. He was not a sinner. He was and is God’s Lamb because He is God’s Son. God has no other Lamb. God has no other Son like the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone meets our need and satisfies God in His righteousness.

— Come to Him now if you never have. Trust no longer in what you are trying to do for God, but trust in what Jesus Christ has done to save guilty sinners from their sins. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” And the same is true of your family members, or anyone else who expects to be saved. It is to the glory of God and to the glory of Christ, that you or I can be saved.

**THE GLORY OF CHRIST AT A WEDDING**

John 2:1-11

**Intro:** For the past two Sundays morning I have been spoken, and I hope that we all have been thinking, about *the glory of Christ*. We began with a consideration of Christ as “the Word.” And that took us to John 1:1 and John 1:14. In the latter passage, John the Apostle said that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” I don’t quite understand why the KJV translators made that part about the glory of our Lord a parenthesis in that verse because it seems to me that it is the most important part of the verse.

John 1:14 emphasizes that when we speak of the glory of Christ, we are speaking of Him in His humanity, that there were manifestations of His Deity while He was on earth, and that His glory was identical with that of His Father in heaven.

Then last Sunday we considered those verses, also in John 1, in which we learn that John the Baptist preached that our Lord was “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, 36). The word “glory” was not used in those passages, but the idea of glory was certainly there because it is very clear that it was the Deity of our Lord which remained unchanged in His humanity which qualified Him uniquely to be your Savior and mine. No other person in all of human history was deserving of that title.

In the passage which I have chosen for today’s message, again we have the word “glory.” And you will see it in John 2:11. And notice that we have in that verse the word “manifested.” Much of the time that the Lord was here on earth His glory was veiled, but more times that we usually realize it was “manifested,” or “manifested forth.” This means that it was seen, it was openly declared. But we must add that it was “manifested forth” for those and to those who had been given the ability to see it. As our text shows, when the ruler of the feast tasted the wine which the Lord had made from water, he knew that it was better than anything that had been served at the marriage before that. However, there is no indication at all in our text that any but the disciples understood the meaning of what had happened, and the result was that they “believed on Him.”



In John chapter 3 we read that Nicodemus had been attracted to the Lord by the miracles that He had performed, but Nicodemus at that point had not realized the full truth concerning the Lord Jesus. (Read John 3:2.)

The discussions that followed the miracle that the Lord performed giving sight to the man who had been born blind in John chapter 9. And we need to keep in mind the Apostle John's declared purpose in writing this Gospel. He wrote it out in John 20:30 and 31:

30 And many other signs [or, miracles] truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Actually the word translated "miracles" in John 2:11 is the Greek word for *signs*. It is the Greek word σημεῖον. It points to some evidence which distinguishes one person from everyone else. Our Lord's miracles were signs that He was God, and not just a mere Man. He was God manifested forth in humanity! That was His glory. And if we understand this, it is because the Lord has given us that understanding. By nature we are all blind to spiritual truth, "blind from birth." And when you and I can truly say that we understand that the Lord Jesus Christ was both God and Man, absolute Deity and perfect humanity, it is because God has given us spiritual sight. And for that we ought incessantly to give God the sincere praise of our hearts.

But now let us look at this account. Even though weddings today are considerably different from weddings in those days, you and I have to admit that the report of the wedding in these verses is very, very different from what we might expect. But let us look first at:

### **I. A PART OF THE LIST OF GUESTS (John 1:1-2).**

Notice the expression, "the third day." Then go back into chapter 1 of John's Gospel and you will see "the next day" in verse 29, and "the day following" in verse 43, leading up to the beginning of chapter 2 and "the third day."

So we actually have four days here packed with significant activity. The first day would have been when the delegation came to see John the Baptist, asking him who he was. "The next day" was the day when John

— preached that our Lord was the Lamb of God. “The day following” tells us about the Lord calling some of His disciples. Then “the third day” we find ourselves with the Lord and His mother and His disciples at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. What was significant about “Cana of Galilee”?

Well, in John 21:2 we are told that Cana of Galilee was Nathanael’s home town. And, at the end of John 1 we learn about how Nathanael was brought to the Lord by Philip. So it seems that Nathanael had something to do with our Lord and His mother and His disciples being invited to this wedding. We are not told who the bride was, nor who the bridegroom was, but one or the other may have been related to Nathanael. I am only speculating, but it is a possibility. It seems that our Lord’s mother, Mary, was already there, and that the invitation to our Lord and His disciples followed from that.

At any rate the focus is upon our Lord, not upon the bride and groom, nor upon the ceremony. So the wedding itself is incidental. What is important is the fact that this is where the Lord performed this amazing miracle!

— So the second point for us to notice is that:

## **II. THERE WAS A NEED (John 2:3-8).**

I am sure that wherever and whenever there has been a wedding, one of the main concerns regarding the refreshments is that there will be enough to serve all of the guests who come.

Well, in this case the unthinkable happened: they ran out of wine. “Wanted” is Old English for *lacked*. The supply that they had was exhausted. Mary, the mother of our Lord, knew about it, and so she told the Lord what had happened. And it seems that she said this to Him because she knew that he could do something about it. We see how strong Mary’s faith was in her Son even before He had started his public ministry of performing miracles.

— The Lord’s answer seemed very abrupt, and we might even think that it was disrespectful. But if it had been disrespectful, then our Lord would have been guilty of sin. But we know that He never did sin. He was incapable of sinning. It was not just that He did not sin, but He could not

sin. He was not disrespectful, but at the same time we need to recognize that this was a gentle rebuke to His mother. He knew what she wanted Him to do, and perhaps she even felt that this was an opportunity for Him to demonstrate Who He was. But His question to her, “What have I to do with thee?”, could better be translated, “What to Me and to thee?” And the meaning seems to be that His thoughts and His ways and His timing were one thing, while those of His mother were another.

This is a strong contradiction of the Roman Catholic teaching that in order to have the greatest influence on our Lord, we need to approach Him through His mother because He will do whatever she wants Him to do. This text proves that was not the case. And his final words to her which are given her indicate that. He told her that *His hour had not yet come!* The “hour,” or time, when the Lord would show forth His glory to the greatest degree would be at the time of His death and resurrection.

And it appears that Mary accepted what the Lord said to her, because she left it to the Lord to tell the servants what to do, if He chose to tell them anything.

Here is a real lesson in prayer. We have the greatest power with our Lord when we are willing to say from our hearts, “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

So, what did the Lord do?

The Apostle John who undoubtedly was there, has told us that there were six large water pots there, each capable of containing “two or three firkins apiece.”

I have a set of Dr. Lewis Johnson’s messages on the Gospel of John, and I read over what he had to say on this passage. He said about these water pots that together they contained from sixty to one hundred and fifty gallons, enough for 2400 servings” (Sermon #9, p. 2). Marriages in those days lasted several days, and usually there were many guests. So the Lord was making a major contribution to this wedding.

And so He merely told the servants to fill the water pots with *water!* And then he told them to pour some out, and take it to the governor of the marriage feast.

He told the servants to fill the water pots with water.

There was nothing that our Lord said. He took no unusual action to make the servants think that something miraculous was taking place. But some time between when the servants poured the water in, and took the liquid out, a miracle was performed by our Lord, and the water was transformed into wine.

Now let us notice:

### **III. THE SEQUEL, or THE RESULT (John 2:9-11).**

The governor, or ruler, of the feast tasted it, and then called for the bridegroom and, without knowing where the wine had come from, told the bridegroom that it was customary to serve the best wine first, but he had saved the best to the last. The Lord not only supplied them with enough wine for the rest of the feast, but He gave them wine that was better than any of the wine that they had had before!!!

And that it had been a miracle performed by our Lord was confirmed by the Apostle John in verse 11.

Now let us think about:

### **IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS MIRACLE.**

Many expositors of this passage have pointed out that the Lord's presence at this marriage was an indication of His approval of what was being done. It was God Who performed the first marriage when he brought the first woman to the first man, and they became husband and wife. And in these days when so many are ignoring the necessity for marriage, and a man and a woman will just live together and even have children, or the marriage relationship is being perverted when two men start living together, or two women start living together, and want that to be called a marriage, they are guaranteeing that the judgment of God will fall upon them. It might appear like God is not paying attention to what is going on, but there is nothing that escapes His eyes. Sooner or later whatever is sin in his sight, will suffer the judgment of God! And there is already much evidence that that judgment has already begun! There is a solemn warning to be learned from this first of our Lord's miracles.

But there is another great lesson in this miracle.

— We learned when we were thinking about the Lord as the Word, that He “was in the beginning with God,” and that “all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:2-3). So in this first of our Lord’s miracles we see Him as the Creator. He not only made the vine on which grapes would grow, but He made the grapes to grow from which men could make the wine. But, to show that as the Creator He could by-pass all of that, He simply turned water into a wine that was better than men could produce by crushing the grapes to extract the juice so they could make wine.

And so we are faced here with omnipotence! He is the Lord Who in the beginning said, “Let there be grape vines, let them produce fruit.” But He demonstrated in Cana of Galilee that He didn’t have to say anything. He just changed the water into wine.

And notice three things about that wine:

- 1) He was capable of doing it immediately.
- 2) He provided an abundant supply.
- 3) What He did was far better than men were capable of producing.
- 4) It was free.

In Genesis 49 where Jacob was pronouncing his blessing upon his sons, and he came to Judah whose family line would lead to Christ. And speaking of the Messiah as Shiloh, Jacob prophetically said this: “He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes” (Gen. 49:11b).

For this reason it seems that in this miracle which showed the glory of the Lord, that it did so, not only as Creator, but also as our Redeemer. This is where His greatest glory is to be seen. As wonderful as it was for the Lord just to speak the word, and to bring all of creation into existence, that is not to be compared with the glory of our Lord which is displayed when a single sinner is transformed into a child of God.

— Yesterday in our men’s prayer meeting I read a section out of a daily devotional book made up with sayings from the writings of J. C. Philpot and compiled by his daughters in 1893 by his daughters. He was a godly English pastor. He was commenting on the verse in Zech. 3:8 which

describes believers as men wondered at. Let me read to you a portion of what Pastor Philpot wrote about why people can wonder at those who know the Lord. Here are his words:

To see a man altogether so different from what he once was; once so careless, carnal, ignorant, unconcerned; to see that man now upon his knees begging for mercy, the tears streaming down his face, his bosom heaving with convulsive sighs, his eyes looking upward that pardon may reach him in his desperate state, – is not that a man to be looked upon with wonder and admiration? To see a man preferring one smile from the face of Jesus, and one word from His peace-speaking lips to all the titles, honors, pleasures, and power that the world can bestow; why, surely if there be a wonder upon earth, that man is one. Was not this the very feeling of the disciples when Saul first “preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God?” “All that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that persecuted the Church of God?” So we look and wonder, and feel at times a holy joy that He who reigns at God’s right hand is every adding trophies to His immortal crown. And whenever we see any of those near and dear to us in the flesh; be husband, wife, sister, brother, child, relative, or friend, touched by the finger of this all-conquering Lord, subdued by His grace, and wrought upon by His Spirit,, then not only do we look upon such with holy wonder, but with the tenderest affection, mingled with tears of thankful praise to the God of all our mercies (*Through Baca’s Vale*, pp. 216, 217)

In that wonderful 55<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah which speaks so clearly about the necessity of seeking the Lord for salvation, we find these words at the beginning of the chapter:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Isa. 55:1).

Thus, wine, “the blood of grapes,” representing the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the communion cup, is typical of our salvation.

And thus it appears to be in the first miracle – a picture of salvation. What they had at the feast was not sufficient. But by His grace our Lord provided what was needed, as I have said,

- 1) Immediately.
- 2) Abundantly.

3) Far better than what they had before.

4) It was free.

— This is like our salvation. He saves right now. He gives us life abundantly. It is superior to anything that we have known before. And it is free!

The Lord Jesus manifested His glory in changing the water into wine because He showed Him to be the Creator, but it also showed Him to be the Redeemer. If you know Him as your Savior, surely at times your soul will be moved to tears of gratitude for what He has done for you. If you don't know Him, come to Him today! Do not delay any longer. You will never find the peace that you desire, and the removal of that burden of sin which lies so heavily upon your heart, until you seek the Lord and find through His shed blood true peace with God.

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**FIRST GLIMPSES OF CHRIST'S GLORY**

John 3:1-21

— **Intro:** The story of how Nicodemus first came to the Lord is one of the best known and best loved stories in the New Testament. Nicodemus is only mentioned three times in the Bible, and they are all in the Gospel of John.

In John 3 we have the first time our Lord and Nicodemus met. The second time that the Apostle John mentioned him is in John 7. It was at a time when the ministry of our Lord was increasing in its effect upon the Jewish people, and this raised both the concern and opposition of the Pharisees. And so we read in John 7:32 that “the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him.” Then let us pick up the story in verse 45. (Read John 7:45-53.)

So Nicodemus was not in favor of condemning the Lord until they had heard Him, had found out what He was teaching and what He had been doing.

— The last time Nicodemus is mentioned is in John 19 immediately following the crucifixion of our Lord. It had been determined by the Roman soldiers that our Lord was dead, and then the Apostle John gave this record of what happened afterwards. (Read John 19:38-42.)

Nicodemus is called in John 3:1, “a ruler of the Jews.” This meant that he was a member of the Sanhedrin. He was one of seventy-one members of the highest Jewish court. It would be very similar to our saying today that so-and-so is a member of the Supreme Court. So Nicodemus was a member of the most powerful group of Jewish leaders at the time of Christ.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mentioned Joseph of Arimathaea, but none of them mentioned Nicodemus. See Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-53. Matthew tells us that Joseph was a rich man, and that the tomb in which the Lord was placed was a tomb which Joseph had prepared for himself. Mark called Joseph an honorable counselor, and Luke simply says that he was a counselor. This means that Joseph was also a member of the Sanhedrin. But it is the Apostle John who has told us that Joseph was “a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews” (John



19:38). And I think that we would have to say the same for Nicodemus. Obviously Nicodemus and Joseph were friends, were keeping quiet about their faith in the Lord, *and yet what they did with the body of the Lord Jesus was actually a declaration of their faith.* Whether or not Saul of Tarsus was also a member of the Pharisees at this time, we do not know, but it is very likely that he was, and that all of these men knew each other. This is only speculation, but we may learn about a lot of interesting relationships when we get to heaven.

The fact that neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke did not mention Nicodemus, does not mean that Nicodemus was not there, but it means that the Apostle John was led by the Holy Spirit to report in a special way what had been going on in the life of Nicodemus. We don't know anything about the work of God in the heart of Joseph of Arimathea, but it is very clear in the Gospels that both Nicodemus and Joseph were men upon whom the sovereign grace of God was at work.

In addition to being "a ruler of the Jews," our Lord called Nicodemus, according to John 3:10, "a master of Israel." This meant that he was a teacher. We could probably and very accurately call him *a doctor of Theology!* And yet it is very clear that at that time when he came to the Lord he was *an unregenerated doctor of theology!* The Lord's question to Nicodemus there in verse 10 indicates that Nicodemus was culpable. That is, that the doctrine of salvation was so clear even in the OT that Nicodemus was responsible for teaching false doctrine.

But perhaps even Nicodemus had had an uneasy feeling about what he had been teaching, and that may have been one of the reasons he came to our Lord.

Now let us turn to the text in John 3, and consider, first of all:

### **I. WHY NICODEMUS CAME TO CHRIST (John 3:1-2).**

There are many things that we can say by way of interpreting John 3:2. Everybody who has studied this passage seems to have an idea as to why Nicodemus came to the Lord "by night." Many say it was because he didn't want anyone to see him talking to the Lord. Others say that it was because the Lord would have been freer to talk at night when the crowds were not thronging around him. I have suggested that perhaps there was

some dissatisfaction in his own heart about what he had been teaching. By that I mean that he may have wondered why, when people were confronted with Scripture, they did not do what they were supposed to do according to the Law of Moses.

There probably is some element of truth in all of these explanations that I have mentioned, but it would be a great mistake for us to consider this passage of Scripture without applying a truth which our Lord expressed later in His ministry, a truth which is recorded for us in John 6:44. It is a truth which is in operation every time a person becomes sincerely interested in Christ and His teachings.

These are our Lord's words recorded for us in John 6:44:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

More than learning what Nicodemus did as we read John 3:1 and 2, *we are learning what God the Father was doing!* People go to church for various reasons. People even read the Bible for different reasons. *But no one can come to Christ with a sincere desire to know the truth, unless God the Father is drawing him, or her, to Christ. And there are no exceptions to this truth which the Lord stated according to John 6:44! There are absolutely none.* God had been working in Nicodemus' heart long before that night when he came to talk to the Lord Jesus. Nicodemus did not come "on his own." God had been dealing with him. God had made him dissatisfied with his own understanding of the truth. He was seeing that the Law does not change people's hearts, even children's hearts. He knew that there was something that he was not understanding about the scriptures upon which he was supposed to be an authority! Only God could have made him understand even that.

But I want you to see also the one thing that had been impressed upon his heart which made him seek out the Lord Jesus. (Read it in verse 2.)

In this present series we are considering "the glory of Christ." The glory of Christ is His Deity, and in particular His Deity manifested even after He became a Man. *Nicodemus was not prepared at this point to say that Jesus was God in human flesh, but he did say this:*

Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles [signs] that thou doest except God be with him.

By the use of the word “know” Nicodemus was indicating that he understood, he was sure, he was convinced, that the Lord was a teacher who had come from God. He was not prepared at this point to say that Jesus Christ was God, *but he had seen some of the first glimpses of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ!* Nicodemus had heard in the teaching of the Lord, and he had seen in the miracles of the Lord, that which convinced him that the Lord *had come from God!* This was further evidence that God was at work in his heart because multitudes had seen what Nicodemus had seen, and had heard the same teaching that Nicodemus had heard, but it had not moved them to consider at all *who* this person, *Jesus of Nazareth*, might be. This question had provoked questions and arguments from many, but with Nicodemus it was a firm conviction.

But let me point out something in this statement that may have gotten by you. It is this: Why did he say “we”? “We know that thou art a teacher come from God.”

We might just dismiss this as an “editorial we,” but there was no reason for him to speak that way to the Lord. The best interpretation that can be placed upon that we, the most natural interpretation, is that Nicodemus was speaking of himself and at least one other person. Perhaps this is the reason that the Apostle John linked together the names of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Both were Pharisees. Both were members of the Sanhedrin. Both hesitated to let it be known that they were attracted by the teachings and miracles of Christ.

I am not stating this as the truth behind that “we,” but I am suggesting that Nicodemus was there with the Lord that night, not only for himself, but that he was also there on behalf of Joseph who for some reason was not able to join him that night. Whatever the true explanation may be, if what I am suggesting is not the true one, it is interesting to see how God reached into the enemy’s camp, and drew out two of the outstanding Pharisees, and brought them to His Son! What these man had seen was not just that our Lord was another person like John the Baptist who had been “sent” from God, but they had caught the first glimpses of proof that would lead them later to a full faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God Who came to be the Savior of sinners! As I have said, others saw the same miracles, and heard the same teaching, but they did not see it the way Nicodemus and that other person heard and saw what the Lord was doing.

The miracles were *signs* (the better translation of what we have in our text as “miracles.” They were signs identifying the fact that Jesus was a unique Person, and Nicodemus wanted to hear more of His teaching. He did not come to be healed. He did not come to see the Lord perform another miracle. *He came to hear more of that wonderful teaching! And that is exactly what the Lord gave to him.*

## II. THE LORD’S RESPONSE TO NICODEMUS (John 3:3-21).

Now I do not have the time today to go into great detail in this passage as I would like to, but I do want to point out the main features of the Lord’s teaching for our own benefit.

Remember that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were teachers of the Law. But they evidently had seen plenty of proof that telling people what to do, was not enough. And maybe they had realized this in their own lives. God never indicated that the Law had the power to change hearts, that is, that people are changed and made acceptable to God by *doing!* And so the Lord told Nicodemus that what teachers and pupils alike needed was to be born again! However, the word that the Lord used here is the Greek word ἀνωθεν, which can mean “again,” but is better translated *from above*.

The same word is used in verse 31 of this chapter where we have a part of the message of John the Baptist. Speaking of our Lord, John said, “He that cometh from above is above all.” So what the Lord was seeking to get across to Nicodemus was that you can look all over the earth, listen to all the philosophies of men, observe their religions, see their good works, but you will never find in any of that the power that is needed to change the hearts of men. No man has that ability to do it for himself. And even the pure Law of Moses, although it was the Word of God, cannot change lives, cannot do away with the guilt of sin. Man needs to receive life from above, from God, and that life was not only preached by Christ, but it comes to sinners *from God, through Christ*.

Nicodemus wanted further clarification, and so we have his question in verse 4. (Read.)

Now I am sure that Nicodemus was a very intelligent man or he would not have had the position that he had. But what the Lord said really

— didn't make sense to him. He may have felt that his mission in coming to the Lord was not going to help him at all—hence, the question that he asked. He knew that nobody could enter his mother's womb again. What did the Lord mean?

Notice that it sounded like foolishness to Nicodemus, the Lord didn't change His message. He just proceeded to explain in greater detail. And He did so by making this message personal with Nicodemus.

It is through the water [the Word] and the Holy Spirit that this new birth takes place. The flesh will always be the flesh. It is incapable of being anything else. Reformation is impossible with human beings, and in verse 7 the Lord made it clear that he as a teacher needed to be born again just as much as his pupils needed a new birth.

But there is an even greater point. We learn from verse 7 that Nicodemus was definitely one of the elect. The Lord said, Ye, you Nicodemus, and the one you were talking about when you said, "We know." "Ye [plural] must be born again."

— And in verse 8 the Lord indicated to Nicodemus that there will always be questions that we cannot answer, nor power that we cannot control, just like the wind. We hear it, but we can't tell where it has been, or where it is going. So we never know where God will be pleased to open people's minds and hearts to the Gospel, but we can be sure that He will!

Nicodemus still did not understand, and so we have his question in verse 9. (Read.)

After very gently rebuking Nicodemus in verse 10, the Lord went on to declare what His message carried absolute authority. See His words in verses 11 through 13. The Lord said, "Verily, verily" in verse 3, again in verse 5, and now again in verse 11. The words of the Lord Jesus are the words which the Father sent Him to declare. They are absolute truth.

— And then the Lord gave Nicodemus a lesson from an event in the Old Testament which Nicodemus knew, but had not fully understood. And this was to bring home the simple truth of the Gospel. The serpent which Moses lifted up was a type of Christ Who came to become a curse for us that we might have life, eternal life, by simply looking in faith to Him.

And this brought the Lord to show to Nicodemus that salvation is not by obeying the Law of Moses, but by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law condemns, but Christ came to save.

From verse 18 we see that there is nothing that we have to do to be under the judgment of God. We are condemned already, and this is why we need a Savior.

In the last three verses of our text the Lord told Nicodemus that even though light had come into the world, all through the revelations of the OT, and finally in the coming of Christ, yet people still reject the truth *because they love their sins*. But there are those, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who come to the light, then their lives are changed, and they give evidence that God is doing His work in them.

**Concl:** I wish we had more time to go into the wonderful details of what our Lord said to Nicodemus, but perhaps we have seen enough to marvel once again at the truth of the Gospel. It was strong medicine for Nicodemus to take. It ran contrary to all that he had believed before, and all that he had taught. But he had come to the greatest Teacher of all, and there was power in the message he proclaimed. And we see how God was moving Nicodemus along in his understanding of the truth. It was a major step ahead in all that God was doing to bring His chosen servants to Himself, not through what they could do, but what God was doing in their hearts as He pointed them to His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Make sure that you understand because there is only one way of salvation. It is not through what we do for God, but through what God has done for us in Christ. It is not by our works, but by the faith that God Himself gives to us as we hear the precious Word of Truth.

It is in the light of Christ's glory that we see the light. Nicodemus had seen a little of Christ's glory. Through that the Father brought him to the Son where he saw the glory in an even greater way through the gracious words of truth which came from the Lord's mouth.

**HE WHO IS FROM ABOVE**

John 3:25-36

**Intro:** The Gospel of John was written to reveal the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is clear from John 20:30-31. (Quote.) When I say that it was written to reveal the glory of Christ, I mean that the Apostle John wrote to show that Jesus Christ was full Deity in the flesh. The Lord's glory is His Deity regardless of whether we consider Him before His incarnation, or during His ministry here on earth, or now that He has returned to the Father in heaven. He set aside the use of many of His attributes while He was here on earth, nevertheless every single attribute was present in Him. Neither His conception as a human being nor His birth in any way changed His Deity. These are truths beyond what we can fully comprehend, but they are clearly taught in Scripture and are absolutely necessary if our Lord were to be able to save us from our sins. If He were not God, then we must conclude that He was a human being like we are, and He would need a Savior just like we do. In which case, there would be no salvation, no Gospel of grace to be preached to needy sinners.

I know I am repeating some of the truths that I have mentioned each week, but I want to make sure, as much as I can, that we all understand how important it is to believe in the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In chapters 1 and 2 of this Gospel of John, after the Apostle John Himself had declared that he had seen the glory of the Lord (see 1:14), no one gave greater testimony to the glory of Christ than did John the Baptist! He was the one God sent ahead of Christ to prepare the way for Christ. Not only did he preach that our Lord was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), but when he saw the Spirit descending on our Lord at the time when he baptized Jesus, he declared: "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34).

So nothing could be clearer than that John the Baptist believed that Jesus Christ was God in human flesh.

In the latter part of John 3 we come upon John the Baptist again. This begins with verse 25 and goes to the end of the chapter.

After we leave John 3 John the Baptist is mentioned briefly in John 4:1,

then in a couple of verses in John 5, and finally in the latter part of John 10. In the latter part of John 10 we find that the Lord was engaged in a controversy with the Jewish leaders because He had claimed that He was the Son of God. Beginning with John 10:39 we read this report which begins with what the Jews wanted to do with our Lord:

39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,

40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.

42 And many believed on him there (John 10:39-42).

This was undoubtedly years after John the Baptist had been beheaded, but those who had heard his testimony about the Lord, were convinced later that his testimony about the Deity of our Lord, was true.

To get the full content of what is recorded about the teaching and preaching of John the Baptist, we would have to go to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as to John's Gospel, but I will confine myself today to what is recorded here in the latter part of John 3. And I will divide these verses into four parts:

- 1) John the Baptist and his disciples (John 3:25-27).
- 2) John the Baptist and Jesus Christ (John 3:28-30).
- 3) Jesus Christ and God the Father (John 3:31-35).
- 4) Believers and Unbelievers (John 3:36).

This portion of John's Gospel begins with:

### **I. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND HIS DISCIPLES (John 3:25-27).**

We do not have all the details that we might like to have about the way in which the Jewish leaders had taunted John the Baptist's disciples concerning the growing influence of the ministry of Jesus. And it was perhaps with some jealousy and zeal for their leader that the disciples of John came asking why, at that time, more people were going to the Lord than were coming to them. After all, the ministry of John the Baptist had attracted more attention than anybody for the past several hundred years! His disciples wanted to see that ministry grow, not diminish. And yet they could not deny that what the Jews were saying, was true.



John the Baptist understood Who the Lord was, that He was the Son of God, and so he was seeking to get his disciples to see that what was happening to his own ministry as compared with the Lord's ministry, was evidence that God was at work. John the Baptist did not look upon himself and the Lord as in competition with each other, but both of God, and yet of one succeeding and replacing the other.

I am sure that John the Baptist would not have said what he did about some false teacher. Then he would have said, as the farmer in the parable, "An enemy hath done this" (Matt. 13:28). But John the Baptist knew what his ministry was, and Who the Lord was and what He had come to do, so he saw in all of this a fulfillment of the plans and purposes of God! This is a good example of the sovereignty of God. And yet we must realize that it took a full measure of the grace of God to respond to his disciples as he did. John the Baptist saw the hand of God in all that was taking place in Israel at that time.

Now when I have indicated in the outline that I have given you, that these first three verses had to do with John the Baptist and his disciples, I do not mean to exclude his disciples from the rest of the chapter. The whole remaining part of the chapter, from verse 28 to verse 36 records how John the Baptist explained to his disciples what was taking place before their eyes.

The next part of John the Baptist's ministry to his disciples had to do with:

## **II. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS CHRIST (John 3:28-30).**

Often the full impact of what we have been taught does not really hit us until what we have been doing seems to be threatened. I am sure that the staff and the people of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia have had a hard time understanding why their Pastor, in the midst of a very fruitful ministry, should be taken from them. We don't always have the answer, but we know that God has His sovereign purposes, and Dr. Boice realized that truth, and rested upon it.

So John the Baptist reminded his disciples that they had heard him say many times that he was not the Christ, he was not the Messiah, but that he was "sent" to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

— And he took an illustration from every day life in those days to portray for them his relationship with the Lord. He wasn't the bridegroom, nor was he the bride. He was "the friend of the bridegroom" who was in charge of arranging the wedding. John the Baptist was like the ruler or governor of the feast whom we learned about in John 2. And it was always a time of joy as well as relief when the ruler of the feast heard the voice of the bridegroom, and knew that the bridegroom had come. So instead of being sad, or jealous, John the Baptist was rejoicing in what was taking place. In fact, *his joy was full!*

And then John the Baptist clearly told his disciples, referring to the Lord and to himself, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

— In this statement the "He" and the "I" are emphatic. The "must" is a word we have noticed before many times in our study of the Word. The Greek text actually says, *He must increase, but I decrease*. And the verb "must" indicates something that is absolutely necessary because it is what God has appointed shall be done. It could not be otherwise, and John the Baptist knew it. The Lord's influence would grow greater and greater, while John the Baptist's would grow less and less.

— There is a sense in which this ought to be the life motto of every child of God. We are not here to exalt ourselves, but to exalt our Lord. The most effective message is one in which people go away talking about the Lord, and not about the preacher. This is God's will for every pastor, every Christian, every church. And we are to start with seeing the Lord appear greater and greater in the eyes of men, while we stand aside, happy that the focus is upon Him.

At this point John the Baptist went on to speak about:

### **III. JESUS CHRIST AND GOD THE FATHER (John 3:31-35).**

This is the section where we see the glory of our Lord.

— "He that cometh from above is above all." You cannot describe the origin of any of us with words like this. This is even different from the way that the Apostle John described the coming of John the Baptist in chapter 1 where he said, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John" (John 1:6). We know who John's father was – Zacharias. And we know

who his mother was – Elisabeth. We know who our Lord’s mother was – the virgin Mary. But we also know that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Our Lord had no human father. So to say that our Lord “cometh from above” was meant to indicate His Deity, and as such He “is above all.” As I mentioned to you last week “above” is the same word in the Greek that our Lord used with Nicodemus when He said, “Ye must be born again” – from above!

“Above all” is a different word, and it speaks of the superior place that He holds over all, one of absolute sovereignty, an attribute which belongs only to One Who is God! ***John the Baptist was here declaring the glory of Christ to his disciples as he doubtless had done many times before.***

John and all of the rest of us are “earthly.” This was not to minimize the importance of John’s ministry, but to emphasize the difference between us and the Lord. Our knowledge is in part, very limited at best. The Lord’s knowledge is unlimited and infallible.

Bishop Ryle in his commentary on the Gospel of John makes a very interesting comment on this verse:

The difficulty that some see in John the Baptist calling his own ministry “earthly,” is quite needlessly raised. It is evident that he calls it so “comparatively.” Compared to the teaching of Scribes and Pharisees, it was not earthly, but heavenly. Compared to the teaching of Him Who came from heaven, it was earthly. A candle compared to darkness is light, but the same candle compared to the sun is a poor dim spark (I, 184).

Verse 32 continues to emphasize the glory of Christ. Christ knows what no mere man could possibly know. And what he has “seen and heard, the equivalent of knowing, “He testifieth.” Not even Solomon spoke with the knowledge and wisdom which people heard from the mouth of the Lord Jesus. How thankful we should be for His words. I like Bibles that have the words of our Lord in red letters. That helps us to remember how important, extremely important His words were, and still are! They are words we never need to doubt. He always spoke the truth, and the truth has been preserved for us.

But the amazing fact is that comparatively, “no man receiveth His testimony.” As the Apostle Paul said,

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

But verse 33 tells us that some have received His testimony. I have. And you have. And many others have. But it is not because we are smarter than other people, it is because “God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:10). What God has revealed in His Word, He has also made known to us in our hearts. And so in receiving the truth, we have placed our seal (so to speak) along with that of John the Baptist that the words of the Lord Jesus are the truth.

Verse 34 tells us why the words of the Lord Jesus are so important. It is because He has spoken the words of God. There have been other prophets, but they were all limited in what they had to say, limited to what God revealed to them. But no such limitation was placed upon the Lord Jesus because the Holy Spirit was upon Him in full measure.

I am aware that the words “unto Him” are not in the original text, but it seems from the context that there is no doubt but that it was about our Lord that John the Baptist was speaking here. And the evidence is overwhelming among those who have written on this passage that John was speaking of Christ – so obvious that the Holy Spirit did not deem it necessary to put the words in the text.

And so in verse 35 we see the intimate relationship between the Father and the Son. “The Father loveth the Son.” Attempting to describe the love that the Father has for His Son, is like attempting to measure that which is immeasurable. Ryle said that it “is a subject too deep for man to fathom” (I, 188). It is the love which was behind those times when the Father spoke from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). He said it at His baptism; He said it again at His transfiguration. The Lord referred to this in His high priestly prayer: “Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

And the Father loves His Son to such a degree that He has committed all judgment into His hands. See John 5:22. Again as our Lord said in His great prayer found in John 17, “As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him”

(John 17:2). All that pertains to the salvation of sinners, as well as to the judgment of those who do not believe in Christ, is in the hands of the Lord. By His death He justified, sanctified, and will ultimately glorify those whom the Father gave to Him. And He ultimately will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The affairs of all of our souls, is in the hands of our Lord. If He did not keep us, we should all be lost. But He is ever faithful and will, as the Apostle Paul said, keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day. See 2 Tim. 1:12.

But to think that God's love for His own is so great that He gave that one and only beloved Son, that we might live through Him, tells how much His love is also focused upon us.

Finally, John the Baptist concluded by telling his disciples the truth about salvation.

#### **IV. BELIEVERS AND THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE (John 3:36).**

There are various ways that human beings can be divided: men and women, children and adults, the various colors of our skins, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, and so on. But the division that far outweighs all others in importance is the division between those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who do not believe in Him. And it has been decreed by God, and fully supported by Christ and by the Holy Spirit, that those who are trusting in Christ have everlasting life; those who have not trusted in Him "shall not see life," that is, eternal life, "but the wrath of God abideth on" them.

You see, it doesn't make any difference what we think unless our thinking is in harmony with the Word of God. All other religions are false. There is only one Savior. The eternal fate of every person who has ever lived is in the hands of our Creator and Lord. There would be no salvation at all for anyone if Jesus Christ had not offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice for sinners when He suffered and died on the Cross. If you buy the idea that each of us can decide for ourselves what is true and what is not true, then you are going to find out what Solomon said twice in the book of Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25:

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

**Concl:** A few moments ago I read to you that no man received Christ's testimony. But then right after that we read that there were those who did receive His testimony. And that those who received our Lord's testimony were confirming by their action that Christ's testimony was true. No person has the ability to understand the truth of God, that all are sinners, that all are under the wrath of God, and that those who continue on without Christ will ultimately fall under the terrible and eternal judgment of God from which there will be no escape.

Every person here today has heard this truth. If God is gracious to you, you have understood what you have heard, and perhaps you have already believed. You have put your trust in the Savior.

I would not be speaking the truth to you if I said there is more than one way to be saved from the judgment of God. I would not be telling you the truth if I told you there were even two ways. The truth of God is that there is only one way, only one Savior, and His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ. No one else could possibly save us because everybody else needs to be saved. But Jesus Christ was not a sinner; He became a man, but He did not become a sinner. And because He was without sin, He as a Man qualified to die for human sinners. He didn't die for angels. He didn't die for dogs and cats. He died for people, those who were originally made in the image of God. And that promise is, a promise that will never be revoked, that "whosoever believeth in Him," the Lord Jesus Christ, should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

What do you need to do to be lost? NOTHING!!! But if you sincerely put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, believing that He did everything necessary for your salvation, without any help at all from you, you can be saved – saved right now, and saved for all eternity! If you aren't trusting in Christ, I pray that the Lord will grant you the faith today so that you can be saved.

What greater glory could possibly be given to Christ than that which God has given to Him in salvation? Those who believe in Him for salvation, are saved. Those who do not believe are abiding under the wrath of God. May God Himself enable you to trust Christ now.