

God's Message to Us in John 1-12

Halifax, NS

3 February 2019, 2:00 PM

Introduction

Today we come to the fourth gospel in our sermon series going through the books of the Bible.

- The gospel of John is the fourth gospel.

Like the other three gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it reveals to us by divine inspiration the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- However, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the synoptic gospels because of their similarity to each other, while John is different.
- The synoptic gospels each have their own unique emphasis, but they pretty much cover the same ground.
 - John has many accounts and discourses that are not in the synoptic gospels, and they have many that are not in John.
 - One of the reasons for this is that John centers much of his focus on what Jesus did when He was in Jerusalem while the synoptic gospels focus more on His ministry in Galilee,
 - though, of course, they *all* focus on Christ's death, burial, resurrection at Jerusalem.
 - Yet, it is only in John that we have the discourse in the upper room... the words covering the five chapters of John 13-17 that Jesus spoke to His disciples after the passover supper in the upper room.

Some of the other unique features we find in John are very much related to his purpose.

- John's purpose is clearly expressed in chapter 20, the second to last chapter of John, where he says:
 - **John 20:30-31: And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**
- John definitely has that as his focus all the way through his gospel.
 - For that reason, he often refers to the testimony of God, to the testimony of people that Jesus healed, or to his own testimony.
 - For example, at the end of the book he says, in John 21:24: **This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.**"
 - And related to this is much talk about *believing*—not just having faith, but actively believing on Jesus...
 - And he talks about light, and truth, and eternal life.
 - He refers to miracles as *signs* that show who Jesus is.
 - He talks about the *authority* of Jesus and His words.
 - He speaks of the new birth and of Holy Spirit who enables us to believe.
 - He stresses that Jesus is the eternal Son of God and points often to that.
 - And he includes a lot of individual personal responses of faith.

- Everything focuses on believing that Jesus is the Christ, and having life by Him.
- So we see from this that John's Gospel is a good one to direct unbelievers to.
 - But realise that it is also excellent for those who do believe that we might strengthen our faith.
 - As believers, we can never get enough of looking at all that Christ is to us as our Lord and Saviour, and John presents Him to us as the object of our faith on almost every page.
 - If we have the Holy Spirit, we will be greatly enriched with a fuller richer embrace of Christ every time we read this wonderful gospel.

Let's take a walk through John so that we will believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing, we will have life in His name.

- Today, we will look at the first twelve chapters, and next week we will do the other nine, if the Lord wills.

I. In the first chapter, John presents Jesus as the Son of God.

A. He opens with the sublime declaration that He is *the Word made flesh*.

1. Mark simply asserted that He is the Son of God, but John fully explains it.
 - a. He says that He was with God in the beginning.
 - **John 1:1-2: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.**
 - b. But not just that He was with God, but also was Himself God.
 - You see at the end of verse 1 how it says "**the Word was God.**"
 - There is no article here, as in when we say "the house was brick"—not a brick or the brick, but that brick was what it was.
 - He was (and of course, always was, always is, and always shall be) God!
 - This is what was saw at the end that John said he writes for us to believe... that Jesus is the Son of God.
 - c. John also tells us that He is the source of all things created, of all life, and of light.
 - Verse 3 & 4 say: **All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**
 - *All things* refers to everything from trees to dogs to galaxies.
 - *Life* refers to animation, things that have a spirit: conscious life.
 - *Light* refers to all perception—the ability to know, perceive, understand.
 - He is the origin and the source of all.
2. John tells us that though this was so,
 - we who are in the world were in darkness and did not know Him.
 - Verse 5: **And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**
 - Even though John the baptiser testified of Him...

- Still, even His own people (the Jews) did not receive Him... none of them except for those who were born of God—brought to spiritual life by the power of God.
 - Verses 10-13 explain: **He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**
 - John is making a point here that is central to his concern about believing...
 - That all of us—even the Jews to whom He came—are by nature in the darkness and unable to see Christ...
 - But that God causes some to be born out of their natural state of spiritual death into spiritual life
- They see Jesus as God who became flesh... God incarnate—becoming man.
- 3. He explains that He became flesh and dwelt among us in verses 14-18.
 - He states the plain fact of it in very clear terms in verse 14:
 - **And the Word became 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.**
 - This one is the one who was the eternal Son of the Father—who was with God and was Himself God, now made flesh.
 - He who was pure spirit, became flesh to dwell among us, and those who are born again see Him as God the Son in flesh, and they see that He is full of grace and truth.
 - Moses (verse 17 says), gave us law—showing us what God requires of us;
 - but the Word, the Son of God, came with grace and truth, to actually bring us all that the law requires of us as fallen sinners.
 - He came to bring us life as those who were dead in trespasses and sins.
 - Again, as verse 12 says, **“as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:”**
 - He is the marvellous source of eternal salvation and life for all who believe, restoring us to the Father as His children.
- B. John goes on to show us how John the baptiser testified of Him.
 1. John is concerned all the way through with valid testimony—that we may read of these testimonies and believe.
 - John the baptiser was the voice crying in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the LORD (Yahweh)”
 - He called the people to prepare for the LORD Himself, to prepare for this one John calls the Word who was with God and who was God and who became flesh and dwelt among us to bring us grace and truth.
 2. John the baptiser even describes Him in verse 29 as **“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”**

- Everyone knew of all the lambs that were slain in Jerusalem to portray atonement for sin—the death of the innocent in place of the guilty.
 - But with this statement, John shows that all of those sacrifices find their true fulfillment in this one who came with grace and truth.
 - John uses truth this way a lot—when he says that grace and truth came through Jesus, by *truth* he means not that Moses was false, but that Moses only appointed symbols of atonement while Christ was the true atonement.
 - The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
 - He actually gives us what God requires for us to become God’s sons through faith.
- C. After this, John tells of how various of Jesus’ disciples, such as Andrew and Peter, as well as Philip and Nathanael, received John’s testimony about Jesus...
- They came to Him and followed Him and confessed that He was Christ and that He was the Son of God.
 - In verse 41, Andrew tells Simon Peter, **“We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ)”**
 - And in verse 49, Nathanael says, **“You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”** when Jesus testifies that He saw him under the fig tree where he was probably saying his prayers.
 - Jesus asserts that Nathanael will see much greater things than that...
 - In John 1:51, He says: **And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”**
 - In other words, Jesus is the one who opens the way between us and heaven. He is the link between us and God.
 - As the Son of God made flesh, He connects us to all the blessings of life and light and love that come from God to us when we believe.
 - This, again, is the theme of the gospel of John—that when we believe on the Son of God, we obtain eternal life—we are united with the Father by Him.

TRANS> This brings us to the next section of John.

II. John shows us in chapters 2-5 that Jesus is the Son of God who is the source of eternal life for all who believe.

- A. In chapter 2, the first sign that He is the-Son-of-God-who-is-here-for-us is given...Jesus turns the water to wine.
1. John describes this as the first sign that He does.
 - Surely it is a picture of Him giving us what is needed.
 - Wine was needed for the wedding and all they had was the water of purification...
 - But Jesus replaces the water of purification with that which was needed, wine, and the wine was more than acceptable.
 - He replaces ceremonies with real purification.
 2. Then Jesus goes to Jerusalem and exposes the corruption at the temple, driving out the money-changers that were there...

- And when questioned as to His authority to cleanse the temple, which He calls His Father’s house, He declares (v. 19) **“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”**
 - John informs us that He said this, speaking of His body—to be crucified and raised on the third day for the life of the world.
 - The old temple was full of defilement... He would take that defilement and be crucified, and then rise up bringing life to all who are in Him by faith.
- B. In chapter 3, He makes the marvellous claim that He will be lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness.
- This talk of being lifted up is a theme of John’s gospel.
1. In verse 13-15, He speaks of Himself as the Son of man and says: **“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”**
 - This refers to a story in the Old Testament when the people sinned and were bitten by vipers in the wilderness and were dying from the bites...
 - And God told Moses to put a brass serpent on a pole and instruct the people to look at it—and when they did, they were healed.
 - Jesus says here that He came down from heaven where no one had gone, to be lifted up so that whoever believes will not die in their sin...
 - Verse 16: **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”**
 2. Jesus was explaining this to respected teacher of the Jews named Nicodemus who came to Him by night, having seen His miracles.
 - Jesus had told him what we saw in chapter 1 about being born of God...
 - That the only ones who enter the kingdom of Christ are those who are born of God—born of the Holy Spirit—given life by Him so that they believer.
 - The chapter ends with the powerful words that (John 3:35-36): **“The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”**
- C. In chapter 4, Jesus makes the claim that He is the one who gives the living water.
1. He speaks here to a very different kind of person than Nicodemus: a Samaritan woman, who is surprised when He asks her for water since Jews usually had no dealing with Samaritans.
 - Jesus says, in 4:10: **“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”**
 - I have used a modified version of this verse to testify of Christ to unbelievers in the hospital before... “If you knew who Jesus is, you would ask Him and He would give you eternal life.”

- He goes on to explain in verse 14 that **“whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”**
 - Without Jesus, we are like an arid desert—there is no spiritual life in us at all—but Jesus has the water of life, even for a Samaritan woman who has lived with one man after another!
 - 2. The woman believes and tells her friends, and they come and see, and then say to her (verse 42): **“Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”**
 - They were born, not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- D. In chapter 5, Jesus makes the claim that He is equal to the Father.
1. He heals a man on the Sabbath who had an infirmity for 38 years, telling the man to take up his bed and walk.
 - This is a violation, not of God’s law, but of the man-made rabbinic law.
 - They accuse Jesus both for healing the man on the Sabbath and for having him carry his bed on the Sabbath.
 - Jesus responds in a way that infuriates them all the more because He responds in a way that directly asserts that He is equal with God.
 - **John 5:17: But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”**
 - Jesus is saying that He is one with God and that He and the Father do everything in concert because He is God’s Son.
 - They want to kill Him for making such a claim!
 2. But instead of backing down on the claim, Jesus only digs in deeper,
 - claiming that the Father has appointed Him (v. 22) to render final judgment to all people...something that only God is able to do.
 - and claiming that (v. 23) **all should honour the Son just as they honour the Father.**
 - He says that only those who hear His voice (the call of Jesus) and believe in Him will have eternal life (v. 25)... and also that **the hour is coming** (in the future) **in which v. 28-29: all who are in the graves will hear His voice²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.**
 - This is a huge claim—our relationship with Him determines whether we have eternal life or perish.
 3. He asserts that His claim is backed up by the testimony of John the baptiser and even more by the works that He is doing... like the healing of the man just now... and by His Father in heaven, and by the Scripture where Moses wrote of Him.

TRANS> So you see how Jesus is set forth as the Son of God who must be believed in for eternal life.

- This same theme continues in chapters 6-12, only now...

III. Jesus presents what He is to us under a number of different pictures.

A. In chapter 6, He says, “I am the bread of life.”

1. This claim comes in connection with the feeding of the 5000—the other gospels have this miracle, but John shows us in what way it was a sign...
 - Jesus is the bread of God which came down from heaven to give life to the world.
2. Jesus rebukes those who want to make Him king just because they feel that they can get what they want...
 - He tells them that they must come to Him and eat His flesh and drink His blood that they might have eternal life.
 - He is speaking the language of a sacrifice that is killed and then offered to God and shared with the worshippers.

B. In chapter 7, He presents Himself as the One who speaks heavenly truth and gives us the Holy Spirit.

1. He says that anyone who wants to do the will of the Father will learn that He speaks the truth.
 - **John 7:17: “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority*.”**
 - Those who truly seek will always end up recognising that Jesus speaks the truth.
2. And He promises that He will give the Holy Spirit to those who come to Him for life—using the symbol of water that was poured out on the last day of the feast.
 - **John 7:37-39: On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.**
 - What a wonderful promise—the Spirit lifts you out of yourself so you can serve others for Jesus’ sake.

C. In chapter 8, He presents Himself as the One who speaks truth as God, the Son of the Father, and was before Abraham.

- He accuses the Jews of rejecting Him because they are of their father the Devil who rejected the truth from the beginning and is the father of lies.
- They claim that they are Abraham’s seed and that God is their Father, but Jesus says not so because they seek to kill Him—a thing Abraham did not do.
 - They ask how He could know Abraham when He is not even yet fifty years old.
 - He replies, “Before Abraham was, I am.”
 - That is a claim of divine existence—that He was always there.

D. In chapter 9, He is claims to be the light of the world who gives sight to the blind.

- Here He heals a man who was born blind, and with that healing, He makes this great claim (v. 5): “**As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.**”

- And after the man acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus says: **“For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”**
 - He uses the giving of sight to tell us that He gives us spiritual sight so that we can know the truth.
 - We get so muddled about things, but in Jesus we see who we are, who He is as our Saviour, and who God is.
 - What a blessing to have our blind eyes opened by Jesus!
- E. In chapter 10, He claims to be the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and gathers them in to Him for eternal life, and then preserves them.
- What security it gives to all who believe to hear Jesus say this:
 - **John 10:14-16: “I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”**
 - And this: **John 10:27-28: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”**
 - You are not safe because of you... you are safe because Jesus is your shepherd. He keeps you and He will bring you to the Father.
- F. In chapter 11, He declares Himself to be the resurrection and the life so that those who believe in Him will never die.
- Once again, He uses a miracle as a sign to support this claim.
 - He raises a man named Lazarus who had been dead for four days so that his body was starting to decay.
 - And as He does this, He instructs us that (John 11:25-26): **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”**
 - He will raise up these mortal bodies and make them immortal.
 - What a Saviour He is to us!
 - There is every reason to believe Him—if you don’t, you will miss all that He came to give.
- G. In chapter 12, He claims to be the king who dies to give life to the world.
- He rides into Jerusalem as the king of peace (riding on a donkey instead of a war horse) and accepts worship despite the opposition of the Jewish authorities...
 - Then, He is told that there are Greeks who are looking for Him
 - His response is interesting...
 - He says (v. 23-24): **“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”**
 - He said this because until He died, there was no salvation for these Greeks and other people from nations outside of Israel.

- Such persons had to become Jews if they wanted to be saved because it was to the Jews that the promises had been made.
- But you see, when Jesus sees these Greeks already coming, it reminds Him that the time has now come for Him to die, like that grain He was talking about that is put into the ground and dies and then brings forth much grain.
 - In verse 32, He refers says, “**And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.**”
 - In other words, when He dies for sin, the nations will come and be saved.
- We who are Gentiles and not Jews are very glad that Jesus has been lifted up.
 - He is there in all the ways that have seen today for our salvation.

Conclusion (and transition): How beautifully Jesus is presented to us in the Gospel of John as the object of our faith... as the one who connects us to the Father in salvation.

- This book is just packed with reasons to believe and comforts for those who do.
 - In Christ, we have all that we need for eternal life.
- Of course the gospel of John does not stop here.
 - John goes on to show us in chapter 13-17, as we will see next week, how Jesus spoke to His disciples in the upper room.
 - In this section, Jesus speaks of how He will continue to look after them after He goes to be with the Father.
 - It is very relevant for us because it tells us how Jesus connects us to the Father now that He is no longer here among us.
 - John added this section that is not in the other gospels.
 - And in chapter 18-21, we have John’s record of what Jesus did to procure all of these blessings—His death, burial, and resurrection.
 - We will look forward to looking at these next week.
- We have already drunk from a firehose this week... seeing so much about our Saviour.
 - He is the Son of God.
 - He is the one who came with grace and truth.
 - He is the one to be believed in that we might have life through His name.
 - Let us praise the Father for Him.