

Jesus According to John
John 20:30-31
Series #1 – The Gospel According to John

Introduction: Take your Bible and join me in John chapter 20, the Gospel of John, chapter 20.

We have the awesome and holy privilege this morning to begin an extended study of the Gospel according to John. As we begin this study, we are going to start in chapter 20, because it is here, almost at the end of the book, that we find John's clear statement of purpose for the book. So, as we begin our study, I want to lay out before you the wonderful purpose of this book. John 20 – and let's start reading in verse 24 to give us some context. *Read 20:24-31.*

John's Gospel is filled with favorite passages and most-memorized verses. John 3:16 is one of the most recognizable verses of Scripture in all of society. And the interaction between Jesus and Nicodemus and Jesus and the Samaritan woman are rich treasure troves of truth. The book starts with a glorious exposition of deep theology – Jesus as the Word. And the book ends with a compassionate and corrective interaction between Jesus and Peter in which the chief apostle is called to return to his love for Jesus. And everything in between proves that this book is deeply theologically and warmly devotional. It has been said that in the waters of this Gospel an elephant can swim, and a child can wade. Its pages contain the words of truth which so often the Lord has used to call a soul to himself in saving faith. And its pages contain some of the most comforting words in all of Scripture – words that are often requested as saints face their last breath. In fact, as Sir Walter Scott was in his final hours he asked his friend, Mr. Lockhart, to read to him. Lockhart asked him what he should read, and Scott replied – “Do you have to ask? There is only one book.” So, Lockhart took up the book of John and read to him the fourteenth chapter, to which Scott responded after it was read, “Well, that is a great comfort.” And so it is! This is a tremendous book of Holy Scripture. And it is so because it puts before us the person and work of our Savior so that we may believe on his name!

But maybe you have wondered, why do we have four gospels? Why do we need four accounts of the life of Christ? And what's with John's Gospel? It is so very different from the other three. Isn't that a problem? Doesn't that prove that John went rogue and wasn't inspired by the Spirit? Isn't there a problem with John's Gospel then? Well, no, there isn't a problem with John's Gospel at all. It fits perfectly with the other three accounts, and each of the Gospels have a role to play in presenting Christ Jesus our Lord to us. Each of them are like puzzle pieces which interlock with one another and give us the full picture needed of our glorious Savior. So, what is John's place among the other Gospels then? And how does this help us understand the purpose of this Gospel?

I. The Place of John's Gospel

- a. Well, the place of the Gospel according to John is that it is indeed quite different from the other three Gospels. About 90% of John's content is unique to his Gospel. The other three Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke – are called the Synoptic Gospels. The word Synoptic comes from a Greek word meaning to see the whole together. So, the synoptic Gospels present the life of Christ in remarkably similar ways. They all follow the same general timeline of Jesus life, and they all include a lot of the same content. They are all unique in their presentation and in their emphasis on the life of Christ, but they are all very similar as well. And John is very different. He does not include an account of the birth or early years of the life of Jesus. He does not include a genealogy of Jesus. There are no narrative parables in John, no list of the twelve apostles, no narrative of Jesus casting out a demon. John does not include the account of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper, or of Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. But in John's Gospel, there is an emphasis on the truth about God and about Jesus as God's Son which undergirds all of the accounts given in the synoptics. We read of his discussion with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman. We read in John of Jesus' teaching about his nature as the great 'I Am.' And we are told more about the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel than in any of the other three.
- b. And all of this is for the divine purpose of completion. And where God intends completion, we dare not bring in competition. There is no problem between John's Gospel and the synoptic Gospels. And there is no problem between the three synoptics either, by the way. Each Gospel was inspired by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of the proclamation of Jesus the Christ. The three synoptics fill the requirement of the Law of Moses that for a truth to be established it has to be established on the basis of two or three eyewitnesses. Well, these three eyewitnesses agree at every turn about the details and the effect of Jesus of Nazareth. John's Gospel then, is the capstone work of the Holy Spirit in which we are given the deep theological explanations of what we read about in the synoptic Gospels. John Calvin said it this way, he said that it is like the three synoptics give us an account of Jesus' body and John's Gospel gives us the account of his soul, as it were.
- c. John wrote his gospel last, probably sometime after 80AD, some 50-70 years after the life of Christ. He wrote it from Ephesus, and he wrote it near the end of his own life. He wrote the book at a time when the church was facing the dueling heresies of denying Jesus' humanity or of denying Jesus' divinity. The question of Jesus' divinity and humanity had been well covered in the synoptic Gospels, but this Gospel puts the issue to rest. And when you combine it with the witness of the first three Gospels, there is an air-tight, undeniably true case for Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.
- d. So, think with me for a minute about the puzzle that is the 4 Gospels and how each piece interlocks with the others to give us this gloriously full picture of Jesus. To be clear – every one of the Gospels presents the full truth about Jesus – that He is God in the flesh, that he has come as the Savior of mankind through his righteous life and substitutionary death, that he is truly God and truly man, and

that his two natures – human and divine – give him the unique role of redeemer. But each of the Gospels has its own unique emphasis.

- e. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes Jesus as the King. Matthew presents Jesus to his mostly Jewish readers as one who was qualified to be king as the Son of David and who speaks with and acts out his authority as King over all, but who ultimately lays down that life for his subjects so that they might be ransomed from the enemy. This is why Matthew includes a genealogy right off the bat – because every king must show his rightful claim to the throne.
- f. Mark then presents Jesus as a servant of the Most High God. This does not minimize his deity or take away from his status as king in Matthew, but Mark wants his readers to know that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. This is why in Mark's Gospel, Jesus is always on the move. Mark's favorite word is "immediately" – which carries the narrative along in rapid fashion. This is to show Jesus as a servant hurriedly scurrying along from one task to another in service to the Most High God. This is why there is no genealogy in Mark's Gospel, because who cares to know the family hierarchy of a servant?
- g. Then as you turn the pages to Luke's Gospel you see the emphasis of Jesus as a man. Luke puts before us like no other, the humanity of our Lord – and who better to do this than a physician? He gives to us the human genealogy of our Lord as it relates to proving his humanity. He puts before us the human sufferings Jesus encountered and the compassion he had on the least and the lost. We see in Luke's Gospel Jesus, the Son of man.
- h. And then we turn to John's Gospel and we see Jesus put before us as the Son of God. Jesus is God in the flesh – as is so clearly presented in chapter 1. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Word came to reveal God to us and to reconcile men to God. This presentation of Jesus as God is why there is no genealogy of Jesus in John's Gospel – because there is no predecessor to God – He is the great I Am! John's Gospel contains the clearest and most easily understood claims of deity in Jesus' own words. You simply cannot read John's Gospel and think that Jesus did not at least think himself to be God. And, if you have the eyes of faith, you cannot read John's Gospel and miss that Jesus is truly God. These pages give irrefutable proof.
- i. And these gospels need one another. The synoptics need each other, in God's good design, to be the full witnesses of Christ that they are intended to be. And John's Gospel needs the synoptics and the synoptics need John. They are pieces of the same puzzle, which when put together, put before us the whole masterpiece of our exalted Lord. Let me give you two examples of how the gospels need each other, just to help you understand the place of John in relation to the synoptics.
 - i. As you read through the synoptic Gospels you read of the very abrupt calling of the twelve disciples and you are left wondering why it is that they so willingly followed this man they had presumably just met. But then you turn to John 1 and you read of this prior relationship that many

of them had with Jesus and it starts to make sense how things developed into them leaving all and following him. They both need each other.

- ii. As you read through the Gospel of John you will find no accounts of exorcism. John doesn't record any of Jesus' interactions with demon possessed people. But as you read the synoptics, you find this kind of interaction every couple of pages. Is this just a flaw of John's? Maybe it is something he just didn't think was important to include for his purpose in writing the Gospel? Well, there is a deeper answer. As you read John's Gospel you get a clear picture, from the very first chapter, about the conflict between good and evil, light and darkness. Through the words of Jesus, he presents to us the theology of evil – he presents Satan to us as the father of lies and as a murderer. He shows through Jesus' interactions with the religious leaders how Satan has infiltrated and infected their thinking and used them to cause distortion and deception among the Jews. So, John is explaining to us what the synoptics put on display for us. It's a beautiful thing really – a well-designed plan by our all-wise God.

II. The Purpose of John's Gospel

- a. Let's think next about the purpose of John's Gospel – and that's what we so clearly see spelled out in our text – John 20:30-31. Of all the four Gospels, John is the only one who gives us such a clear statement of purpose, which is why I thought it was right to start here in our series. If we understand the purpose statement of this book, we will be given the right lenses to see every text we come to in the book.
- b. *Refined Purpose – 30-31a*
 - i. John tells us that this is a refined purpose that is compelling him to write. He is not presenting to us a biography of the life of Jesus. Which, by the way, none of the gospels do. A gospel is not a biography. And if they were biographies, they would be pretty poor ones wouldn't they? They are quite short with so very many details left out. But they are not a biography. They are a Gospel. They have a clear aim. There is a polemical purpose to this presentation of the life of Christ. It is arguing for the truth about Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.
 - ii. And John tells us in verse 30 that there were many other signs to choose from, but he intentionally chose just these signs that are given. John tells us in 21:25 that if everything about Jesus were told the whole world could not contain all the books that would need to be written. There is a rifled purpose to this gospel of John. He is zeroed in on the goal and the Spirit has directed and inspired him in what is most needful to make the case about the truth of who Jesus is.
- c. *Apologetic Purpose – 31b*
 - i. This refined purpose is also an apologetic purpose. By the end of the 1st Century, error was already having great affect on the church's doctrine about Christ. And so, John's gospel is written to make the case for the

truth about Jesus. Specifically, John sets out to prove that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God. By the Christ, he is speaking of the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament. The Promised One who would come as a Son of Abraham and as a Son of David. The Messiah who would overthrow all of Israel's enemies and under whose reign the Jews would have peace with God and with men. John is saying through this Gospel – Jesus is that Messiah.

- ii. But more than that, he is saying that Jesus is that Messiah who is also the Son of God. This was not common in 1st Century Jewish thinking. They didn't understand from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Messiah had to be God incarnate in order to accomplish all that was promised of the Messiah. So, John's gospel sets out to prove that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, and namely, that he is the Son of God. He is God. He is One with the Father. He is the second member of the Trinity who has come in human flesh. John is out to prove that to be true in this very gospel.
- iii. One of key ways in which John shows us this undeniable deity of Jesus is to put before us 7 signs and 7 statements by Jesus about his nature as the great 'I Am.' And this goes back to the laser focus that John has in this gospel. Of the innumerable amount of signs available to John from the life of Jesus, he chooses just these 7. And he combines them with discourses from the life of Jesus in which Jesus makes clear statements about his identity. And all of this is apologetic in nature – to convince the reader that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the very Son of God. We will look at each of these as we work through the gospel, but just consider them in flyover fashion for a minute.
 1. 2:1-11 – Jesus turns water into wine – shows that a new age has come with Jesus. The old ways are replaced by the new as Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee.
 2. 4:46-54 – Jesus heals the Official's son – displays the truth that salvation will be by faith alone in Christ alone.
 3. 5:1-9 – Jesus heals the paralytic man in Jerusalem – shows that Jesus is greater than Moses as he heals on the Sabbath, and it shows that Christ alone has power to heal the broken body and the broken soul.
 4. 6:1-16 – Jesus feeds the 5,000 near the Sea of Galilee – proves that Jesus is the Great Provider and is Himself the very Bread of life. He is the Word that has been spoken, and he is the Bread which has been given.
 5. 6:16-21 – Jesus walks on water on the Sea of Galilee – shows that Jesus has power over all of his Creation which proves he is much more than a mere man.

6. 9:1-41 – Jesus heals the man born blind in Jerusalem – shows that Jesus alone can give physical and spiritual sight to those who are blind.
 7. 11:38-44 – Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead – proves that Jesus is the Resurrection and the life.
- iv. This unique combination of signs from Jesus' life leaves us without a doubt that Jesus is more than a mere man, and more than a good prophet and more than a great teacher. He must be the Christ, the very Son of God.
- d. *Evangelistic Purpose – 31c*
- i. But John's Gospel is not just apologetic in nature. John is not just trying to win an argument about the character and nature of our Lord. His aim is much higher. His aim is evangelistic. He is proclaiming these truths about Jesus so that everyone who reads these words may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John is making the case for Jesus as the Christ so that we would believe in Christ, and by believing in Christ we would have eternal life in Him.
 - ii. This statement comes at the end of chapter 20, in which we have been confronted with the Mt. Everest of Jesus' signs – his very own resurrection from the dead. The chapter recounts for us how the disciples saw the empty tomb and the resurrected Lord, and they believed. But there was one who was absent all the times the Lord had appeared to them and he refused to believe until he could see Jesus and touch his nail pierced hands and see his spear pierced side. And you know what happens next. Jesus appears to them again when Thomas is there and shows him his hands and his side and tells Thomas to believe in him. And Thomas responds – "My Lord and my God!" What he saw convinced him that what he had heard was true – that his crucified Master was now his resurrected Lord and therefore truly his God.
 - iii. And Jesus pronounces the second beatitude in the book – blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. This is followed immediately by John's purpose statement that he is writing so that we may believe and have life. In other words, for those of us who cannot see the resurrected Lord with our eyes, John has given us the account of his life so that we might know he is truly the one promised from Genesis to Malachi and that he is the Son of God – truly God and truly man.
 - iv. Notice that this belief has very specific content. Thomas does not just say – oh, now I believe. But rather he says, "My Lord and my God!" His belief was not in the Jesus of his own making, or of his own desires. His belief took Jesus in the fullness of what he was and submitted completely and joyfully to him. This is not a belief in the Jesus of your own making – the "Get me out of hell Jesus", or the "Love me on my terms Jesus", or the "Make my life the best it can be now Jesus", or the "Be there when I need

you Jesus”, or the “Heal all my illnesses and solve all my problems Jesus”, or the “Culturally cool and hip Jesus.” Rather, this is a settled belief in Jesus as he is! We must believe in Jesus, but we better know who we are believing in and what this belief looks like. This is much more than mere mental agreement about the ability of Jesus to save me. This is the wholehearted worship and full-life submission that is behind the statement of Thomas – My Lord and My God! This is a belief which encompasses the whole person as they are overwhelmed by the fullness of the truth about Jesus.

- v. This type of belief has been one of the main themes of John’s Gospel throughout. He uses the word for believe almost 100 times in these 21 chapters, which is almost twice as many times as the Synoptics use this word. And many of those uses are to tell the story of those who have believed in Jesus and have received life in his name. So, John does not just tell us to believe, but he gives us example after example to show us what belief in Jesus looks like. In chapter 1 he tells us about Nathanael’s belief. In chapter 4 it is the Samaritan village that believes. In chapter 9 it is the man who was born blind who believes in Jesus. In chapter 11 it is Martha who believes. In chapter 16 it is the disciples themselves. In chapter 20, John himself believes when he sees the empty tomb and the grave clothes folded up. And Thomas believes after seeing the resurrected Lord. In fact, you could say that the Gospel is a running narrative about the disciples developing faith in Jesus. They believe early on, but that faith grows and develops more and more throughout the book to the point that by the end of chapter 21 they are all in with Jesus. They are ready to give their lives and their all to proclaim the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God – and that belief in him is the only way to have eternal life. So, as you flip from John’s Gospel to the Acts of the Apostles, you find a different group of men in Acts 1 than you find in the early parts of John 20.
- vi. Just think of John himself. He was called by Mark one of the sons of thunder, with his brother James. In Mark 10 they were hungry for the prestige and power that could be theirs at the right and left hand of the Messiah in his kingdom. In Luke 9 they were ready to call down fire on a village who wouldn’t receive Jesus because he was headed to Jerusalem. In other words, John was an aggressive, arrogant, and volatile man. But then you turn to Acts and he is a completely different man. As you read John’s own Gospel – written near the end of his life – you see this overwhelming emphasis on the love of God and on our love for one another. As you read his epistles to the church you read of how we must love one another as evidence of our love for God. He is indeed the apostle of love. So, what changed? He truly and fully believed in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. And by believing, he had life in Jesus’ name. And this eternal life informed every aspect of his life in this world. He said by his life with Thomas – My Lord and My God!

- e. This is the power of the good news about Jesus. It is able to give true and lasting life by believing in His name! Do you know this Jesus in that way? Do you have life in his name? Can you say with Thomas, My Lord and my God?
- f. Two of John's disciples said and proved that with their lives. Ignatius was from Ephesus, the town in modern day Turkey where the Apostle John wrote this gospel from as a pastor in the church of Ephesus. He was discipled by John and sent out to pastor the church in Antioch. He was deeply concerned with the heresies that were infiltrating the church through the false teachers. And he was especially concerned about the denial of the humanity of Jesus that was happening. His message was consistent with John's – this Jesus was truly the Son of God in the flesh. He truly lived, he truly taught and performed many signs, he truly died and truly rose again – and by believing you can truly have life in his name. In 110 AD, Trajan was the Emperor of Rome and he demanded full worship of the deities of Rome, including himself. In one of his letters advising one of his governors how to handle the Christians he said, "If [Christians] are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it – that is, by worshiping our gods – even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance."¹ How ironic!
- g. Ignatius was arrested and whisked away to Rome for trial. He knew that this Jesus who had truly lived and truly interceded for him and truly died and truly rose again was there with him in that moment. He refused to repent of his belief in Jesus – and he became one of the first martyrs after the apostles because he agreed with Thomas about Jesus – My Lord and my God!
- h. The second prominent disciple of John's was Polycarp. After many faithful years of pastoral ministry in Smyrna he was declared to be an enemy of the state at the age of 86. As his persecutors demanded him to recant his faith he said, "For eighty-six years I have been his servant. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" On the day of his execution he was put in the amphitheater with other Christians who were to be martyred and he was given one last chance to turn on Jesus. He was told to turn to the Christians behind him and say, "Away with the atheists." The Christians were considered atheists in Rome because they wouldn't worship the gods of the State, and most specifically they wouldn't worship the emperor. In that moment, Polycarp turned to the great crowd in the amphitheater and stretched out his arm pointing up and down and the great mass of people gathered to watch their death and pointing to them all he said, "Away with the atheists." And so, Polycarp was martyred that day.
- i. In one of the accounts of his martyrdom it calls this a "day of victory" and it closes its account with these words, "Polycarp was arrested by Herod when Philip was high priest during the proconsulship of Statius Quadratus. But while Jesus Christ

¹ Stephen J. Nichols, *5 Minutes in Church History*, pg. 12

was reigning as King forever – To him be glory, honor, majesty, and the eternal throne, from generation to generation.”²

Conclusion: Is this the Jesus you know? Does your belief in him look like this?

² Ibid, pg. 15