

EXPOSITION OF JOHN (Introduction Part III)

Message #3

Various Texts

In this church there are presently well over 300 people, which is why we have two services - we do not have enough seats for everybody. Our plan and prayer is that one day we could build a new sanctuary that will be large enough to seat everyone at one service. Now suppose our building committee says, we want to build a new sanctuary just exactly like this one - same size, same seating capacity, same everything. We would begin to suspect the committee had burned out some major bulbs in their beans. We don't need the same thing, we need something new.

If you read the first three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, everything seems somewhat cohesive. They seem to be about the same. **But when you read John, everything seems so different**. That does not mean some themes do not crisscross. For example, in all of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), there are some things that are very clear about Jesus Christ: 1) Jesus was really human; 2) Jesus was really God; 3) Jesus was one Person - the God/man; 4) Jesus' divine and human natures were inseparable. You would pick up on this no matter what gospel you read.

In fact, when we analyze the four gospels we soon realize that there are many similar and parallel details given about Christ's life: **1)** He was born in Bethlehem (John 7:42; Matthew 2; Luke 2); **2)** He lived in Nazareth (John 1:46; Matthew 2:23; Luke 2:51); **3)** He lived in Capernaum (John 2:12; 4:17-24; Matthew 4:13; Mark 2:1; Luke 7:1); **4)** He was preceded by a forerunner (John 1; Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3); **5)** He was connected to Joseph & Mary (John 1:45; 2:1-12; 6:42; 7:3, 5; 19:25; Matthew 12:46; Mark 3:31; Luke 3:23); **6)** He died on a cross and was raised from the dead (Matthew 27-28; Mark 15-16; Luke 23-24; John 19-20).

But when we look carefully at the Gospel of John in a comparative way with the other Gospels, we also soon realize there are some major differences. John had copies of Matthew, Mark and Luke and he certainly knew what was in them and he purposely decides to leave some things out and add other things. **We must logically assume there would be major differences or John wouldn't have written a new gospel.** We may expect that John has a new purpose, and a new focus. He will add new aspects to Christ's Person and teaching. He will develop new dimensions.

It is clear when you read the gospel that this is precisely what John does. **1)** There is nothing in John's gospel about the birth of Christ, **2)** the baptism of Christ, **3)** the temptation of Christ, **4)** the transfiguration of Christ, **5)** the Lord's Supper, **6)** His agony in the Garden or **7)** His ascension. These were critical to other gospels but not to John. These kinds of observations cause us to realize John's purpose must be different in scope. He knew of these other events, in fact, he was at most of them, but for some inspired reason, he doesn't delve into them. He has his own unique inspired agenda. John doesn't focus on the birth of Christ because he will focus on His eternality. He does not focus on the Jewish Baptism of Christ because he is focused on the Church Age. He does not focus on the temptation of Christ because Christ is God and you cannot tempt God. He does not focus on the transfiguration of Christ because His whole gospel is designed to show Christ's glory. He does not focus on the Lord's Supper but he will zero in

on its special meaning. He does not focus on the agony in the garden, because John will show Christ's entire life was an agonizing war. God being rejected on earth was an agonizing experience from the Jordan to the Cross. He does not focus on the ascension of Christ because he had already written Revelation which displayed Him in all of His glory in heaven. He had personally seen the resurrected, ascended Christ in heaven so He doesn't discuss how and when He went there.

The Gospel of John is new, it is refreshing, it is big, it is different. We agree with Dr. Marcus Dods, if John didn't have something new to say about Christ, John "would not have written at all" (*The Gospel of Saint John*, p. 675). This gospel is so unique that we see the need to spend one more week introducing it. The uniqueness of the Gospel of John may be seen in many areas:

UNIQUE FEATURE #1 – The Gospel of John is unique in its names given to Jesus Christ.

In the four gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, there are a total of at least 46 amazing names and titles given to Jesus Christ. Many of the names and titles overlap. For example, Jesus is called "Jesus" in all gospels. Jesus is called "son" in all gospels. Jesus is called the "son of God" in all the gospels. Jesus is called "Christ" in all the gospels as well as "King", "Lord", "Teacher", "man" and "bridegroom." **However, when you come to the Gospel of John there are at least fifteen names and titles given to Jesus Christ that do not occur in any other gospel.** These specific names are majestic and superhuman. There is not another person in existence who will ever be given all of these names or who can measure up to what these names communicate. In fact, no normal man would ever dare speak of himself in these terms:

First of all the name "Jesus" shows up in John far more than in any other gospel. Jesus is used 142 times in Matthew, 77 times in Mark, 84 times in Luke, but 239 times in John. **The reason for this is because John wants to make certain all clearly know who he is pinpointing with these Divine titles. There can be no misunderstanding about this - the One is Jesus Christ !**

Title #1 - Jesus is called "God" only in John. 1:1; 5:18; 10:33; 20:28

Title #2 - Jesus is called "the only begotten" only in John. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18

Title #3 - Jesus is called "the truth" only in John. 14:6

Title #4 - Jesus is called "the way" only in John. 14:6

Title #5 - Jesus is called "the life" only in John. 11:25; 14:6

Title #6 - Jesus is called "the true vine" only in John. 15:1

Title #7 - Jesus is called "the Lamb" only in John. 1:29, 36

Title #8 - Jesus is called "the Word" only in John. 1:1, 14

Title #9 - Jesus is called "the bread" only in John. 6:35, 41, 48, 51

Title #10 - Jesus is called “the door ” only in John. 10:7, 9

Title #11 - Jesus is called “the I AM ” only in John. 4:26; 8:28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8

Title #12 - Jesus is called “the Savior of the world” only in John. 4:42

Title #13 - Jesus is called “the Messiah ” only in John. 1:41, 45

Title #14 - Jesus is called “the resurrection ” only in John. 11:25

Title #15 - Jesus is called “the Paraclete ” only in John. 14:16

These unique names and titles clearly are designed to show Jesus Christ is the only Divine, Superhuman God/man. He is the only Person, who can save sinners and give them a relationship with God. He is the only One who can give sinners life, light, comfort and meaning. The big question in John’s gospel concerning Jesus Christ is not whether He was human, but whether He was God. John clears this matter up just by the names He gives Jesus in his gospel.

UNIQUE FEATURE #2 – The Gospel of John is unique in its work given to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is presented in John as coming to this world to undertake a major work or task or assignment. Perhaps more than any other gospel writer, John really zeroes in on why Jesus Christ came into this world. It is true that we get clear glimpses of Christ’s purpose in the other gospels. For example,

- 1) Matthew 9:13 - “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”
- 2) Matthew 20:28 - “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served ... but to give His life a ransom for the many.”
- 3) Luke 19:10 - “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost.”

However, there is no gospel like the fourth gospel that reveals and reinforces Christ’s purpose time and time again. It is important to observe that the word used in John describing the “work” of Jesus Christ is *ergon* (εργον). This particular word emphasizes one’s task, one’s work or one’s employment assignment (G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, pp. 178-179). This word is only used one time in the other gospels referring to Christ’s work (Matthew 11:2) and in that context it is not used by Christ Himself. Typically in the other gospels the word that is used is *dunamis* (δυναμις), which emphasizes dynamic miraculous power. But in John this is the key word in regard to Christ’s work:

- 1) John 4:34 - “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work”
- 2) John 5:17 - “My Father is working until now and I Myself am working.”
- 3) John 5:36 - “... for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do ...”
- 4) John 6:29 - “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”
- 5) John 9:4 - “We must work the works of Him who sent Me ...”

- 6) John 10:25 - "... the works that I do in My father's name, these bear witness of Me."
- 7) John 10:32 - "I showed you many good works from the Father ..."
- 8) John 10:37 - "If I do not do the works of My Father do not believe Me."
- 9) John 10:38 - "... believe the works that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."
- 10) John 14:10 - "... but the Father abiding in Me does His works."
- 11) John 14:11 - "Believe Me ... on account of the works themselves."
- 12) John 14:12 - "... he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also ..."
- 13) John 15:24 - "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did ..."
- 14) John 17:4 - "I have glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do."

What John is revealing here is that everything Christ did and said was part of the work and plan of God, which would culminate with Him on the cross. God becoming man was a big work assignment. Everything Christ did was part of that Divine assignment. This was His job. He wasn't doing miracles just to do miracles. Miracles were not themselves an end, but were part of the big work picture of God so that people would identify Him and believe in Him and His cross-work. Christ had a unique work to do and He accomplished it all. As He, Himself said, he "accomplished the work" (John 17:4).

UNIQUE FEATURE #3 – The Gospel of John is unique in its discourses given by Jesus Christ.

One cannot read the gospels without noticing there is a major difference in John's gospel from Matthew, Mark or Luke. The difference is not just in expression, but in substance. In the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke), Christ's discourses are typically simple and direct, using parables and proverbs to make the point. Not so in John's gospel. John's gospel goes into deep theological truths without using one parable. Why? Grace Age growth demands a deep understanding of God's Word.

There are 12 deep theological discourses that show up in John that do not show up in the other gospels:

- 1) The discourse concerning the need for a New Spiritual Birth (John 3:1-21)
- 2) The discourse concerning the need to drink of the Water of Life (John 4:4-26)
- 3) The discourse concerning the need to believe in the One who can give life (John 5:19-47)
- 4) The discourse concerning the need to eat from the living Bread of Life (John 6:26-59)
- 5) The discourse concerning the need to believe in One presenting Divine Truth (John 7:14-29)
- 6) The discourse concerning the need to recognize the One who is the Light of the world (John 8:12-20)
- 7) The discourse concerning the need to believe Him or die in sin (John 8:21-30)
- 8) The discourse concerning the need for spiritual freedom through the Son (John 8:31-59)
- 9) The discourse concerning the need to know the true shepherd of God's flock (John 10:1-21)
- 10) The discourse concerning Christ's Oneness with His Father (John 10:22-38)
- 11) The discourse concerning Christ's Redemptive work for the world (John 12:20-36)
- 12) The discourse concerning Christ's future plan in view of His cross-work (John 13-17)

This final discourse, called the Upper Room discourse, is unparalleled in any other gospel. When Jesus actually gave this discourse, there were no New Testament Bibles in print and no New Testament churches in existence. This discourse is one of the most profound and deep discourses in all of Scripture.

Jesus Christ gives His Apostles a capsule form breakdown of Church Age doctrine and truth here. He covers topics such as the Rapture of the Church, the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age, the fruit bearing responsibility believers have, the warfare they are in and He gives new instruction concerning prayer. This discourse looks forward to the Church Age and to truth that would eventually show up in the Church Epistles. John is the only writer to have this focus. His discourse selection is totally unique and profoundly deep.

It stands to reason that since his is the only gospel to really be focused on the Church Age, it would be different and so it is.

UNIQUE FEATURE #4 – The Gospel of John is unique in its miracles performed by Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures do not tell us all of the miracles Christ did while on earth (John 20:30; 21:25). In fact, it has been observed by Dr. Scroggie that there are only 35 major miracles recorded in the gospels (*A Guide To the Gospels*, p. 553). Ada Habershon categorizes 36 (*The Study of Miracles*, pp. 276-277). In Matthew there are 20 recorded miracles. In Mark there are 18 recorded miracles. In Luke there are 20 recorded miracles. However in John there are only 8 miracles. **What this tells us, since John is writing for the Church Age, is that physical miracles will not be the key feature of the Church Age.** Seven of the eight miracles are before His death and six of them are only found in John's gospel. **One peculiar difference between John's selection of miracles is that often they are done to promote some theological instruction.** They are always done with a 'spiritual motive and meaning' (William Graham Scroggie, *A Guide To The Gospels*, p. 420). For example, the feeding of the 5,000 is a miracle recorded by all gospel writers - Matthew (14); Mark (6); Luke (9) and John (6:1-14). Matthew, Mark and Luke accurately record the miraculous event but only John mentions the response of the people (6:14), as the leftovers were being gathered. John saw the theological reason for the miracle - Christological identification.

In John, there are many unspecified miracles Jesus performed- 2:23; 3:2; 6:2; 7:31; 11:47; 12:37. Since John only selects eight and adds six new ones in his gospel, we know that these are carefully selected for a purpose. **The six miracles only found in John are:**

Johanine Miracle #1 - Jesus turns water into wine. John 2:1-11

Johanine Miracle #2 - Jesus heals the nobleman's son. John 4:46-54

Johanine Miracle #3 - Jesus heals the impotent man at Bethesda. John 5:1-9

Johanine Miracle #4 - Jesus gives sight to a man born blind. John 9:1-7

Johanine Miracle #5 - Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. John 11:17-44

Johanine Miracle #6 - Jesus orchestrates a huge catch of fish. John 21:1-14

The two miracles that John and other gospel writers record are:

Gospels Miracle #7 - Feeding of the five thousand. John 6:1-14; Mark 6; Matthew 14; Luke 9

Gospels Miracle #8 - Walking on the sea. John 6:16-21; Mark 6; Matthew 14

When Jesus referred to His miracles in John, He called them “signs” and “wonders.” In fact, the noun “sign” (σημειον) occurs some 17 times in John’s gospel - 2:11, 18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 20:30.

Miracles then were part of the work of God in which Jesus gave miraculous signs so people would come to understand and believe He was God. These miracles were signs that “manifested His glory” (John 2:11).

Every specific miracle that John records in his gospel is presented with this purpose in view. In fact, He purposely lets Lazarus die so He can display the “glory of God” concerning Himself so people would believe in Him (John 11:4, 11, 14-15). Ada Habershon, a daughter of a London pastor, who carefully studied Christ’s miracles and parables and earned the respect of men like Charles Haddon Spurgeon and D. L. Moody in the 1800s, said, “Since John’s Gospel reveals Him (Christ) as the Son of God and is written to prove His Deity, there must be some connection between the few miracles recorded in John’s Gospel with the truth of His Deity” (Ada Habershon, *The Study of the Miracles*, p. 193).

Miss Habershon is correct, there is a connection. Christ’s miracles were carefully selected by John, not just because they truly happened, but because John wanted people to know these miracles manifested the fact that Jesus Christ was the glorious God.

The Gospel of John is like no other you will ever study. You will see Jesus Christ in ways you have not fully seen Him before. This gospel will touch your heart and it will strengthen your faith.

The greatest miracle you will ever see is the miracle of what Jesus Christ will do in your life if you let Him into your life and let Him lead you in life.