

SERMON 1
JOHN 1:1-5

THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

We are beginning a study of the Gospel of John. Of course there are four gospels in the Bible; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew, Mark and Luke are very similar in many ways. They cover many of the same events and give us a very thorough view of those events from three different set of eyes. Matthew, Mark and Luke each give us a summary or a sketch of the Life of Jesus. But the gospel of John is quite different. John is not a comprehensive study of the life of Christ. John picks out events very selectively in order to prove that Jesus is the Son of God and that we should put our faith in Him.

The gospel of John is quite different than the other gospels. John does not talk about the parables of Jesus. He does not talk about the temptation of Jesus. He does not cover the astonishing miracle at the Mount of Transfiguration. He does not cover the inauguration of the Lord's Table. John does not discuss the baptism of Jesus although he alludes to it. John does not discuss the calling of the twelve disciples. So you can see that many of the events that are prominent in Matthew, Mark and Luke are not to be found in John.

Most of what you find in John is not found in Matthew, Mark and Luke. John covers the encounter with Nicodemus and with the woman at the well. Only in John do we find the resurrection of Lazarus. In John we find the long discourses with the Jews that are not found in Matthew, Mark and Luke. So, John is a unique gospel. And it is important because of its uniqueness.

There are 21 chapters in John's gospel. The last ten of those chapters cover the last week of Jesus' life. There are several chapters devoted to the night before his death. So, a large portion of John's gospel covers the very end of the life of Jesus.

The book of John does not detail all of Jesus' miracles. Only seven of his miracles are recorded in John's gospel. So you can see that John was very selective in discussing the miracles of Jesus. He selected miracles in order to teach something about Christ. He didn't just race through the life of Christ and tell us about all the miraculous things which he did. In fact, this would have been quite impossible because it appears that the works of Jesus were virtually innumerable.

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

John 20:30

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

John 21:25

Such is the greatness of Jesus.

The Purpose of the Gospel of John

The gospel of John was written with a very specific purpose in mind. It was written to serve as a foundation for faith in Jesus Christ. It was written specifically that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God.

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 20:31

You may remember that the book of Hebrews was a very good book setting forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ. That book showed point by point how Jesus Christ was superior to the Old Testament types found in Israel. And when we finished the book of Hebrews we couldn't help but have very high and lofty opinion of Jesus the Savior of the world.

And when we study this gospel of John, we are also going to see a very majestic Savior. The gospel of John is going to drill home the point over and over that Jesus is not just a human being, but he is also the Son of God. He is God who has come to visit us in the flesh. Obviously, the deity of Christ is the central message of the gospel.

Take a look at our key verse again.

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 20:31

In this verse, John tells us why he is writing the gospel. He is writing to show us that Jesus is the Christ. That is, Jesus is the One who was promised in the Old Testament. He is the deliverer. He is the fulfillment of that Jewish religion called Judaism. He is the One that it was all about. And in many ways, the gospel of John depicts Jesus as being the fulfillment of all those Old Testament figures.

1. You will remember that under the Old Covenant, the Jews had a temple. It was the central focus of their religion. Everyone came to the temple to worship. The priests served in the temple. All of the religious activity was in the temple. But look what Jesus said,

Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.

John 2:19-21

2. Under the Old Covenant they had a Table of Shewbread in the holy place. And the priests ate of the bread in order to sustain their lives. But look what John's gospel says.

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then they said unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

John 6:33-35

3. Under the Old Covenant there was a candlestick in the holy place. And it served for light so that the priests could perform their service in this enclosed room. And the candlestick was a type of Christ.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

John 1:4, 5

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 8:12

4. Under the Old Covenant there was an altar of incense. And they kept incense burning and the incense was a sweet smelling savor unto the Lord. The incense was a picture of intercession. It was prayers going up unto God. And when you come to John 17 you find that Jesus is the great intercessor. And in John 17 Jesus prayed and interceded for the disciples and then he interceded for all believers.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

John 17:20

And so, the book of John shows that Jesus is the Anointed One. He is the real Temple. He is the real Bread of life. He is the real Light of the world. He is the real Intercessor. He is the Christ to which all of those types pointed.

The book of John proclaims Jesus as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament passages that promised a wonderful deliverer.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

And John's gospel says, "This is that very One."

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

Back to John 20:31. So, these things were written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ. But you will also notice that John wrote these things so that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. John writes in order to show us that Jesus is God himself. Jesus is not merely a great prophet. He is not merely a teacher. He is not an angel. He is not God's highest created being. He is God himself. Jesus is not created. Jesus is the Creator. Jesus is one with the Father. He is coequal with the Father. To look at Jesus is to look at the Father. The works of Jesus are the works of the Father. The words of Jesus are the words of the Father. And this is the message of the gospel of John.

So John writes his gospel to convince us that Jesus is the Christ and Jesus is the Son of God. But also notice that John's purpose goes beyond mere intellectual knowledge of these facts. His goal is that we might believe.

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 20:31

When we finish our study of the book of John, if we receive it as we should, then our hearts should be filled with faith in this person, Jesus Christ. We should be willing to cast all of our confidence in him and him alone for salvation and blessing and eternal peace and joy. Jesus is the promised Christ. He is the Son of God. And as John will teach us, He is the "way, the truth and the life."

The Theme of the Gospel of John

The theme of the Book of John is the deity of Christ. In this gospel, as nowhere else in the Bible, the Godhead of Christ is presented and spelled out. In this Gospel we see the full unveiling of the divine glories of Christ Jesus our Saviour. In the very first verses of the Gospel we see Jesus dwelling with the Father before time began. And so, as we study this book, we should keep this theme in mind and we should always see the divinity that shines through the human veneer of Jesus.

Highlights in the Gospel of John

Of course, every word of Scripture is a highlight. Every word is important. But even in God's Word, it seems some of the words stand out from the others. And so, let me point out a few highlights of the Gospel of John.

1. The first two verses stand out as a majestic declaration of the deity of Jesus. These two verse declare the eternal existence of Jesus, his eternal fellowship with the Father, and his co-essence with the Father.
2. It is in John's Gospel that John the Baptist announces that Jesus is the "Son of God." (John 1:34)

3. It is John's Gospel that records the first public miracle of Jesus. (John 2:11)
4. It is John's Gospel that teaches about regeneration. (John 3:1-8; John 5:21)
5. It is John's Gospel that records the following great sermons and metaphors of Jesus:

I am the Bread of Life (John 6:22-59)

I am the Light of the World (John 8:12-20)

I am the Door (John 10:9)

I am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)

I am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25)

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)

I am the True Vine (John 15:1)

An Outline of the Gospel of John

I want to give you a little outline of the book of John just to give you a feel for the overall movement of the book.

I. Prologue (1:1-18)

In the Prologue, we have several very momentous truths set forth in very short order.

A. The eternal and divine nature of Jesus Christ. (1:1-5)

B. The forerunner of Jesus Christ. (1:6-8)

C. The incarnation of Jesus Christ (1:9-11)

D. The reception of Jesus Christ (1:11-18)

II. Christ's ministry to the nation of Israel (1:19-12:50)

You have to remember that Jesus never traveled to Asia Minor. He never went down into Egypt to preach. He didn't go east of the Jordan. But he preached in Israel. The gospel was later to go to the Gentiles in a big way after his death, but his earthly ministry was largely a ministry to the Jews. And so we have eleven chapters or so of his ministry to the nation of Israel.

III. Christ's Ministry to his Disciples before His Death (13:1-17:26)

IV. Christ's Ministry by His Death and Resurrection and Post Resurrection Instructions to His Disciples (18:1-21:25)

And now, let's begin our study of the text of the Gospel of John.

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

There can be no doubt in the Scriptures about the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is everywhere set forth and affirmed. And especially, it is clearly stated in the opening verses of John's Gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

Jesus Existed Before the Time of Creation

Our gospel starts off just like the book of Genesis. John says, "In the beginning." And when he says in the beginning, he is referring to the beginning of all things as we know them. He is referring to the creation of the world.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

So, the event which marked the beginning was creation. And you will notice here in our text that "In the beginning, was the Word." This very clearly suggests that Jesus already existed whenever the heavens and the earth were created. Jesus was not a created being. Jesus simply already existed at the time of creation.

Of course, this suggests that Jesus is eternal. He had no beginning. There was never a time when Jesus did not exist. Now, the human mind cannot conceive of such a thing. God has created us into a finite world and our perception is that all things have a beginning. And that is true. All things have a beginning; that is, all things except God. God is the everlasting One. He is from everlasting to everlasting. All things spring from Him, but He springs from nothing.

Now, the gospel of Matthew and the gospel of Luke trace the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew traces the human genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham. Luke traces the human genealogy back to Adam! (Luke 3:38) But John never gives a genealogy because John portrays Jesus not so much in his humanity, but in his divinity. Remember, John portrays Jesus as the Son of God. So, there is no genealogy of Jesus in John. There is no divine genealogy. Jesus always existed. He was never created. He always was God.

Jesus was a Separate Person from all Eternity

You will notice that it says,

And the Word was with God.

This teaches us that God has always existed with separate and distinct personalities. There was never a time when Jesus was just a thought or an idea in the mind of the Father. He was always a real Person who lived with God. There was eternal fellowship between the Father and the Son. And they were with each other. Of course, we also know from other passages that there is a third Person in the Godhead. There is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And each of these Persons are eternal Persons and each of them were with each other in eternity. That is why it says, “And the Word was with God.

Now this is quite a high honor, to be with God in eternity before the creation of the world. And that is what is said about Jesus in these first two phrases.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.

But unless there should be any confusion about the matter, John goes on to clarify that not only was Jesus existing at the time of creation; and not only was He with God before creation; but also he was God.

And the Word was God.

It would be a horrible error to conclude that Jesus was something less than God. It is not correct to conclude that Jesus was somewhat less than the Father. Jesus was not less than the Father. Jesus was God just as the Father was God. And the Jews knew exactly what Jesus was saying when he said,

I and the Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

John 10:30

The Bible teaches that there is one God and that there are three Persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All three of these Persons are God. In this verse, two of the Persons of the Godhead are mentioned. It is the first of many clear statements in this Gospel that Jesus Christ is God. It is not enough to say that Jesus is “a god,” or that Jesus is godlike. He is more than that. He is God.

Of course, our salvation depends on this great truth because we have offended God. Our sins are sins against God. Our trespasses are against the holiness of God. As sinners, we have waved our fists in God’s face. And we need a Savior who is both God and man. The fact that Jesus was God Himself makes his atonement of infinite value. It makes his atonement effective. Had salvation been possible by the death of an angel or some other created being, then I suppose He would have done so. But salvation was

not possible except that God should come and die Himself for the sins of his people. And therefore, the deity of Christ is a crucial element in the plan of salvation. It is not just a nice bit of trivia that Christ is God. It is vital to our salvation. And John lays the groundwork for salvation by declaring that the One who became incarnate and who eventually died on a cross was none other than God himself.

Jesus is the Creator

All things were made by Him.

Far from being a created Being himself, He was the Creator. And notice what it is that Jesus Christ created. He created *all things*. That is he created all of the elements. All matter was created by Him. Every atom and every molecule; every physical thing came from Him. This includes the earth, all the planets, the angels, all animals and mankind. Notice how forceful John is in asserting that Jesus created all things that were made.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:3

This verse suggests that if something was made, then it was made by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not a created thing, because all created things are made by Jesus Christ and without him was not any thing made that was made. This same idea is found in Colossians.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Colossians 1:16, 17

Jesus is the Source of Life

In him was life.

This is the very nature of God. God is alive. God is not merely a life principle. He is not the force of nature. He is not a moral principle. Rather, God is a living entity. And life is a part of His essence. Just as truth and justice and goodness and mercy and grace is a part of who He is, so life is an essential part of his essence.

And if anything in the world has life, it is because it came from Him. Life does not come from any other source. Life cannot be created in a test tube. Life doesn't generate itself from dead objects. Two rocks pressed against each other under extreme pressure for millions of years does not produce life. Life comes from one Person and that Person is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Source of Light

And the life was the light of men.

It is clear from this verse that Jesus not only conveyed life to men, but he also conveyed light. The type of life that Jesus conveyed to men, is somehow different from the life conveyed to the animals. Animals were given physical life. They have the ability to relate to the physical world.

Example: If my dog sees a squirrel run across the yard, she relates to that and she takes off like a bolt of lightning. If you put a bowl of food down, she relates to that. She likes to be petted. If you step on her, she yelps because she relates to the physical world. But one thing she will never do is look up into the heavens and appreciate the God who made her world. You won't ever see her kneel down and pray. You won't ever see her congregating with other dogs in the neighborhood and singing hymns to God.

You see, when God gave man life he gave man something extra, He gave man light. He gave man the light of spiritual awareness. He gave man the light of a conscience. He gave man the ability to relate to Him on a spiritual plane. He gave man an intellect that can appreciate God. And all of this light came from Jesus Christ.

Man is God's creative masterpiece. And when Christ made man he not only made man with a physical body to relate to the universe, but he also made him with a spiritual component which allows man to relate to God.

So, this wonderful knowledge of God, this moral awareness that we have, this barometer in our conscience, this innate understanding that we have that God is the Creator and we are the creature, this spiritual craving that is in all men to some degree, all of this is light that comes from the very life of Christ.

There is another sense in which Christ is the light of men. When he came at the incarnation, he came as the supreme example for mankind. It was like the sun rose in the morning and now we see how we should live. We should live like Him! Now we see. Now we see what grace and truth are all about. Now we see mercy and forgiveness. Now we see what it is like to be meek and mild. Now we see what it means to always do the will of the Father. And in this way Christ was the light of men.

The Reception of the Light

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

We are going to see in the next few verses and also in the balance of the book that in general there was not a positive reception to the coming of Christ into the world. This is the sense of verse five. The Light shined into the darkness, but the darkness received it not.

The darkness of course, represents the state of the world due to sin. The world was a deep, dark pit. Minds were darkened; eyes were blinded; ears were dull of hearing; hearts were unreceptive. And when Jesus came into the world, it was not a place that was receptive to the light.

- I. The world in general did not receive him. (v.10)
- II. The Jews did not receive him. (v.11)