

We come this morning to the final two verses of chapter 20, and to John's summary statement concerning the purpose of this fourth gospel. Thus, it's important to notice, verses 30-31 are a postscript to the whole book and are not to be limited to what has immediately preceded.

Why John adds this postscript at the end of chapter 20, and then continues to write chapter 21, has been a debated point. Personally, I think the best answer connects verses 30-31 to the confession of Thomas (v28). Having affirmed that Christ was his Lord and God, John then pauses to inform his readers, that this was the primary point of his book. That every person who reads his gospel, would also believe that Christ was their Lord and God.

Thus, there's a sense in which in Thomas's confession, we find a summary of John's entire purpose of writing his gospel. And it's for this reason, he pauses to underscore this fact to his readers, and then finishes his book with chapter 21.

And so, within verses 30-31, we not only find the purpose of John's gospel, but also the purpose of the entire Bible. Why did John write this fourth gospel? Why were any of the gospels written? "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."

- I. The Nature of Signs
- II. The Number of Signs
- III. The Purpose of Signs

I. The Nature of Signs

1. The Greek word rendered "sign" is also rendered "miracle" and "wonder"—it refers to a miraculous act that causes wonder and awe.
2. Thus, they are typically referred to as "signs" because they were intended to point to something else—a sign points to something.
3. What did Jesus' sign miracles point to? Well, I suggest they generally pointed to three things: (1) His compassion, (2) His commission, and (3) His redemption.
4. (1) His compassion—the sign miracles that our Savior performed, illustrated God's loving compassion for His creation.
5. Thus, when our Savior feed the multitudes, raised the dead, and healed the sick, these were all expressions of compassion.
6. The sign miracles were literal miracles that Jesus performed as expressions of His lovingness toward His creation.
7. They illustrated the great truth, that God is concerned with humanity, and especially with suffering humanity.
8. There is a sense in which, in every miracle performed, we have a glimpse into the heart of our gracious Creator.
9. (2) His commission—that is, our Savior sign miracles, proved His identity, as God's Son who came from heaven.
10. Jn.3:2—"Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these things that You do unless God is with him."
11. In other words—His miracles were intended to point to His divine commission—that He came down from heaven.
12. But, let us not be confused—His miracles didn't merely prove He was divinely commissioned, but He was divine.
13. Thus, one obvious reason or purpose behind the sign miracles was to point to Christ as God's anointed Messenger.
14. (3) His redemption—by this I mean, His sign miracles were illustrations or pictures of redemption from sin and Satan.

15. Every miracle He performed was a living parable or picture of salvation—it illustrated the need and nature of redemption.
16. For example, when He raised Lazarus from physical death, it pointed to our need of being raised from spiritual death.
17. When He changed water into wine, it pointed to the fact, that in Him and His NC, there is an abundance of grace.
18. And so, while every miracle was an actual miracle, they were also sermons of sorts, that taught spiritual truth.
19. They were physical miracles that illustrated spiritual truth—they each were a picture of redemption from sin and Satan.
20. And so, signs were miracles or acts of divine power, intended to point to Christ's compassion, commission, and redemption.

II. The Number of Signs

1. John says that Jesus' "did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but THESE are written."
2. In other words, John selected the miracles recorded in his book for a special reason—they were chosen out of many others.
3. Now, if you've been with us through our examination of John's gospel, you will know he recorded seven miracles.
4. The changing of water into wine (Jn.2); the healing of the royal official's son (Jn.4); the healing of the paralytic (Jn.5); the feeding of the 5000 (Jn.6); the walking on water (Jn.6); the healing of the blind man (Jn.9); the raising of Lazarus from the dead (Jn.11).
5. (1) These miracles were accompanied with related teaching—that is, the signs are illustrations of subsequent teaching.
6. Simply put brethren, the signs or miracles were never intended to explain themselves but were explained by related teaching.
7. For example, after our Savior fed the 5000 bread and fish, He then gave His discourse on Himself being the bread of life.
8. And after He raised Lazarus from the dead, He then taught about Himself as—"The Resurrection and the Life."
9. Thus, when John speaks about recording the signs, he doesn't intend to exclude our Savior's teaching and other actions.
10. He is simply saying, he intentionally selected these seven particular signs, and their teaching, for specific reasons.
11. (2) These miracles were crowned with the resurrection—this is the greatest sign and called that by our Savior Himself.
12. Matt.12:39—"An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."
13. That is, just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, so our Savior was three days in the belly of the earth.
14. And so, Jonah was a type of Christ, and especially of His resurrection—our Savior's resurrection was a sign pointing to His identity.
15. Brethren, no person can raise Himself from the dead unless He's God—the resurrection pointed to His true identity.
16. Thus, when John speaks about certain signs, we mustn't think he's excluding the greatest sign—His resurrection.
17. John is simply saying—I have selected these seven signs to prove a point, but they can never be separated from His teaching or His redemptive work.
18. In short, when John says—"but these are written"—he is not excluding the rest of what he wrote within this book.

19. In fact, there is a sense in which the seven miracles recorded, find their culmination in His death and resurrection.
20. For example, think of His first miracle (turning water into wine)—this pointed to the fact that in His death and resurrection He would begin a new and better covenant.
21. And when He raised Lazarus from the dead, He said—"I Am the resurrection and the Life"—they all pointed to these historical acts.
22. And so John selected these seven miracles, and their related teaching, to illustrate salvation and point to His crucifixion and resurrection.

III. The Purpose of Signs

1. V31—"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."
2. The fundamental purpose behind John's gospel, is that those who read it would believe it and have eternal life.
3. The Greek word rendered "believe" means "to believe something is true and to commit or entrust oneself to that truth."
4. Thus, to believe isn't merely to agree that certain things are true (it is that), but it also includes the idea of trust.
5. To really believe these truths, necessarily leads to a personal heartfelt commitment or trust in the Christ of the facts.
6. (1) What they should believe, v31—"these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."
7. (a) The Christ—this word literally means "the Anointed"—and it's applied to Him as the Mediator between God and man.
8. It's the NT Greek counterpart to the OT Hebrew Messiah, and thus the term Christ ties Jesus to the OT Scriptures.
9. Because in the OT, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed, the term Christ describes Jesus as the prophet, priest, and king of the NC.
10. In other words, within this term Christ (the Anointed One), is included all that He came to do as the Lord's Anointed One.
11. It includes His incarnation, perfect life, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—all that He does as prophet, priest, and king.
12. Christ is the fulfillment of all of the OT types and shadows—He is the final prophet, priest, and king of the NC.
13. As a result, it's rather easy to read through John's gospel and see Christ portrayed as God's prophet, priest, and king.
14. He is God's prophet, who comes from God to teach man, He is God's priest, who offers Himself to God on behalf of man, and He is God's king, who rules over man and creation.
15. This is what we must believe—we must believe that Jesus is the Christ—He is the Messiah—He is God's Anointed One.
16. (b) The Son of God—this title describes Christ as divine—He is not only the Christ, but God's eternally begotten Son.
17. My friends, one of the fundamental reasons why the Jews wanted Jesus dead was because He claimed to be God's Son.
18. Jn.5:18—"Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."
19. Jn.19:7—"The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.'"
20. My friends, the Jews understood what our Savior meant, when He spoke of Himself as God's only and unique Son.
21. They obviously did not believe it, but they understood what the claim entailed—to be the Son of God is to be God.

22. And thus, John wrote His gospel for the specific purpose, to highlight the true identity of Christ as God's Son.
23. (2) Why they should believe—"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."
24. By life is meant spiritual and eternal life—this life is found in His name—that is, in His person—life is found in Christ.
25. Perhaps the best definition of spiritual life I can give would be—to be restored to fellowship and communion with God.
26. This is true LIFE—to be reconciled to God, to walk with God, to love God, to serve God, and to know His love.
27. This life begins when you believe and continues throughout all eternity—and thus, it's often called "eternal life."
28. Now, this of course presupposes the fact that man by nature is spiritually dead—that is, he is separated from God.
29. While native man is alive to sin and to this world, he is dead with regards to fellowship and communion with God.
30. And the rather simple reason being—he is without Christ—since life is in Christ those without Christ are without life.
31. 1Jn.5:11-12—"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."
32. (3) Who should believe—here I want to answer the question—Who does John mean when he says—"but these are written that YOU may believe."
33. Well, there are basically two options, and I want to suggest that most likely both are intended—John wrote so that saints may believe the truth increasingly, and he wrote so that sinners would believe the truth savingly.
34. (a) John wrote his gospel so that saints may believe the truth increasingly—this is seen in the phrase "that you may believe."
35. It's possible to render the phrase "that you may continue to believe" or perhaps "that you may go on believing."
36. Understood in this way, John wrote his gospel for the purpose of strengthening Christians in their personal faith.
37. And there is little doubt that John wrote his gospel in order to combat false teaching that was spreading in his day.
38. Christians have need of evidence that confronts the errors of false teachers who would question the truths of Scripture.
39. John specifically recorded the events of his gospel to highlight the truth, that Jesus Christ is God's eternal Son.
40. He wanted to highlight the truth, that Jesus is the Christ, that He is Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world.
41. In short, John wanted to vindicate the truth that Christ is the GodMan, who came into the world to save sinners.
42. And brethren, this is merely intended to give us a defense against skeptics, but also against our remaining doubts.
43. 1Jn.5:13—"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."
44. John's purpose in writing his first epistle (1John), was to provide assurance that we in fact believed and that we would continue to believe.
45. Throughout John's letter he provides the evidences whereby we can examine ourselves to see whether we believe.
46. When a person believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, they will live in certain ways that show this belief.
47. As we examine ourselves and find these evidences, this encourages our hearts and in turn promotes further faith.

48. But dear brethren, surely we know, that another way to promote faith in our hearts is to read and read John's gospel.
49. (b) John wrote his gospel so that sinners may believe the truth savingly—I personally, believe this is the primary purpose.
50. John not only wrote his gospel for apologetic purposes, but foremostly and primary, for evangelistic purposes.
51. John's primary purpose in writing this book, was so that those who read and hear it, would believe and be saved.
52. Thus, Christians often encourage non-Christians to read through the gospel of John more than any other book.
53. Obs.1—The purpose of Scripture is to produce faith—God had the Scripture written, so that people would believe.
54. God desires that those who read or hear Scripture would believe it, and as they continue to hear, increasingly believe it.
55. This is why the Spirit enabled men to record the events of Jesus' life, miracles, teaching, death and resurrection.
56. My dear friends, no person can savingly believe without reading or hearing the written and holy word of God.
57. These two final verses of John 20, underscore the absolute necessity of the written word—"these are written that you may believe."
58. But, my main point here is a related truth—God had the Scripture written because He desires that those who hear it believe it.
59. Let me briefly remind you of the important theological distinction between God's secret and revealed will (desire).
60. God's secret (decretive) will, concerns His sovereign decree and entails everything that actually and finally happens.
61. Simply put—nothing actually happens except that which God, from eternity past, decreed or willing to take place.
62. And yet, there's also what we refer to as God's revealed will, and this concerns His will as made known in Scripture.
63. It is God's will or desire that every person who hears or reads Scripture believe it, obey it, love it, and share it.
64. Now this obviously says something to two groups of people—(1) it says something to those who preach His word.
65. What does this say to those who preach or share the word? It says, we should preach it with a desire that echo's God's desire.
66. V31—"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."
67. In other words, John wrote this book for the express purpose, that those who read or hear it would believe it.
68. In other words, John desired that sinners would be saved, and he desired that every sinner exposed to his book would be saved.
69. My dear friends, this is true of all the preachers within the Bible (OT and NT)—they preached that men would be saved.
70. But it also true of the greatest preachers throughout the history of the church—men such as Edwards, Whitefield and Spurgeon.
71. And yet, dear brethren, it was also true of the greatest preacher who ever lived, Jn.5:34—"I say these things that you may be saved."
72. (2) It says something to those who hear His word—simply put, God gave you His word so that you would believe it.
73. No sinner should ever question whether or not it's God will for them to believe on Christ and have eternal life.

74. Obs.2—The object of faith is the person and work of Christ—that is, the primary object of faith is Christ, the Son of God.
75. Faith derives no power from itself but only from its object—all faith has an object and all saving faith has Christ as its object.
76. Now, if this is so, we learn a few related lessons from this observation—(1) the entire Bible points to Christ and His work.
77. My friends, what's true of John is true of the entire Bible—"These things were written that you would believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."
78. (2) Preachers of the word must major on Christ and His work—if faith focus in Christ and His work, and if the Scriptures primarily teach about Christ and His work, then preachers must make much of Christ and His work.
79. 1Cor.2:2—"For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"—that is, the person and work of Christ.
80. Why? Because the primary object of saving faith is Christ and His work—we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
81. Obs.3—The result of faith is the possession and promotion of life—this is why God gave His word to be believed.
82. God gave His word so that those who hear it would believe it and be reconciled to Him through Christ His Son.
83. In short, God gave us His word, to tell us about Christ, so that those who believe it would have life, and that eternal.