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18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834
Sunday, June 11, 2017

John 20:29-31; 21:24-25 “Evidence that Jesus Gives Life”

Intro. Death is inescapable. The grim reaper comes mostly to the old, but also to the young. You could even face death before this day is over. Tell me, do you know for sure that you are going to heaven when you die? I want you to know for sure, and the Bible says in 1 John 5:13 that you can know for sure. If death still seems too far off to concern you, then let's consider your present life. Are you at peace with God, knowing that you are right with Him? Are you satisfied with life? Do you have abiding joy and peace? Are you loved? Or do you feel hurt, guilty, angry, depressed, troubled, lonely, unloved? If any of these words describe you, do you think God created you like this? No! The fact is, we are all fallen creatures. By nature we're spiritually dead even while we physically live. Many people experience the problems I just mentioned. So as we conclude John's Gospel this morning, I want you to know that John's Gospel was written to give you hope for a different, better kind of life, and for a life that is eternal.

In fact, our text includes the very purpose of the Gospel of John. One attribute of modern America is that when you leave your house, you lock your door. The only problem about locking your house is that you have to have a key to get back in. Have you ever been locked out of your home or car? I believe we all have. One solution to the problem of being locked out is to have a hidden key that you could retrieve. Well, the not so hidden key to obtaining real life that is eternal is found at the end of chapter 20. There John plainly says in v.31, "...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." That is what the Gospel of John is all about. That is the purpose of this Gospel that we have been studying for quite some time. And if you will listen this morning, you can learn how to have the kind of life God intended you to have both now, and forever.

Now as we have just seen, you must understand up front that Jesus is the key to life. Without that key, you cannot have real life and enter heaven. So our attention must turn to Jesus. We must believe in Him. And one way that John sought to get us to believe in Jesus is this:

I. CONSIDER THE SIGNS JESUS DID

In John 20:30 he said, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples...." He is talking about miracles, but John called the miracles of Jesus "signs." There are other words for miracles. There is the word translated wonders (*teras*; 4:48). Jesus did many miracles that caused people to be in awe of what happened. Then there is a word that is often translated "miracle," but it actually and literally refers to an act of supernatural power (*dunamis*; Mark 9:39). Jesus exercised great power over the forces of nature. He calmed the raging storm. Raising the dead may be considered His greatest act of power. But the preferred word for "miracle" that John used was a "sign." In fact, this word is used 17 times in this gospel.¹ Why did John use this word? Well let's consider:

¹ John doesn't use *dunamis*, and *teras* is used only in John 4:48. All 3 words are used in Acts 2:22, 2 Cor. 12:12, 2 Thess. 2:9, and Hebrews 2:4.

A. The Nature of these Signs – A good sign will get your attention. What good is a sign if no one reads it, or sees it. Even so, the miracles of Jesus certainly got people’s attention. But a sign should not just draw attention to itself, but what it points to! It tells you about a place, person, or product, or gives a message. Now the miraculous signs of Jesus were intended to point people to Jesus, and lead us to consider the significance of the miracle. The miracles were not an end in themselves. John believed that the signs Jesus did should lead us to believe in Jesus as the Son of God who can give us eternal life. Furthermore, in John’s gospel, the sign never stands alone. Each miracle introduces teaching with reference to Christ. For example, He gave sight to the blind and then taught that He is the light of the world! (John 11-12).

B. The Number of these Signs – John only told of 7 miracles of Jesus, plus the resurrection. But v.30 says, “...truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples...” I believe that Jesus did hundreds of miracles. In fact, look over to 21:25, “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” That sounds like Jesus did *thousands* of miracles. He probably healed dozens of people on many days. If He averaged 10 miracles/day over three years of ministry He would have done over 10,000 miracles! So indeed, all the libraries of the ancient world could not contain a record of all the miracles of Jesus, along with a full explanation of their meaning and glories.²

So Jesus did not just do a few miraculous signs that could possibly be explained away as tricks. The sheer number is overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Son of God!

C. The Naming of these Signs – John did not attempt to write a complete biography of Jesus Christ. He was very selective. He knew far more than he wrote. So out of thousands of miraculous signs, John chose 7 for his gospel. The structure of John’s gospel is built about certain “signs” which prove the deity of Jesus. Let’s briefly review the 7 miracles, or signs, that John selected. In each case we will also see that the sign points to a truth about Jesus:

1. Water into Wine (2:1-11) – After Jesus turned the water into wine, the master of the feast commented about how good and superior it was. That sign points to the fact that Jesus is the Master of quality. He does all things well. Trust in Him, and He can greatly improve the quality of your life.

2. Healing of Official’s Son (4:43-54) – Not only did He heal the official’s son, but He did so from miles away. Jesus just spoke the word, and the son was healed. This sign points to the fact that Jesus is the Master of distance. He is not limited by distance and space. Though He seems far away in a place called heaven, He is nearby. His Spirit can meet the needs of your life.

3. Healing at the Pool (5:1-9) – Here we read of the lame man who had not walked in 38 years. Yet Jesus healed him. This sign points to the fact that Jesus is the Master of time. Time was no barrier to the healing touch of Jesus. Even so, even if you have lived without Jesus for 70 years, He can still forgive you and save you.

4. Feeding of 5000 (6:1-15) – Jesus took the loaves and the few fish and multiplied them, so that there was more than enough to feed 5000. This sign points to the fact that Jesus is the Master of quantity. No crowd is too great for Jesus. He can hear the prayers of millions, and He can save thousands at the same time.

² However, John is probably using hyperbole here. We should be glad that not all was recorded. As it is, the Bible is very manageable in size. Most people haven’t read the Bible even though it is equivalent in length to one large book. Think of how few would read the Bible if it were even larger!

5. Walking on Water (6:16-21) – A storm came upon the Sea of Galilee while the disciples were in a boat. The disciples could have perished in the storm, but Jesus came to them, walking on water! This sign points to the fact that Jesus is the Master over natural law, for He is the great Creator and Sustainer of all things.

6. Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-41) – Jesus came across a man who was born blind. He gave him sight for the first time in his life! This sign points to the fact that Jesus is the Master over misfortune and tragedy. No matter the misfortune you face, Jesus can, in His time, turn tragedy into triumph. Even death is not too great of a tragedy for Jesus to overcome! And that leads to the last 2 signs:

7. Raising of Lazarus (11:1-44) – When Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus, he had been dead for 4 days. His body had already begun to decompose. Yet Jesus raised him from the dead. This sign points to the fact that Jesus is the Master over death. Jesus was Master over that which man has no control. He is adequate for every situation.

Though John selected 7 signs, he really gave an eighth:

8. The Resurrection of Jesus! (Chapter 20) – Jesus said in John 2:19, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Likewise, He said in Matthew 12:39-40, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” The greatest sign of all was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We see this in the number and order of signs given by John. Seven is the perfect number, but 8 makes the complete octave in a musical scale (Illustrate by singing do, re, me, fa, so, la, ti, . . . do). It’s just not complete without it! And since He rose again, He still lives to meet our needs today. Jesus is not just a historical figure, but man’s eternal contemporary.

II. HEAR THE WITNESS OF THESE SIGNS

In John 21:24 John wrote, “This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things. . . .” John’s Gospel is called a testimony, a witness. The fact is, we have never seen Jesus. We were not present when He performed these miracles. Even most of John’s readers had never seen Jesus. So how can we know that Jesus actually did these miracles? We have in this book of the Bible eye-witness testimony by someone who was there. His testimony has been written and preserved in Scripture.

This is the language of the courtroom. If someone has been accused of a crime, the prosecution brings in eye-witnesses to testify of what they had seen and heard. Eye-witness testimony is a universally accepted means of discovering the truth.

So God does not ask you to believe blindly. So He has provided witnesses, and their witness has been faithfully recorded and preserved.

So note with me:

A. The Reliability of John’s Witness – These were eyewitnesses. In 21:24 “this” must refer to John, for Peter had been martyred. And then it says, “. . . and we know that his testimony is true.” All the emphasis in the Greek is on the adjective “true.”³ And why does it change to a plural? Though it could be an editorial “we,” I believe that the elders in Ephesus who received the Gospel

³ In Greek, notice its forward position in the sentence: οίδαμεν οτι αληθης εστιν η μαρτυρια αυτου.

of John added these words. They knew that John was a truthful man, a reliable witness. This is like a signed affidavit affirming John's testimony.⁴

B. The Reality of *Many* Witnesses – According to God's law in Deut. 19:15, "...by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established." So the witness of John the apostle was not enough. Not only was John a witness, but 20:30 says, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples...." Notice that Jesus did these signs "in the presence of" His disciples.⁵ These are signs they saw, heard, and experienced firsthand by at least 12 witnesses! They were eyewitnesses (1:14). John wrote in his first epistle (1:1-2), "That which ...we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, ...the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness...." In fact, there were 500 who saw Jesus alive from the dead (1 Cor. 15:6).

This is an important contrast to other religions. Mormonism is based upon the testimony of one man: Joseph Smith. Islam is based upon the dreams and visions of one man: Mohammad. But the miracles of Jesus were not made up stories of an imaginative man. Many testified to the miracles of Jesus. That is one reason why Christianity spread so rapidly in the first century. People could interview eyewitnesses who were still alive.

Last of all:

III. CONSIDER THE PURPOSE OF THESE SIGNS

Why did Jesus perform these miraculous signs? And why did John record these for us? He gives us the following two purposes for his Gospel in 20:31:

A. That You Might Believe in Jesus – That's what he said in v.31. "Believe" is found 99 times in John's gospel. Clearly, this is the primary purpose and theme of the Gospel of John. These signs were not written just to furnish historical information, or to entertain us. But that we might believe in Him. Salvation and eternal life is by faith and not works (Eph. 2:8, 9; Acts 16:30-31). Eternal life is not gained as a reward for being good, but it is received by faith in Jesus. And it does not mean mere mental assent.

When Scottish missionary John G. Paton was translating the Bible in the Outer Hebrides, he searched for the exact word to translate "believe." Finally, he discovered it: he used a word that meant, "lean your whole weight upon." That is what saving faith is—leaning your whole weight upon Jesus Christ.⁶ It is to rely upon Him.

And what is it that we are to believe? John wrote his gospel that we might believe two truths about Jesus:

1. That Jesus Is the Christ – The English word "Christ" is a transliteration of the Greek word *Christos*, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *mashiyach*,⁷ or Messiah, meaning the anointed one. In the Old Testament God kept promising to send a Messiah, a Savior. God also promised many blessings that would be fulfilled through the Messiah. Jesus is the

⁴ In fact, this statement follows the form found in the papyri where one signs an affidavit.

⁵ Pink says that the "many other signs" refer not to what the Lord had done through the whole course of His public ministry, but to the proofs which the risen Christ had furnished His apostles. This is confirmed by the words "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples," whereas, most of His ministerial signs were performed before the general public.

⁶ It is also a present tense, "continue to believe." In Ephesus, Corinthus and others were trying to stop their belief.

⁷ Found only in Daniel 9:25-26.

fulfillment of the Old Testament hopes and promises. This includes promises of the forgiveness of sin through the death of Messiah. Isaiah 53:6 tells us how. There the prophet said, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” And that same prophecy tells us what happened when Jesus bore our sin. He suffered and died. Why? V.5 of that prophecy says, “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” Do you believe?

2. That Jesus Is the Son of God – Jesus was not just a man. He is the Son of God. Who else can turn water into fine wine? Who else can heal a man born blind? Who else but the Son of God could walk on water, or raise the dead? Surely, Jesus is the Son of God. Don’t you also believe?

It is important that our Savior is the Son of God. Only God can give life from the dead. Only God can give life that is eternal. Only God can handle all the problems that you face. Only God can hear the prayers of millions, and yet handle each one individually. I’m glad that I can have confidence that my Savior is the Son of God!

So John’s Gospel was written that you may believe. And having believed in Jesus, it was also written:

B. That You Might Have Life – That’s what he says in the last of v.31. What is the life that God wants you to have? Negatively, it is the opposite of condemnation. You see, by nature we have all sinned, and we are under the sentence of death. Eph. 2:2 says that before you believe in Christ, you are dead in trespasses and sins. John 3:18 says, “...he who does not believe [in Jesus] is condemned already....” Without Jesus you are like someone on death row. You are just waiting for the full sentence of death to be carried out. So we all need this life that Jesus offers. God loves you, and wants to give you this eternal life. Are you prepared to face death?

Once a certain king had a court jester that entertained him well. One day the king held out to him his royal scepter and said, “Court Jester, you are the greatest fool I know. Keep this scepter until you find a greater fool in my kingdom.” Years passed, and one day the jester was called in to see the king and entertain him. The king was dying and said, “Jester, I am going away on a long journey from which I will not return” (of course he was referring to death). The jester asked, “King, have you made any preparations for this long journey?” To which the king replied, “No, I have not.” Quickly the jester extended to the king the scepter once again and said, “I have found a greater fool than I.”

Oh, don’t be a fool today. You can be free from the condemnation of death. Make sure you are prepared for death, for it is something we all must face.

But this life is not just freedom from the condemnation of eternal death, but positively, it is life that is eternal in duration. That’s good to know, because the longer you live, the more you realize how short life really is (James 4:14; Job 14:1). Through Jesus you will never die again, but live on forever and ever. Furthermore, this life that Jesus gives is a new quality of life. It involves a quality of life in terms of satisfaction. Jesus said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.” Oh, since I have believed in Jesus, I have found that His promises are true. I have a deep sense of satisfaction. Can I get a witness from anyone else here today? And in John 10:10 Jesus said, “...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”⁸ And what is great about this promise

⁸ We may add John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

of eternal life is that it is also a present possession. “Have” in v.31 is a present tense. Eternal life is not given in the future, but it becomes a present possession the moment you believe in Jesus.

And notice that John says in the last of v.31, “that believing you may have life *in His name*.” The name of Jesus represents who He is and what He has done. You are not going to gain life through the church, or the priest, or the preacher, or by good works. The only way to have life is to trust in Jesus, who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life....” (John 14:6).

Conclusion: So what will you do this morning? The evidence is overwhelming. Surely, you are not going to say the many miracles and witnesses were all lies. As we have read this Gospel, you have met many people who did believe and received everlasting life: (1) Nathanael (1:50); (2) The other disciples of Jesus (2:11); (3) the woman at the well and the other Samaritans (4:39); (4) the nobleman (4:50); (5) the blind man (9:38); (6) Martha (11:27); (7) the Jews who saw Lazarus raised from the dead (12:11); and (8) even doubting Thomas (20:28). All of these gave the same witness, “I believe.”

[Add a modern testimony of belief?]

Will you believe in Jesus today? Will you receive eternal life? Only Jesus will make your life what God intended it to be. Only Jesus can give you eternal life. Come to Jesus. Trust in Him today!

Sources: Oliver B. Greene, *The Gospel According to John, Vol. 1* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1966); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955); Herschel H. Hobbs *John: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:23] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2012); Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); A.T. Robertson's, *New Testament Word Pictures*; Introduction to Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948); Warren W. Wiersbe, *“Be” Series: New Testament Volumes 1 & 2, John* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). J. Vernon McGee read but not used.

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