

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:
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John 20:29-31; 21:24-25 “Jesus Gives Life”

Intro. Death is inescapable. The grim reaper comes mostly to the old, but he also takes the young. You could face death before this day is over. Tell me, do you know for sure that you are going to heaven when you die? If death still seems too far off for you, then let's consider your present life. Are you at peace with God, knowing that you are right with Him? Are you completely 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. And 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 kind of life.

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. But there was a time in American when many people would not feel it necessary to lock the 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? 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 understanding the gospel of John is found at the end of chapter 20 of John's gospel. For there he 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 from the beginning.

Now as we have just seen, you must understand up front that Jesus is the key to life. Without that key, you cannot 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 by selecting and reporting:

I. 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*). 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*). Jesus exercised great power over the forces of nature. 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 first of all:

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

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, & Hebrews 2:4.

product, or gives a message. Now the miracle 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, and believe that He indeed has the attributes of deity. Furthermore, the sign never stands alone. Each miracle introduces teaching with reference to Christ.

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. 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. 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!

Now what that tells us is that there 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 hundreds and thousands of miracle 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 & 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.

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.

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.

6. Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-41) – Jesus came across a man who was born blind. He gave him sight. This sign points to the fact that Jesus is the Master over misfortune & 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. His Own Resurrection (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 & order of signs given by John. Seven is the perfect number, but 8 makes the complete octave in music. (Illustrate by singing doe, rae, me, fa, so, la, ti, ... doe). 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. 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. This is the language of the courtroom.

A. The Role of This Witness – We have never seen Jesus. We were not present when He performed these miracles. In fact, even most of John’s readers had never seen Jesus. That is why Jesus said in 20:29, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Then v.31 says, “but these are written that you may believe....” God does not ask you to believe blindly. So He has provided witnesses, and their witness has been faithfully recorded in Scripture.

B. The Reality Of Many Witnesses – 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.² These are signs they saw, heard, and experienced first hand. They were eyewitnesses (1:14). John wrote in his first epistle, “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....” 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.

C. 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.”

² 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.

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 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

III. 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:

A. That You Might Believe (v.31a) – “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 & 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 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: the word meant, “lean your whole weight upon.” That is what saving faith is—leaning your whole weight upon Jesus Christ (C-483).⁵

And what is it that we are to believe? John wrote his gospel that we might believe 2 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*,⁶ or Messiah, meaning the anointed one. This is the One to whom the Old Testament prophets pointed. He is the 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 – Who else can take water, and turn it 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 be 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!

B. That You Might Have Life (v. 31b) –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

³ In Greek, notice its forward position in the sentence.

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

⁵ It is a also present tense, “continue to believe.” In Ephesus, Corinthus and others were trying to stop their belief.

⁶ Found only in Daniel 9:25-26.

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.” (C-352). Oh, don’t be a fool today. You can be free from the condemnation of death. You can have eternal life. Make sure you are prepared for death, for it is something we all must face.

But this life is not just freedom from condemnation, but positively, it is 1) eternal in duration. Through Jesus you will never die again, but live on forever and ever. Furthermore, this life that Jesus gives is 2) 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 promise to be 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.”⁷ And what is great about this promise of eternal life is that it is a 3) 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, “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 through the rituals of the church. 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 are 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 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.” Will you believe in Jesus today? Will you receive eternal life?

Sources: William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955); Oliver B. Greene, *The Gospel According to John, Vol. 3* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1966); Herschel H. Hobbs *John: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965); 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); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996). 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.

⁷ 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.”