

Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live
(The Gospel of John: Signs of the Messiah - 1:1-12:50)

John 1:1-2

Who is Jesus? (Part 1)

There is nothing more thrilling - and at times not so thrilling - than when we really get to know someone: those moments when they open the door to their heart, and we are able to feel its throb and see deep inside. The Gospel of John is filled with moments like that. And as we open the door and walk into the “foyer of the book” we are faced with the most important question you or anyone else will ever have to face. Who is Jesus Christ? What do you think of Jesus Christ? Your eternal destiny, and the quality of life you live here, depends upon your answer.

Now for many this book is not entirely new. Some of the most widely known and loved texts in the Word of God are from this gospel. You remember some of them. *“For God so loved the world... (John 3:16); I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty (John 6:35); I am the good shepherd (John 10:11); I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25); I am the true vine (John 15:1); I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).*

Luther wrote that if a tyrant succeeded in destroying the Holy Scriptures and only a single copy of the Gospel of John and the epistle to the Romans were left, Christianity would be saved. How could he say that? Why would he say that? Well, because from the beginning of John to the end of John we come face-to-face with the answers to the question, “Who is Jesus?” We begin to see clearly and understand more fully the central figure of our faith! Without Christ we have no faith! Indeed the very purpose of the book is “that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). Clearly John’s Gospel is the “Gospel of Belief.” This word “believe” occurs 98 times in the gospel. But just what are we to believe about this Christ? In the prologue to the book (1:1-18; an introductory summary of the book), we discover seven things about Jesus Christ: that Jesus is the Word, Jesus is God, Jesus is Life, Jesus is Light, Jesus is Truth, Jesus is Perfect Man, and Jesus is Grace. Let us begin with the first two verses in which we discover two wonderful things about Christ:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God.”

I. Jesus is the Word (the “Logos”).

1. The “Word” to the Jewish mind would be associated with God’s creative utterances: *“Let there be light and there was light!”* (Genesis 1:3) The idea is that when God speaks things instantly get done! God is so powerful that he speaks things into existence.

2. The “Word” to the Jewish mind would also be associated with the way God discloses himself in creation. He speaks and things of indescribable beauty, things of grandeur, things that are pure, things that demonstrate infinite wisdom and power appear!

3. The “Word” to the Greek mind would find its meaning in that creation is not a thing of chaos, but a thing of order. And this would mean that there must be divine reason and wisdom that sovereignly controls it. We are told that Plato once turned to a little group of philosophers and students and said “It may be that some day there will come forth from God a “Word”, a “Logos”, who will reveal all mysteries and make everything plain. John is saying that that day has come.

4. The “Word” to John is what the Jews and Greeks thought and yet something much more. The Word is a person! *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son”* (Hebrews 1:1-2). The idea here is that when Jesus talks, God talks, and that when you see Jesus you meet God face-to-face! This “Word” is much more than a voice from God or even the voice of God. It is the totality of God himself! It is the living breathing Word. It is the living breathing God.

5. But what does this mean to you! It means that when you look out at the beauty of creation you remember that the “Word” spoke it into existence. When you read the Bible, the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to you from its pages. You have the privilege of praying and asking Christ to talk to you - to speak into your mind words of comfort, words of direction, words of power, words of truth, and words of peace and life.

II. Jesus is God!

1. Jesus is in his being, in his person, very God!

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God.”

The emphasis here is not on something that Jesus does, but something that Jesus is! You may say that your occupation is to be a teacher or a business owner or a farmer or mechanic. But what you do as an occupation is only a small part of who you really are. John is opening the door into the very person of Jesus and saying that at his very core he is the God of the universe. The “Word” must be identified and it can only be identified in relationship to the one true God of Israel. Therefore everything that can be said about God the Father can be said about the Son.

2. Jesus pre-existed everything in the universe and indeed the universe itself.

There was a time when only God existed and nothing else. Jesus existed when there was no time, and it would be he that would make everything that exists in time (Hebrews 1:1-2; Revelation 1:8, 17- the “Alpha and Omega”).

3. Jesus has always been with God.

The idea is that Jesus feels at home with or is close to God. It is that wherever God is, Jesus is. Further, there is the idea that Jesus can stand face-to-face or look directly into the eyes of God. He is absolutely equal with God. He is also seen to be a separate entity (a separate person) from God, not a mere extension or attribute of God.

***The ESV translation study notes rightly says that here are the building blocks that go into the doctrine of the Trinity: the one true God consists of more than one person, they relate to each other, and they have always existed.”

4. Because Jesus is God:

1) When you get to know Jesus, you get to know God. You get to know the truth about God. They don't simply exist together. They have an intimate relationship with each other. They share the same attributes. That is, they are very much like each other. We often think of God as just and holy, stern and avenging. In contrast, we think of Jesus as loving and meek and mild. But it is true that both God and Jesus hate sin; that both will judge the world; that both strike awe and fear into the hearts of men and women.

2) Because he is God, Jesus can satisfy every need of your heart. Because he is God he was able to be a perfect sinless sacrifice for our sins. He was able to remove forever the burden of sin from those who believe on him. Because he is God he is infinite. There is no end to his power, his love, his mercy, his holiness, and his grace.

Conclusion

Who is this Jesus? This is the thesis of the book of John. We are going to see a great deal of evidence for that as we go on in our study of the book. And so we come back again to the questions that we begin with. What do you think of Jesus Christ? Who is he? If you read the Gospels, you will find that this question was raised many times during Christ's earthly ministry. When Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey (Palm Sunday) the people turned to each other and asked, “Who is this?” (Matthew 21:10). When Jesus stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee his disciples asked “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!” (Mark 4:41). Herod, who had beheaded John, asked “Who, then, is this I hear such things about?” (Luke 9:9). When Jesus forgave the sins of a paralytic, the scribes and Pharisees asked themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who

can forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). This is a very important question because if Jesus was only a man then you can afford to forget about him or ignore him. But if Jesus is God then you must agree with Thomas who climaxes this gospel in Chapter 20:28 by saying "My Lord and my God!"