

LESSON 283

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Related Scripture: John 1:18-34

KEY VERSE: "He that rejected me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."—John 12:48.

Lesson Scripture: John 20:30-31;
1:6-13; 17:1-5

Introduction:

We begin this week a series of lessons from the gospel of John. Selections for the series are rather scattered and disorganized; a study straight through the scripture as written would be more profitable. However, all the inspired word of God is profitable, even in bits and pieces; though when we take passages out of context we need to be careful not to misinterpret or misapply them.

For the first lesson of this series we have three passages of scripture from as many chapters of John. No doubt the intention is to give us an introductory view of the book, and I shall try to organize the lesson accordingly. An outline follows:

1. The Purpose, John 20:30, 31
 - a. Signs bestowed, 30
 - b. Signs believed, 31
2. The Person, John 1:6-13
 - a. Christ the Light, 6-9
 - b. Christ the Lord, 10-12
 - c. Christ the Life, 13
3. The Program, John 17:1-5
 - a. Glory of events, 1
 - b. Glory of earth, 2-4
 - c. Glory of eternity, 5

Notes on the Printed Text:

The Purpose, John 20:30, 31.

Often a writer does not tell us his purpose in writing, but John is clear and definite in stating at least one purpose for his writing this book. Other writers of inspired scripture may have had more or less the same end in view as one of their objectives, but the gospel of John is the only book in the Bible expressly said to have been written to bring its readers to believe in Christ.

Signs Bestowed, 30.

In Jn. 2:11 we read of the "beginning of miracles" or "signs"—the same Greek word as used here. Many other miracles or signs are recorded in John's gospel, and still others in the other gospels; but these are only a small fraction of all the signs that Jesus did "in the presence of his disciples."

Signs and miracles ought not to be necessary to faith in God. His least work is a miracle; we ourselves are His miraculous creation. As Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." (Mat. 12:39.) Yet in His infinite mercy God commended His Son to His disciples through a multitude of signs only lightly referred to in the scripture.

Signs Believed, 31.

Here then is the purpose of including some of these signs in the record: under divine inspiration the apostle desired the salvation of his readers through faith "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

"Liberal" or infidel theologians and their followers, who deny the miracles of Jesus, though they presume to call themselves Christians, are left without a Savior. It is only through believing in the Jesus of the New Testament, that He "is the Christ, the Son of God," that we can "have life through his name."

The Person, John 1:6-13.

John's purpose, therefore, is accomplished by telling us of a divine Person. The writer does not bother to tell us his purpose until near the end of his book, but he introduces the Person to us at the very beginning, and keeps Him in view throughout.

Christ the Light, 6-9.

Our scientific knowledge or understanding of light may be extremely limited, but at least it is a part of our common everyday experience. It is one of the figures frequently used in the Bible to represent God and righteousness.

Remember that John the Baptist and John the apostle were two different men, though of course all the apostles, including John, were also Baptists, having been baptized by John the Baptist. (Acts 1:22.) John the apostle was the writer of the book we are studying; John the Baptist was the "man sent from God . . . to bear witness of the Light."

John the Baptist, other Baptist preachers, and other messengers of God are not themselves sources of light; they are mere reflectors and witnesses of that "true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Christ the Lord, 10-12.

Notice the practical identification here of Father and Son. Let theologians wrangle if they will over vain attempts to explain the mystery of the Trinity; faith will do better simply to accept the language of scripture and hope for better understanding when we get to heaven.

Christ then is One with the Creator of the world, though His own creation failed to recognize Him when He appeared in the world. Even His own people Israel, on the whole, "received him not." Yet, recognized or not, He is Lord of all; and so He gave power or authority to become children of God to "as many as received him," which is to say, "to them that believe on his name."

Christ the Life, 13.

Perhaps no better explanation of the new birth can be given than is given by John himself in another book:

"This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (I Jn. 5:11, 12.)

The Program, John 17:1-5.

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Acts 15:18.) In other words, God follows a plan or program of action that He has had in mind from eternity. The ministry of Jesus is part of that program.

Glory of Events, 1.

Ultimately, though not always obviously at the time, God is glorified in the events of history, which are all well under His directive or permissive control. The greatest and focal event of all time was the crucifixion of Christ, and it was in view of this event that Jesus prayed, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."

Glory on Earth, 2-4.

From the manger to the cross, Jesus glorified His heavenly Father, always doing the Father's will. But the most glorious thing in the earthly ministry of Jesus was His giving of eternal life to those that the Father had given Him. And the most glorious description of eternal life in all the Bible is this, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Having finished the work which the Father had given Him to do, Jesus could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth."

Glory of Eternity, 5.

Eternal glory is beyond our present knowledge, though we are given some glimpses of it in the Bible. Jesus, however, remembered the glory which He had enjoyed with the Father "before the world was," and longed to be restored to that glory after His earthly humiliation.

Key Verse:

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."—John 12:48.

A man's words are an expression of himself, and so the words or teachings of Christ are inseparable from Himself. To reject Him logically implies rejection of His words; to reject His words necessarily involves rejection of Himself. Religionists who pretend to honor Christ while refusing to believe His words are merely brazen hypocrites. Perhaps one reason they so hate His teachings is that His harshest words of condemnation are addressed to hypocrites.

Now, according to Jesus Himself, the lost sinner (still lost because he has not believed—Jn. 3:18) will in the end be judged by that very word which he has refused to believe. The Christ Who is Himself the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, has declared of His words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Mat. 24:35.)