

Exalting Jesus, The Son of God

"That You May Believe"

INTRODUCTION:

- I. One of the most awe-inspiring stories in the Old Testament is that of a fugitive from Egypt turned shepherd by the name of Moses.
 - A. Alone in the Sinai desert, the Bible tells us Moses saw a flaming bush in the distance – except the bush was not consumed by the fire.
 1. As he drew nearer, God called out to him.
 - a. God said: **Exodus 3:5** – *"Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."*
 - b. The Bible tells us Moses suddenly found himself standing in the very presence of the One, True, Living God.
 - c. He was standing on holy ground.
 2. The scriptures don't tell us what went through the mind of Moses at that moment.
 - a. All we are told is: **Exodus 3:6** - *Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.*

- B. Every time we come into the presence of God we are, in essence, standing on holy ground.
 - 1. Whether we come into the presence of God when we assemble to worship, or whether we come into the presence of God in the quietness of our prayers, we should never take those encounters lightly.
 - a. Those moments should invoke in each of us the deepest reverential respect and awe-struck fear.
 - b. Why? Because we are in the presence of the One, True, Living and Holy God.

- II. This morning we're going to begin a special series of studies through one of the most unique books of the Bible – this book is commonly known as the Gospel of John.
 - A. And as we prepare to step across the threshold of John's Gospel, we might feel compelled to take off our shoes, for every page of this wonderful book is ablaze with the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. Perhaps, more than almost any other book we might read in the Bible, when we come to the gospel of John we quickly realize we are truly standing on holy ground.

2. It's a book that exalts Jesus Christ as the Son of God perhaps more than any other – which is why I have chosen this as the title of this series of lessons.
 3. However, before we take our first step into John's gospel, I want us to understand why this account of the life of Jesus unlike any other.
- B. There is no question about the fact that, in the gospel of John, we will come to know Jesus Christ in a way unlike any other book in the Bible.
1. But what is it about this book that makes it so unique?
 2. What makes the gospel of John so different from other books in the New Testament, especially from the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke?

Body:

- I. Open your Bibles to the gospel according to John, and let's examine some of the reasons why this book is so wonderful.
 - A. One of the first things you will notice about John's gospel is the style in which it is written.
 1. It is simple and straightforward. Seldom will you find a word over three syllables – most are one or two.
 - a. **John 1:1** – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
 - b. Simple. Straightforward. Yet, sublime.

2. John is also a writer of contrasts: he speaks of light and dark, life and death, Spirit and flesh.
 - a. A story may jump from sadness to great joy, from stormy conflict to sweet calm, from a crisis of doubt to concrete assurance.
- B. It's also been said that John's gospel is unlike those of Matthew, Mark and Luke because John seems to take snapshots to record the life of Jesus, rather than recording it like taping with a video camera.
 1. John's approach to the life of Christ is more selective.
 2. His gospel reads more like thematic scrapbook of Christ's life rather than a detailed chronicle of the life of Christ.
- C. John's gospel is also uniquely different from the others because of the things we don't find there.
 1. There is no account of Jesus' birth, His baptism by John, nor of His temptation in the wilderness.
 2. There is no record of the institution of the Lord's Supper, of Gethsemane, or of His ascension into heaven.
 3. We can find nothing of Jesus healing people possessed by evil spirits, nor do we find a single parable of Jesus.
- D. But John's gospel is also uniquely different from the others because of what it mentions that the others do not.
 1. John alone tells us of the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-11).

2. He's the only writer to mention the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-15); or with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). John is the only one to mention the raising of Lazarus (John 11); or of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17); or of the teaching about the Holy Spirit as the divine Comforter (John 14-17); or of the most beautiful prayer Jesus prayed for the apostles and all who would believe in Him through their word (John 17); or of the intensely emotional dialogue with Peter (John 21:15-23).
 3. John also provides unique vignettes not found in the other gospels of Thomas (John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-29); Andrew (John 1:40-41; 6:8-9; 12:22); and Philip (John 6:5-7; 14:8-9).
- E. But what clearly separates John's gospel from all the rest is the unique purpose for which it was written. John explains in his own words:
1. **John 20:30-31** – *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 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 word "signs" in verse 30 refers to an act or a miracle that is filled with meaning.

- a. These signs were not simply a display of supernatural power, but a dynamic way of showing some specific aspect of the person of Jesus Christ.
 - b. John records seven such signs – each a concrete demonstration that Jesus is God.
 - c. These seven miracles all occur during the three years of Christ's *public ministry* (John chapters 1-12).
 - d. But as public unbelief intensifies, the miracles cease, and for the few days before His crucifixion, Jesus withdraws to a *private ministry* with his disciples (John chapters 13-21).
3. No other gospel account of Jesus exposes the full light of His deity more than the gospel of John.
 4. Essentially, John presents the life of Jesus in a very selective manner – structuring his material in such a way that would lead the reader to only one irrefutable conclusion – that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.
- II. Have you ever wondered why there are four gospels? Why not have just one definitive biography of Christ rather than four separate accounts?
- A. One writer explained it this way. He said a picture is more complete when taken from several different angles.

1. If you've ever seen the instant replay in football games of a disputed call, the scene is replayed from multiple angles – many of which will reveal things not seen from other angles.
- B. Or consider the biography of a famous man like the late Mike Wallace, best known as the host of ABC's 60 Minutes. The biography would be incomplete unless the author gathered accounts of this man's life from all perspectives.
1. Each person who knew him would see him from a different viewpoint, giving us a little different slant on his life.
 2. His wife as a loving companion and husband; his children as Dad; and his associates as a trusted, beloved friend.
- C. In the same manner, each Gospel writer looks at Jesus from a unique divinely inspired perspective.
1. Matthew, wrote to Jews, and seems to focus on Jesus as King of the Jews – tracing the genealogy of Jesus back to David and Abraham, and setting forth Jesus as the Redeemer-King of Israel, the Messiah.
 - a. Someone once said we could place the inscription of "*Behold, your King!*" (**Zechariah 9:9**) over Matthew's gospel.
 2. Mark, wrote to Romans (possibly from the mouth of Peter), and seems to focus on Jesus as a servant – which is probably why there is no genealogy of Jesus in Mark's gospel.

- a. After all, who would be interested in the genealogy of a lowly servant?
 - b. But, Mark shows us Jesus as a Servant who *"did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."* **(Mark 10:45)**
 - c. Over Mark's gospel perhaps we could hang the inscription, *"Behold, My Servant!"* **(Isaiah 42:1)**
3. Luke, wrote primarily to a Greek audience, and focuses on the humanity of Jesus, and consequently, traces the genealogy of Jesus Christ back to Adam.
- a. Jesus is presented as the Redeemer of the whole human race.
 - b. He came to save men of every nation – a *"Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles"* **(Luke 2:32)** – which may explain why Luke's gospel was written to a Greek by the name of Theophilus.
 - c. Over Luke's gospel we might hang the inscription *"Behold, the Man!"* **(Zechariah 6:12)**
4. Matthew, Mark and Luke are all called "synoptic gospels" because they are a synopsis or a general summary of the life and teachings of Jesus.

- a. They record many of the same events, in the same sequence, and sometimes using similar words.

III. But when we come to John's gospel, we find a gospel written to a timeless, universal audience.

A. More than any other writer, John stressed the deity of Jesus and His unique relationship with the Father as the Son of God.

- 1. Perhaps that's why the word "*believe*," in one form or another, appears some 98 times in John's gospel – approximately 10 times more than any other gospel account of the life of Jesus.

- a. It's an active word that means "to depend upon," or "to trust in."

- b. In fact, the Greek word is "pisteuo." The Hebrew is "aman."

- c. In non-theological terms, the root word refers to a pillar or even a doorpost – each of which must be depended upon for support.

- d. It's this same sense of dependence that is captured in

- Proverbs 3:5:** "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. . .*"

- 2. To believe in Jesus is to trust in Jesus, and to trust in Jesus is to lean on Jesus – to depend upon Him to hold us up.

- B. John wants his readers "to depend upon" and "to trust in" the indisputable evidence that proves beyond any doubt that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
1. Because this is the only kind of belief that will give us *"life in His name."* **(John 20:30-31)**
 2. If there was ever written a book that will strengthen your faith, and deepen your trust that Jesus is the Son of God, it will be the gospel of John.
 - a. And so, perhaps over the gospel of John we could hang the inscription, *"Behold, your God!"* **(Isaiah 35:4)**

IV. Brethren, there is no middle-ground when it comes to believing in the deity of Jesus Christ. And nowhere does Jesus more boldly proclaim His deity than in the gospel of John. Just look at some of His claims.

- A. Jesus claimed equality with the Father:
1. **John 10:30-33:** *"I and My Father are one.' Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?' The Jews answered Him, saying, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.'"*

- a. When Jesus said, "I and My Father are ONE," He used a word that means "one in essence or nature."
 - b. A.T. Robertson, a Greek scholar, writes, "This crisp statement is the climax of Christ's claims concerning the relationship between the Father and Himself (the Son). They stir the Pharisees to uncontrolled anger."
 - c. Those who heard Jesus make this claim knew beyond any doubt whatsoever that Jesus was claiming deity – He was claiming equality to God the Father.
 - d. The Jews, of course, considered this blasphemy, and they immediately proceeded to take judgment into their own hands by stoning Jesus according to the Law (Leviticus 24:16).
 - e. It's important for us to understand that these Jews would not have attempted to stone Jesus for simply saying He and the Father were one in purpose, or one in agreement.
 - f. They clearly understood Jesus to say He and the Father were one in essence and nature – a Divine essence and nature (deity).
2. **John 5:17-18:** *"But Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.' 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."

- a. The Jews did not refer to God as "My Father," unless they added the phrase "in heaven," because in their mind, to do so would be claiming their equality with God.
 - b. However, Jesus didn't add the phrase "in heaven," but simply called God His Father, making Himself equal with God.
 - c. Furthermore, when Jesus said He has been working at the same time God has been working, the Jews clearly understood the implication.
 - d. Jesus was essentially saying had as much authority to perform miracles on the Sabbath as did God, because He is God the Son.
3. **John 8:58-59:** *"Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."*
- a. In the Old Testament, the "*I AM*" was a name God gave to Himself (Exodus 3:14; Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 43:10). This term means the Eternally Existent One, or the Eternal One.

- a. It could not have been a mistake. His statements were a deliberate attempt to pass Himself off as the Messiah.
2. Furthermore, if Jesus knew His claim was false, that would make Him a liar.
 - a. No one could say the claims of Jesus were made accidentally, or made only by His disciples, and not by the Lord Himself.
 - b. In fact, when Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin, He was charged of blasphemy on the basis of His own testimony (Mark 14:61-64).
3. And, if Jesus knew His claim to being the Son of God was false, then He would be the world's biggest hypocrite.
 - a. The word hypocrite comes from the Greek theater where actors wore masks to portray various characters (a happy face to portray joy, a sad face to portray sorrow).
 - b. Actors would recite their lines from behind whichever mask they wore. So, originally, the term hypocrite meant anyone who acts out a role that is different from their true character.
 - c. Eventually, the word hypocrite came to mean anyone who outwardly portrays something they are not inwardly.
 - d. Jesus outwardly portrayed Himself to be the Son of God. If Jesus was a mere mortal like everyone else, He not only lied, He would have been the world's biggest hypocrite.

4. Furthermore, if Jesus knew His claim was false, then I think we could rightly say He was demonically influenced.
 - a. Only someone who was unspeakably evil could have misled people into believing he could give them eternal life.
 - b. Satan is a liar and the father of lies (cf., John 8:44), and anyone who claimed to be the Son of God is certainly demonically influenced – to say the least.
 5. And finally, if Jesus knew His claim to being the Son of God was false, then He died a fool.
 - a. Jesus' claim to be the Son of God led Him to be crucified.
 - b. If Jesus was only a man, He died a complete fool – needlessly suffering the most cruel form of death imaginable.
- B. But what if Jesus didn't know His claims were false. What then?
1. If Jesus didn't know His claim to be the Son of God was false, then He would have been deluded - perhaps sincerely deluded.
 - a. Actually, the family of Jesus thought He was deluded (Mark 3:21, 31-35; John 7:2-5).
 - b. But following the resurrection, the brothers of Jesus were not only listed among His disciples, but also played a leading role in the early church (Acts 1:12-14; Galatians 1:18-19; 2:7-9; Acts 15; and the books of James and Jude).

2. Furthermore, if Jesus didn't know His claim was false, He would have been a lunatic with delusions of grandeur.
 - a. For someone to think He is God would be the height of insanity.
 3. And finally, if Jesus didn't know His claim was false, His death was pointless.
 - a. His death served no purpose whatsoever.
- C. Well, Jesus is neither a liar nor a lunatic.
1. The life and teachings of Jesus are certainly not those of a deceiver and a liar.
 - a. His teachings raised the moral consciousness of mankind to the highest level imaginable.
 2. The character of Jesus is certainly not that of a lunatic with delusions of grandeur.
 - a. He is always seen in complete control of every situation, never acting harshly, and His treatment of even His enemies speaks of emotional strength and stability.

VI. So, what if Jesus' claims were true. What does that mean to us?

A. If the claims of Jesus were true, then He truly is Lord!

1. This would mean Jesus is who He claimed to be.

- a. This would mean Jesus truly is the Son of God, and is equal to the Father (John 10:30-33; John 5:17-18; John 8:58-59).
- b. This would also mean Jesus is worthy of the same honors given to God (John 5:20-23).
- c. And this would also mean Jesus is worthy of worship (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; Matthew 8:2; John 9:35-39; Matthew 14:33; John 20:27-29).

VII. And if Jesus is truly Lord, then we're left with only two choices – we can either receive Him or reject Him:

A. What does it mean to receive Him as our Lord and Savior?

1. John writes: **John 1:11-13** – *He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*
 - a. The right to become children of God through a new birth!
 - b. Jesus will have a lot to say about that new birth later in this wonderful gospel of John – and we'll talk about it in depth.
2. But for now, know this: you can be "*born of God*" – born again – this very morning by receiving Jesus Christ.

3. However, to *"receive Him"* means you must receive Him on His terms. And, just what are those terms? Jesus asks all who would receive Him:
 - a. To believe in Him (John 3:16; Hebrews 11:6).
 - b. To repent of our sins (Luke 13:3).
 - c. To confess our faith in Him (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9-10).
 - d. And to be baptized in His name for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:1-4; 1 Peter 3:21).

B. However, if we reject Him:

1. There will be consequences – inescapable consequences.
 - a. Jesus said: **John 12:44-48** – *"He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. 46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."*

CONCLUSION:

- I. It's hard for many of us to imagine someone deliberately rejecting Jesus Christ, and yet it's done all the time.
 - A. We know the tragic consequences facing those who reject Jesus, but what about those who receive Him?
 1. Jesus told His disciples: **John 14:1-3** – *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*
 2. Just imagine what it will be like being with Jesus in heaven throughout all eternity – that wonderful experience will never end.
 - B. But this wonderful promise is given only to those who *"receive Him,"* John says.
 1. Have you received Jesus Christ and the wonderful gifts that He freely offers – forgiveness from sins and eternal life?
 - a. Have you come to Him in faith, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Him, and by being baptized in His name for the remission of all your past sins?
 2. And of you've done that, are you still faithfully following Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

- a. Have you maintained fellowship with Jesus Christ by confessing the sins in your life and asking God to forgive you of those sins?
3. We always set aside this moment to encourage anyone who needs to respond to the Lord's invitation. If you will simply come, Jesus gives you this promise:
 - a. **John 6:37** – *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."*
 - b. **John 6:40** – *"And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."*
 4. Why not come to Jesus now?