

The Post-Resurrection Last Words Of Christ (Part Two)

Fourth & Fifth Last Sayings

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In the closing chapters of John's gospel we actually have a series of "last words of Christ" spoken after the resurrection and before His ascension. In my last sermon we looked at the first three of these sayings. Now we will look at the fourth and fifth of these, both of which deal with the matter of faith.

Christianity requires faith in God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ. This means acceptance of the truth of our deep spiritual need and of the work of the divine Christ and providing the basis of our salvation from sin by His death. It also involves faith in Him and in the demonstration of the truth of His work and teachings by the resurrection.

In contrast the world is totally disbelieving, and it remains so unless God Himself brings faith out of non-faith, just as He is able to bring life out of death or the whole creation out of nothing. But of course that is precisely what God does. He not only creates, loves, and died for those He has made but who have fallen into sin so they might be redeemed, He also leads them to faith and thereby producing in them that which they could never produce in themselves.

This is the meaning of the great and moving story that is the true climax and end of John's gospel. In John, the story concerns the meeting of Jesus and Thomas one week after the resurrection. Thomas had not been with the others when Jesus had first appeared to the disciples in the upper room and we are not told why.

John 20:24-29 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

So Jesus appears to Thomas to lead him to faith and Thomas concludes the story with the highest profession of belief in Jesus recorded in the pages of any of the gospels. He worships Him saying, "My Lord and my God."

This story has given us the well-known English epithet of a "doubting Thomas," but we have to be careful how we use it. For one thing we must not use it to disgrace or to disparage Thomas as if he only, and not the other disciples, or for that matter even ourselves, doubted the resurrection. Remember that none of the other apostles believed either until Jesus had revealed Himself to them and neither do people today naturally believe. If we do it is only because God is there beforehand leading us to do it.

Now again we must not use the phrase “doubting Thomas” to suggest even for a moment that it is just natural for some people to disbelieve and that they are therefore less guilty or are to be excused because of this disposition.

We cannot fail to notice that although Jesus comes down to the level of His doubting disciple to lead him to faith, He does not at all suggest that his unbelief is excusable. Thomas was indeed a doubter; he was not lacking in courage, loyalty, or devotion to Jesus but he did have a gloomy disposition. He looked on the darker side of things. Therefore, when the death of Christ was reported, he responded with the understandable declaration, “I will not believe!”

We see this characteristic in Thomas at every point at which he appears in John's gospel. The first time Thomas appears is in chapter 11. At this point Jesus was in a remote area of the wilderness country beyond the Jordan River where He had gone because of the danger in Jerusalem.

John 10:39 [when He was in Jerusalem] Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.

Then word came to Him that His friend Lazarus, who lived in Bethany near Jerusalem, was sick. At first Jesus delayed for two days but at last He announced his intention to return. Undoubtedly the disciples were frightened and they reminded him that he was in danger.

John 11:8 The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”

Jesus was adamant. There was probably a long pause as the disciples looked around at one another as if to ask if anything could be done to get Him to change His mind or even if they would themselves go with him. In verse 16, John writes:

John 11:16 Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”

What an interesting thing to say! The words were honest, loyal, and courageous, but they were not cheerful. They were quite grim actually.

The second time Thomas is brought to our notice is in John 14. Here Jesus is in the midst of His final sermons to His disciples before His arrest and crucifixion and He has spoken of God's Kingdom.

John 14:2-4 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. 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. And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

Now these were great promises but Thomas was unwilling to let them pass without confessing that he, and presumably others also, did not really know what Jesus was talking about. He replied gloomily in verse 5,

John 14:5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”

Even before Jesus came to Thomas the other disciples had gone to him with the message that Jesus has risen. Undoubtedly it was because of what they had seen themselves. Now they were so filled with joy in the knowledge that Jesus was alive that they went to tell everyone, especially those who had been with Jesus during his earthly ministry. They sought out Thomas and made sure that he was with them when they gathered together to worship later.

There are Christians who have a naturally gloomy temperament and these tend to go off by themselves, and this is a characteristic of that temperament, yet these are the ones who can least afford to be alone. Gloom and despair prey upon them and such people will become gloomier and less believing if left alone. They must be encouraged to have faith and patient endurance based on God's assurance that he will never leave them nor forsake them.

It is true, however, in spite of their concern for Thomas, and as important as this was, the disciples could not change his mind, nor can we change the minds of other people or convert them. God must do that!

So what we read next is that Jesus appeared to lead this doubting apostle to faith. Jesus did it by inviting Thomas to perform His empirical test, that is by coming down to his level and engaging him in a way that would best lead him from unbelief to commitment and belief. Thomas had asked for something he had no right to ask for.

John 20:25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

So to treat Jesus Christ in that way would be irreverent. Moreover, Thomas implied that the test was impossible. He had no intention of believing. Thomas was definitely out of line and faithless, yet Jesus came down to his level, as He always does, to help him through. Verse 27 says:

John 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

So the fourth saying of Jesus Christ after His resurrection and before His ascension is: "Do not be unbelieving, but be believing." The reason or purpose for it is described as a great challenge. He was challenging Thomas and the challenge goes to us as well.

Our God is very gracious and we have no right to demand anything of Him. Yet He who has created us and has died to redeem us, stoops to provide what we need. Do we need evidence? If we do and if we will approach the matter honestly, we will find the proof of His Deity, death for sinners, resurrection, and promised return overwhelming.

What is striking that in this case the thing that actually convinced Thomas was not the empirical test he had demanded. He had demanded to put his finger in the holes of the nails of Christ's hands and thrust his hand into the wound of his side, but when Jesus presented Himself and invited Thomas to reach out his finger and stretch forth his hand, Thomas did not actually do it. He was convinced without these assurances and fell at Christ's feet exclaiming, in verse 28,

John 20:28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

What convinced Thomas, the thing that finally got through to him, was the presence of Christ. Identified by the wounds in His hands, feet, and side, it was Christ Himself who reached Thomas. And this was the greatest proof of all, the love of Christ revealed in His wounds.

Christ will provide what we need if we have honest intellectual questions about God's truth. He will provide intellectual answers for us. He gave us a mind as well as a heart, but the thing that will ultimately convince us is not so much the reasoned arguments, though they are often important stepping-stones, but the love of Christ demonstrated by His death for us.

So here is some encouragement. We have been discussing Thomas, the most doubting of all Christ apostles, but notice that when Christ revealed Himself to Thomas, he moved from doubt to the greatest testimony of faith in Christ recorded by this or any other gospel.

The term "Lord" was sometimes used to address Christ by others, often with less than its full meaning, but here in verse 28 it must have all the content it will bear. Yahweh, the Eternal, Master, King. Thomas also used the term God.

The term "God" is a new form of address in a sense. No one had previously address Jesus Christ in this way. It represented a great insight of faith, perhaps even greater than the similar declaration by the apostle Peter for which he was commended by Christ.

Matthew 16:13-17 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." [We see there his use of the word "God" referring to God the Father.] Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Now in case all of this is thought to be insufficient, Thomas adds the personal pronoun saying, "My Lord and my God." It was not enough that Jesus was both God and King, He was now to be that for Thomas personally, as an individual, not as a group. This is the high point of John's gospel in a sense.

John shows here how one, who began as a great doubter, came by the grace of Christ to that conviction with which the gospel began.

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

He was in the beginning with God! The Gospel of John was written to lead people to this conviction.

John 20:30-31 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 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.

No person is hopeless. God took Abraham, the pagan, and made him into a pillar of faith and the father of his people. He took Moses, the stammerer, and made him into the greatest vehicle for communication of the Word of God, until David and then Paul. He made David, the shepherd boy, into a king after God's own heart. He made Peter the weak into Peter the rock. He made John the son

of thunder into the apostle of love. He even made Paul, the persecutor of Christians, into a faithful ambassador and martyr.

The story of Thomas shows that the apostles were not a group of blind devotees who were ready to believe whatever they were told. They, and especially Thomas, insisted on proof and evidence. Is this not the way that we are sometimes? This is not to say that it is the ideal, because faith cannot be built upon what is seen.

All Thomas heard Christ say regarding His death and resurrection should have been sufficient without the aid of sight. It would have been better to distrust his senses than to discredit Christ's words.

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

This is the state you and I are in. So the fifth saying of Jesus Christ after His resurrection and before His ascension is: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." The reason or purpose for it may be described as a great blessing. So there is an added blessing for those who can believe without having seen.

It is a remarkable characteristic of the Word of God that is filled far more with blessings than with curses. There are curses to be sure, and there are warnings of judgment, but when all is put together the blessings are far more numerous and are more wonderful than any of these somber elements. The Bible begins with a blessing because we are told that after each day of creation God commented on His work saying it is good. The Bible also ends with a blessing.

Revelation 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

So the Bible begins positively and it ends positively, that is the way God works. In between are such versus as:

Genesis 1:28 "God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it."

Genesis 12:2 "I will bless you and make your name great."

Genesis 35:9 Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him.

Numbers 6:24- 26 "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Psalms 1:1 "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly."

Psalms 33:12 "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."

Psalms 119:1 "Blessed are the undefiled in the way."

Romans 4:7-8 “Blessed are they whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

Revelation 14:13 “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.”

The words bless, blessing, and blessed are used over five hundred times in the Old and New Testaments. We think of the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 as an obvious example. There are blessings pronounced upon children, upon one or more of the disciples, upon faithful servants of God, upon those who hear the Word of God and keep it. There is the blessing at the close of John's gospel at in John 20:29.

So this blessing, the fifth of Christ's last words or sayings in John's gospel, is great for several reasons. Among them is that it is the last of Christ's blessings spoken while he was on earth. Appropriately it is one that concerns not just a single person or a limited group of people, but rather all who believe in Him as Savior.

What does Jesus mean when He says, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”? Does He mean that a subjective faith is better than an objective one? Does He mean that a faith that has no relation to evidence is better than a faith that has? Does He mean that only a faith like that is blessed? It is hard to believe that this is His meaning because He has just provided tangible evidence of His resurrection for Thomas by appearing to him and inviting him to put his finger into the holes of His hands and put his hand into Christ's side.

Again it is clear that John did not interpret Christ's words in this way because immediately after this John says that he has written certain things in his gospel in order that those who read might believe. So Jesus is not advocating a faith entirely without evidence but that still does not answer the question what does Jesus mean then?

Jesus is not speaking of a subjective faith but of a satisfied faith. He is speaking of faith that is satisfied with what God provides and is therefore not yearning for visions, miracles, esoteric experiences, or various forms of success as evidence of God's favor. More than that He is saying that a faith without these things is not inferior to, but is actually superior, to a faith based upon them.

Let us take these things one at a time and see why this is so. First of all, take visions for example. If you are, what we might call “a normal Christian,” there have been times when you have been discouraged, perhaps overcome with doubt and you might have thought something like: “If God would only reveal Himself to me in some special way so that I may see, touch, or hear Him, my faith would be made strong.” We might not say it in those exact words but we have had those thoughts, at least early in our conversion.

We know that there were people in the Bible who had such evidence. Abraham saw visions, he spoke with the three angelic visitors, he heard the voice of God from heaven on Mount Moriah. Moses met God on the mountain. On one occasion Moses was hidden in the cleft of the rock and witnessed the fire, the wind, and the earthquake as the Eternal passed by. Isaiah had a vision of God high and lifted up, then he fell on his face because he was so terrified. The disciples saw Christ in the days of His flesh. Paul was caught up to the third heaven, at least in vision. And John himself had the magnificent visions recorded in the book of Revelation.

Some people wonder why they cannot have something similar. They tend to think that they could believe much better and be far more effective in their Christian life and witness if they did have magnificent miracles happening in their lives, but that is not true. We usually want such experiences for the wrong reasons, the main reason being vanity. We would have a far higher opinion of ourselves if we were granted an experience which most people do not have. Another reason is that visions do not necessarily lead to greater faith.

The second example is the miracles or other special acts of God's providence. If you think you could believe God better if you saw some great miracles, actually the opposite is the case. If breathtaking observable miracles had happened in your life, you would gradually become insensitive to the thousands of normal evidences of God's mercy which you receive constantly and you would begin to take them for granted. Think of the Israelites and all the miracles that they saw and how quickly they lost faith, what little faith they had.

The third example is there are people who think they would have stronger faith and be a better able to live the Christian life if they were to have some special enigmatic experience.

The miracle is not only for the benefit of the person receiving the miracle, although there are benefits in that way, and it is not for the glorification of the recipient. Notice what the apostle Paul says is the reason for spiritual gifts, which includes miracles, is here in I Corinthians 12.

I Corinthians 12:7-11 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

We think that if we could only do or experience something like that we would be stronger and happier as Christians, but that is not true either. God sometimes grants such experiences for the good of His church, and the very fact that Paul lists these gifts in I Corinthians 12, is evidence that He does.

But certainly anyone who reads these chapters carefully will note that Paul does not encourage us to seek these experiences. If anything, he seems to warn against them, and he certainly does not pronounce any special blessing upon their exercise. Why is that? Because the blessings of the gospel are for those who live by faith and not by sight, who live by their faith in the character and benevolence of God and not in the evidence of visions, miracles, or other such experiences.

There is one other item which must not be left out, if only because it is so common in our day. It is the supposed evidence of success, measured by the number of people converted, church growth, income for Christian institutions, and other such things. This means that we are not to tie our faith in God to such circumstances. We are to pray, believe, and go on working even when we do not see this kind of numerical blessing.

What is faith? Faith is believing God on the basis of His Word and then acting upon it. This is true faith, it is this that God blesses and God promises a blessing upon those who have faith. God blesses faith, not those living out some unusual experience.

Suppose that God's blessings were linked to the unusual experience or the miracle. In that case either His blessing would be for a small and select group only or else the things we consider unusual would have become common place. We would just take such things for granted as being a normal part of life.

They would be like those other countless evidences of God's providence which we enjoyed daily but do not regard so highly simply because they are common. No, the blessings of God are for all and they are based not upon the unusual in a Christian's life, but upon faith, which by its very nature and definition is common to all who call upon the name of Christ as God and Savior.

This is why the Gospel of John ends on this note. It ends here because John wants to encourage everyone to believe in Jesus Christ and enjoy God's blessings. What are those blessings? There are many ways to answer that question because faith is discussed again and again throughout the Bible.

We may answer it at this point just from John's gospel remembering that John's gospel is primarily the gospel of faith. In John the Greek word for faith *pistos* always occurs in its verbal form *hesdeuce* and is therefore translated as "believe." In that form, "believe," it occurs more often in John than any other biblical book.

We find the word 101 times in John's gospel, compared with a combined use of "faith" and "believe" only 64 times in Romans, and 22 times in Mark. So John is obviously concerned with faith and considers it of prime importance. Whenever John talks about belief or believing, he is talking about having faith in Jesus Christ, and of course God the Father.

What does he say of the blessings that flow from it? The following ten items are prominent and I am going to refer to a scripture for each of these:

1) It is by faith that we become children of God and thus enter into the privileges of being in God's spiritual Family. John indicates this at several points, but especially in his first chapter where he says:

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

Now certainly this is a great blessing and the source of many others this follow.

2) It is through faith that we have eternal life. This is the teaching of the best-known verse in the gospel.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Then in I Corinthians 15 Paul tells us:

I Corinthians 15:26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

Death will be conquered by faith which unites us to Christ who conquered it.

3) By faith we are delivered from judgment. John quotes Jesus in John 5 as saying:

John 5:24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

4) Faith ushers us into the blessings of spiritual satisfaction now.

John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

To come to Christ is to believe in Christ and that is what the parallelism suggests. So belief in Christ is set forth as the key to having all spiritual longings fulfilled.

5) Jesus also calls faith the means for entering into the final resurrection.

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

6) Faith in Jesus is also said to be the way in which we become blessings to others, by way of the Holy Spirit which imparts some of God's blessings to us.

John 7:38-39 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The image here is of a broad river flowing through a desert land giving life and joy to all who come upon it.

7) Through faith we see the glory of God.

John 11:40 Jesus said to her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”

Without faith we will be like the world which is surrounded by the glory of God in nature, yet either does not see it or else attributes it to that which is not God by worshipping idols. It is only as we look to God that our eyes are increasingly open to see what it is what He is doing.

(I would like to interject something here and that is, today is Earth Day. It is a pagan holiday of the world, of the environmentalists. So do not get caught up in celebrating Earth Day. It is the 22nd of April (it is also Lenin's birthday), and it is deeply tied to the occult, so run from Earth Day as a celebration because the world does not see God in nature. They just see their god as nature.)

8) Faith is a secret of a holy life.

John 12:46 “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”

In biblical language darkness is the darkness of sin, and therefore “walking in the light” means walk in holiness by means of the spiritual and moral life with which God gives.

9) The blessing of a fruitful and effective life comes by faith.

John 14:12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

This does not necessarily refer to what we would call miracles, though the disciples did perform miracles, but it refers rather to the many works of witnessing, preaching, and Christ-like service performed by God's people. They are performed by those who take God at His Word and go provide a true witness of his way of life.

10) Lastly, it is through faith that we receive the benefits of Christ's prayers on our behalf.

John 17:20 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.”

We are told,

James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

How much more will the prayers of Jesus Christ avail for us? Even if we lacked all other promises of blessings through faith, this alone should be enough.

Looking at all of these, it is really amazing how many blessings that come from believing in Jesus Christ and God the Father!

Let me shift gears here. Have you ever read a book and wondered afterward why anyone would write it? There are a number of reasons why books are written. Sometimes people write because their jobs depend on it, this is particularly true of professors and some colleges and universities. Some people write because they think it is good for them to write. Still others write as an ego trip, they want their names to be known.

These reasons for writing are largely unworthy of course, but next to others that evoke answers like these are others so clear to in their point and so helpful in development, that their worth is immediately apparent. Such are the classics such as the Bible is the best example, as is the book of John.

Why was the Gospel of John written? The author tells us why in the verses that close chapter 20 and that therefore properly close the book, since chapter 21 is in the nature of an epilogue.

John 20:30-31 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 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.

So John is saying that there were many other things about which he could have written, but that the things he did write were chosen rigorously on the basis of a two-part goal. That goal centers in a person—Jesus Christ.

The first part, the principal, is that those learning about Jesus might believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God. The second part, a consequence to the first, is that the one believing might have eternal life through Christ's name. This is what sets John, and also the Bible as a whole, apart from most other books.

Many books are written to glorify the writer—the author writes about himself. Other books are memoirs of famous people. John is not like this, and neither is the Bible as a whole. Inspired writers freely identify themselves but then they lose themselves in their theme and never glorify either themselves or their achievements. On the contrary, if they speak of themselves at all it is to tell of their own shameful failures so that we might glorify God all the more.

There is no example more striking in this regard than apostle John. He was alert and sensitive. He was a member of a small band of disciples and had therefore traveled with Jesus during the days of His ministry. He was even a member of what we might call the “inner circle” composed of Peter, James, and John.

John must have known more about Jesus by the way of actual fact, sympathy, and direct experience than anyone else, yet he was so far from calling attention to himself or his own superior knowledge that he does not even mention himself by name while composing the gospel. The apostle John used amazing reserve in refusing to use personal reminiscences and details to embellish his gospel. He purposely omits those places of His life in which he might have been. John, James, and Peter were frequently selected by the Messiah to be with Him when others were excluded, but of these occasions John says nothing. He never says, “I was there.”

At the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus it is said of the disciples, as well as the relatives in the multitude, that the Lord put them all out and only suffered the three to be with Him. This was a singular honor, but John does not say a word about the raising of the daughter of Jairus in his account, even though he was there.

Even more amazing is the fact that Christ, when He took with Him the eleven to the garden, He left the major part of them at the gate but He led the three further into the garden and told them to wait at about a stone's cast distance, where some of them heard His prayers and observed the bloody sweat. John, who is one of them, says nothing about it.

John leaves out these things which would promote himself in any way in order that he may put Jesus Christ in the foreground of his writing at every opportunity. Everything you write is to promote the one grand end: that you should believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The purpose that John had and revealed so clearly should be the goal of every Christian.

When John the Baptizer was approached about the astonishing success of Jesus in gathering disciples to Himself, he replied, “He must increase but I must decrease.” So Jesus must, and we must be certain that even in our witnessing we do not detract from our heavenly Father and our Savior Jesus Christ. It is not about us, it is about Them!

Another reason why many books are written is to satisfy curiosity. These books generally sell well because people have great curiosity about certain things. Over the years there have been scores of books by people who have worked for those who are famous and who pretend to let us in on their secrets. People buy these books because they want to know details about the lives of the people involved. But John, though he deals with the most famous Person who ever lived, does not write in that manner.

Most people in writing about Jesus would have recorded a physical description, they would have told how tall he was, how much he weighed, the color of His eyes and hair, other items of a physical nature. They would have told of His childhood, His first friends, what people thought of Him before He began His earthly ministry. They would have told what finally happened to Nicodemus, the reaction of the leaders of Israel to the news of Christ's resurrection, and other such things.

But God did not inspire the gospel writers to record Jesus' life in that way. As John indicates, he wrote only that which would lead us to faith in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God, not to satisfy any understandable, but useless, curiosity.

John's concluding words might have been taken as this: "You have been reading and studying my gospel for some time now and you have come to the end. Have you grasped my purpose? Can it be that you have missed it after all this time? In case you have missed it let me spell it out. Jesus did many, many things but I have not recorded all of them, I have recorded only a part, but I have recorded that part so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and through that belief you might have life through His name."

Have you ever thought of John's gospel in that light? Have you ever noticed that for all its deep theology the gospel of John is primarily a series of testimonies to Christ? Let us consider the testimonies of Christ their in sequence.

In the opening pages of the gospel, after John's own introduction, we have the first testimony. It was of John the Baptizer. As John tells it the leaders of Jerusalem came to the Baptizer to ask who he was and after denying that he was Elijah, that prophet, or the Christ, the Baptizer described himself as one who had come simply to announce the Messiah and point to Him. The next day he had his chance. Jesus passed by and John the Baptizer pointed Him out to two of his own disciples saying,

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Later he formalized his witness saying:

John 1:33-34 "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

The same chapter contains three further testimonies to Jesus. When John the Baptizer had pointed Jesus out to His disciples they left the Baptizer and followed Jesus. They then spent the rest of the day with Jesus and was so impressed that one of them, Andrew, immediately set off to find his brother Peter who said to him:

John 1:41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ).

In the next verses Jesus finds Philip and calls him to discipleship, and Philip then goes to call his friend Nathaniel.

John 1:45 Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

At first Nathaniel is skeptical but after he meets Jesus and is confronted with supernatural knowledge he declares movingly, in verse 49,

John 1:49 Nathaniel answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Then in chapter 2 we have the first of Christ’s many miracles, the changing of water into wine at the marriage feast at Cana. The climax of the story is in verse 11 where we are told of the miracle’s effect upon the disciples who alone of all the guests knew of it.

John 2:11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

The next two chapters introduce us to three representative figures and to others who are associated with them and they give their testimonies. The first figure is Nicodemus. He has little understanding and it is not said that he believes, but the account of his conversation with Jesus leads into John's own comments regarding the person and work of the Savior. He described in chapter 3 as “God's one and only Son whom God gave so that the world might not perish.”

The woman of Samaria dominates chapter 4. Unlike Nicodemus who was a person of repute and privilege, she was an immoral representative of a despised race. She was also a woman, but Jesus revealed Himself to her and led her to faith. Her testimony was in the form of a question, that she asked the men of the city after she had conversed with Jesus, she said,

John 4:29 “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?”

As a result of her witness many of the citizens of Sychar came out to meet Jesus and later said to the woman,

John 4:42 Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

At the end of chapter 4, we have the story of the nobleman whose son was dying. Jesus healed the son by just a word without going to his home.

John 4:53 So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, “Your son lives.” And he himself believed, and his whole household.

In chapter 5 Jesus Himself lists the testimonies that were given to Him, testimonies that God the Father provided. The first is John the Baptizer whose witness was that of a prophet inspired by God. The second is the witness that Christ’s works were miracles. Jesus always attributed these to the power of the Father at work within Him. The third is the direct witness of God Himself, “by a voice from heaven.”

John 5:39 “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”

In chapter 6 the five thousand are fed and the result is that many come to believe in Jesus Christ.

John 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”

Later when Jesus refused to conform to the materialistic expectations of the crowd many of these disciples left Him, but when He returned to his own small band to ask if they wanted to go away, they refused and instead gave great testimony to Him. Peter was the spokesman for the disciples who said in John 6:69

John 6:69 “Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Chapter 7 shows that not just a few but many took notice.

John 7:31 And many of the people believed in Him, and said, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?”

Chapter 8 also tells us that there were a lot of people who recognize the significance of what He was doing.

John 8:29-30 “And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

Chapter 9 contains the story of the man born blind. This man did not see Christ because he could not even see to seek Him out, Jesus sought him, just as He seeks each of us, and He restored the man's sight, both physically and spiritually.

The restoration of spiritual sight is seen in the man's growing awareness of who Jesus was and of His significance for him personally. In verse 11 he calls Jesus “the man,” later in verse 17 he is “a prophet.” Still later he concludes that He must be from God because if He were not he could do nothing and this led to his belief in the Son of God.

John 9:35-37 Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.”

So after Jesus had found him a second time and had revealed Himself to be the Son of God, the man who had been born blind fell at His feet and worshipped Him as Lord. We will pick up the story again in verse 38.

John 9:38-39 Then he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshiped Him. And Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.”

Chapter 10 covers the incident of when the Jews would not believe who Jesus said He was. In further proof He referred to His doing the works of His Father.

John 10:37-38 “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.”

Chapter 11 contains the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, and the result of this last of the miracles.

John 11:45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.

In chapter 12 we are told that many, even among the leaders, believe in Him.

John 12:42-44 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Then Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me.”

So for all of its deep theology, the Gospel of John is primarily a series of testimonies to Christ which we have just witnessed through this brief survey of these chapters.

In John 20, it is quite clear that as the gospel was originally planned and it comes to an end with verse 31, as far as John's purpose at this point.

John 20:31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life [eternal life] in His name.

After the resurrection we have the experiences of Peter, John, Mary, and the disciples as a whole, and eventually Thomas's great realization, “My Lord and my God.” Clearly from first to last the Gospel of John is a testimony to Jesus Christ, “That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.”

Now it is important to point out one last essential thing here. Although John emphasized that he wrote these things that we may have faith that Jesus is the Son of God as a testimony to Jesus Christ, John also recorded that Christ himself made reference to and glorified His Father over one hundred times.

So as John gave witness of the Son of God, Jesus Christ gave witness of His Father, therefore the Father is ultimately glorified in the Gospel of John.

In my next sermon we will finish with the sixth and seventh sayings of Jesus Christ which He spoke after His resurrection and before His ascension, recorded in chapter 21, which is provided as an appendix or in the nature of an epilogue.