

Route 66

John: Son of God

Part 43 - November 7, 2010

Five times in the Gospel of John, the author identifies himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. And the video is a take on one of my favorite Gospel passages.

... Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, **the one Jesus loved**, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but **the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first**. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, **who was behind him**, arrived and went into the tomb. ... Finally the other disciple, **who had reached the tomb first**, also went inside. He saw and believed. - *John 20:1b-8 NIV*

These are the facts as John reports them: alerted by Mary, raced to the tomb ... I won ... and Jesus had risen! Historians watch for irrelevant details in order to authenticate ancient reports. Fabricated accounts, by nature, generalize the details, whereas genuine sources simply write what they recall. Some theologians believe John includes the “race” to demonstrate that Peter was an ordinary man. Because, by the time John wrote this, the late Peter had taken on mythic proportions.



The “Curetes Way”, Ephesus

When John wrote this, he was an old man living in Ephesus. It was about 50 years after Jesus’ death and John is the only *living* apostle left. Church history tells us he came here with Jesus’ mother, after Jesus had left her in John’s care. John is the *only* apostle who will die naturally of old age (at about 94). He saw Christianity flourish and spread throughout the known world, and along with it, persecution.



The synoptic Gospels had been circulating for more than two decades; and, as false doctrine and heresy crept into the faith, John came to realize that a vital emphasis on Jesus was missing.



Matthew had written to the Jews. His prophecy laden book emphasized Jesus as the promised Messianic King who came to establish a spiritual kingdom. Mark had written to the Romans. His action oriented book portrayed Jesus as a Suffering Servant; and it resonated with Rome’s slave population. Luke wrote to the Greeks. His non-Jewish, investigative report, examined Christ’s compassion, and depicted Jesus as the Son of Man.





Now, twenty-some years later, John writes to the world at large. The close friend who knew Jesus best is chosen by God to reveal His deepest truth. Yes, Jesus was the King of the Jews *and* the Suffering Servant *and* the compassionate Son of Man. *But*, He was also something more - something far greater. John reveals Jesus as the Son of God. And in fact, God Himself!

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. - *John 1:1 & 14a NIV*

John says that the *Word* (God's wisdom, authority, and expression) was both "with God" and "was God" since before ... *everything!* He intentionally parallels the "In the beginning" of Genesis 1:1. Just as God made man in His own image, He has now come in the image of man, becoming flesh in order to reveal Himself to his creation and restore our broken relationship. In Jesus, perfect humanity is fused with deity, making Him the *only* possible substitute sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

John's book is unlike the synoptic Gospels. He includes no genealogy, manger, parables, transfiguration, Ascension, or Great Commission. This wasn't his purpose in writing.

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the **Son of God**, and that by believing you may have life in his name.
- John 20:30-31 NIV

The key word in John's Gospel is "believe" (it comes up 98 times). John the Baptist believed it. He says: "I have seen and I testify that this is the **Son of God**." - *John 1:34 NIV*

Nathanael, Jesus' fourth disciple, believed it and declared: ... "Rabbi, you are the **Son of God**; ..." - *John 1:49 NIV*

Martha, the sister of Lazarus believed it and said: "I believe that you are the Christ, the **Son of God** ..." - *John 11:27 NIV*

Only John tells the story of Jesus' first miracle, turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. And John says that this is when the disciples really put their faith in Him.



When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." [Like any good mother, she ignores Him *and* has complete faith in Him. Makes you wonder what kind of miracles He was practicing at home!] Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. [That's 756 bottles!] Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." ... - *John 2:3-8 NIV*

And the master applauds the groom for saving the best till last! In scripture, wine often denotes joy, celebration, and blessing, especially *after* it came to represent Jesus' blood. Did you notice that Jesus didn't instruct the servants to pour the water into the empty wine jugs? He had them use six stone water jars, "the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing". The Jews were legalistic about religious washing. This is like putting punch in a baptismal font. Why would Jesus create wine in ritual cleansing jars?!

He's foreshadowing the fact that the Son of God has come to replace legalistic ritual with joyful devotion, by using His own blood instead of water to *permanently* wash away our uncleanness.



After this, John (and *only John*) records Jesus' visit with a member of the Jewish ruling council named Nicodemus.

... [Nicodemus] said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." - *John 3:2b-3 NIV*

Gentile converts to Judaism were called "newborns"; so, Nicodemus knew the term. But, the idea a *Jew by birth* needing to "convert" to something in order to be saved baffled Nicodemus. Nicodemus knew God's law, but not His love. He knew religious regulations but not God's tender hearted affection.

Remember when venomous snakes attacked the Israelites; and God had Moses lift a bronze snake on a cross-pole so that anyone poisoned could look on it in faith and be saved? (*Num. 21:4-9*)



Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. - *John 3:14-17 NIV*

At a time when *every* religion was based on trying to keep the gods happy, the Word becomes flesh in order to say, "I'm not angry. My desire is life and joy." And what He asks in return is for us to receive what He's offering and live out your new life with sincere appreciation.

See where it says: "One and only Son"? That means "unique", not "created". The Nicene Creed says: "... begotten, not made ..." because God didn't *make* a Son; God *is* the Son!

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself ... - *John 8:58-59a NIV*

The Jews tried to kill Him because they knew *exactly* what He meant. When Moses asked God His name, God said, “I Am”. (Ex. 3:14) Jesus reveals His God-nature with several “I Am” statements:

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry ... - *John 6:35 NIV*

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness ... - *John 8:12a NIV*

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me ... - *John 10:14 NIV*

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies ... - *John 11:25b NIV*

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. - *John 14:6 NIV*

We’re told that as a disciple, John was:

- Possessive and tried to stop others from ministering in Jesus name ... and had to be rebuked. (*Luke 9:49-50*)
- Vengeful and wanted Jesus to send down fire on an unwelcoming village ... and had to be rebuked. (*Luke 9:51-56*)
- Overly ambitious and had his mom ask Jesus for a position of power in His kingdom ... and had to be rebuked. (*Mat. 20:20-28*)
- Hot-tempered and was nicknamed “Son of Thunder” by Jesus.

And yet, John describes himself as: “the one Jesus loved”. That’s really how you should think of yourself. The more you recognize, comprehend, and accept the love of God, the more deeply you’ll be able to love others in His name.

Toward the end of John’s Gospel Jesus appears to the disciples and breathes His Holy Spirit into them and says:

As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. - *John 20:21b NIV*

What Jesus was sent down to do, we are now sent *out* to do. Like the four Gospel writers, we’ve been called to share God’s love by sharing His Son, in our own individual, unique ways.

There’s an old poem about this:

We each write a gospel, a chapter a day,
With our love and our deeds and the things that we say;
Some jot down what’s false and others what’s true,
But what is the gospel according to *you*?