

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

JOHN LESSON 2 (Chapter 1-3)

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey/

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (Jn. 1:1-2). In this text in John 1:1-3, Jesus is identified as being the eternal Word Who was in the beginning with God, and Who is God in the flesh. John’s message is to convince men and women that Jesus is divine. 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” (Jn. 20:30-31). In today’s lesson, we will be looking at the highlights of John 1-3 where John presents Jesus as the Word of God, as the light from God, and as the only way to have eternal life with God.

He begins by showing us that Jesus is the eternal Word. In the beginning was the Word. In John 6:68 Jesus spoke some hard things to His disciples. Some of those disciples then decided to walk with Him no more. He turned to the rest and asked, “Do you want to go away also?” Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Jesus is the eternal Word, and the words He speaks give eternal life. In John 7:17 Jesus said, “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” We must have access to the teaching of God through Jesus and His disciples before we can go to Heaven. Jesus, as the eternal Word, shows us the power of His message.

In verse 1 we learn that Jesus existed before creation. “In the beginning was the word.” In the Greek, that word “was” means literally “already was.” It is not as though the beginning arrives and then Jesus arrives, too. In the beginning, the Word of God (Jesus) “already was.” Jesus, as God, has always existed. In Psalm 90:2 we are told, “From everlasting to everlasting, You are God.” In Genesis 1:26 God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” In Genesis 2:7 we read, “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” The “Us” used to describe God is the plural personal pronoun. Who is the “Us”? It is Jesus the Son, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Colossians 1:15 shows us that Jesus was God’s agent in creation. All things were made by Him. God created all things through Jesus, His Son. In Revelation 5:5 we learn that He is the root and offspring of David. How can He be both the root and the offspring? As the root, He is the Creator of all life. As the offspring, Jesus was born Joseph and Mary, who were of the seed of David. Christ existed before creation.

Jesus is God, as verse 2 shows us. “He was in the beginning with God.” The Gospel of John presents Jesus as being divine. In John 10:30 Jesus said, “My Father and I are one.” They are one in purpose, one in nature, and one in person. Both are God. Both have the goal and mindset of saving mankind. Philippians 2:5-7 says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be

equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men." Christ humbled Himself and died a death on the cross. Jesus did not consider it robbery to give up His equality with God. He gave that up, came to Earth, and lived as a man. Yes, He was still God. But He also took a human form upon Himself, and became the incarnate Son of God. This proved that He is God. In John 20:28 when Thomas saw the nail prints in Jesus' hand and the hole in His side, he said, "My Lord and my God!" Christians are looking for the glorious hope and appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Tit. 2:11-14). Of course, one of the most powerful of passages is Hebrews 1:7-11 where God said to the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever." God the Father called the Son "God," thus proving that Jesus is divine.

We must understand that belief in Christ is the only way that people can have eternal life. In John 1:12 Jesus said, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." We must believe in Jesus. But there is an important point here. Believing in Jesus does not automatically make a person a child of God. It gives the right to become a child of God. Believing puts us in the arena of those who can become children of God by doing what He says. Belief alone will not save, but gives us the right to become what we are not. We are not children of God at the point of belief alone. In James 2:24 we read, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." The only time that the phrase "faith only" ("faith alone") occurs in the Bible is where God said that we are not justified by faith alone. In Matthew 7:21 Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." In Jesus' day people called Him "Lord," but they were not doing what He said. This is why He asked, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' but do not do the things I have said"? (Lk. 6:46). Jesus is the author of salvation "to all those who obey Him" (Heb. 5:8-9). We must commit to Jesus, and do all He says we must do to become children of God. Belief gives us the ability to become that which we are not yet. We are not children of God at the point of God, but we can become such if we submit to Christ's will and continue to obey Him.

In John 1:29 Jesus is presented as being "the Lamb of God." John the Immerser sees Jesus approaching, and then says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." In Revelation 5 there is a bittersweet scene. John has a scroll that will unleash the wrath of God on the ungodly heathens who are persecuting Christians. But there is a problem. There is no one who can open the scroll, which causes John to weep bitterly. Then the Lamb whose throat was cut appears. He had been prepared "before the foundation of the world." Jesus came forth to unleash God's power, anger, and wrath against even people. Because of the great sacrifice that Jesus made, God's plan was unfolded. In 1 Peter 1:17-20 we learn that we are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold from our aimless conduct, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." Without the blood that comes from a sacrifice, there can be no forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sins. Hebrews 10:3-4 adds to that by saying that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins. Where is the Savior, then? Verse 12 answers that when it says, "This Man, Jesus, after He had offered one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down at the right hand of God." Jesus therefore is seen as the beautiful sacrifice Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

In John 2 we see the first miracle that Jesus performed. He is shown to be the Master of content and quality. Jesus, His mother, and His disciples had been invited to a wedding in Cana. The master of the feast ran out of wine (grape juice). Jesus' mother asked Him to

change some water to wine. Jesus gave in to her request. He told the servants to put water in the pots (somewhere between 120 to 160 gallons). They did this, and Jesus then told them to go give the pots to the master so he could take their contents. What they first brought to Jesus as water, they later took to the master as the best grape juice the man had ever tasted. Jesus made the best. Whatever Christ does is superior because He is divine. This shows His power over natural laws. He took water, and changed it into wine. It was not just any grape juice, but the best that the master of the feast had ever tasted. This shows the power of Christ in this miracle.

Sometimes people come to John 2 in order to try to make Jesus teach things that He never taught, and things that are contradictory to the will of God. Some people want to suggest that Jesus made alcoholic wine, which means that it is all right for Christians to drink alcoholic beverages. It is not possible to prove from this text, however, that Jesus made alcoholic wine. In fact, a person would prove that Jesus did not make alcoholic wine in this instance, long before he could prove that Jesus did make alcoholic wine. If a person says that Jesus made alcoholic wine, you are saying that Jesus made anywhere from 120 to 160 gallons of wine for people who had already drunk well. The wedding's guests had been drinking for a while. That would equal about 4,300 cups of intoxicating wine for people to get drunk off of. Why is there a problem with this kind of thinking? It would be a direct violation of Habakkuk 2:15—"Do not press your neighbor to the bottle to get him drunk." It was a sin under Old Testament law to cause someone to get drunk. If Jesus, the sinless Son of God Who had to die as a sinless sacrifice according to God's will, were to make 120 to 160 gallons of alcoholic wine (4,300 cups) for people who had already drunk well, yet the Scriptures says not to do that, that would mean that Jesus sinned. We may as well close up our Bibles and go home if we are willing to say that. Jesus did not make alcoholic wine.

Others have tried to use the statement which indicates that the best wine had been saved until the last to show that this must have been fermented wine. Actually, the opposite would be true. Today's alcoholic standards were not the standards used back then. In the first century, wine was judged to be the best if it tasted the freshest—the closest to coming off the vine. Such wine was not fermented, but closest resembled fresh-squeezed grapes. That was the best wine. Thus, when it says that the best wine had been saved until last, it means that Jesus made it as close as possible to fresh-squeezed grapes. He did not make alcoholic wine. He did not violate the will of God by causing people to get drunk. He made the best grape juice imaginable. If people want to come to this test to suggest that Jesus made wine, and that it is all right for Christians to drink alcoholic beverages, they are in error. The child of God is commanded not to get drunk. Ephesians 5:18 says, "Do not be drunk with wine." That is a direct command. If it takes six beers for a person to get fully drunk, and that person drinks two beers, how drunk is he? We are not to have anything to do with alcohol. Proverbs 20:1 says, "Wine is a mocker; strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." We are not to have anything to do with alcoholic beverages. In 1 Peter 5:8 we are told to "be sober." That is the opposite of what some people teach in regard to John 2.

Christians are to be the light of the world (Mt. 5:16). We are to be the lamp that is set on a table for everyone to see. If we are the light of the world, and if we are to reach others with the Gospel (Lk. 19:10), how can we convert them if we are buying alcohol, drinking, and getting drunk? How will people view that? They will view it as something worldly and ungodly. It will destroy our influence if we get involved in such things. We must abstain from those things because Jesus did not make intoxicating wine in John 2.

There is a powerful statement in verse 5 of John 2. This statement, which comes from the lips of Christ's mother, should be every Christian's motto. She told the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." Can you find a better motto in the Bible than that? If Jesus says something to you, do not second guess it, and you do not question it. Whatever Jesus says, go and do. That is what we all need to do (Mt. 7:21). We need to do the will of the Father. Jesus has the word of life, and we need to submit to those words and do them. He is the author eternal salvation to all those who obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). We need to walk in His footsteps and do the will of the Father. We do not need to allow our prejudices and biases to influence us. Whatever Jesus says, we must do. Isn't that simple? Wouldn't we be a lot better off if we did that. Those are things that can help us to better live the Christian life and do what God wants us to do.

In John 2:25 we are told that Jesus "knew what was in man." Jesus knows our hearts. Hebrews 4:13 tells us that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." In Luke 16:15 we learn that God knows what is in the heart of every man. Acts 1:24 tells us that God knows our hearts. Proverbs 15:3 tells us that the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the good and the evil. Ecclesiastes 12:14 tells us that God even knows secret things. God knows if we are sincere, or if we are hypocrites. If you are not living the way we ought to, you are not fooling anybody. You may think you have the people around you fooled. You may think that you have your wife and your kids fooled. You may think that you have people at the church house fooled. But no one is really fooled. God is not mocked. He will not be laughed at or made fun of. You will not trick God. God knows what is in your heart. He knows who you really are. On the Day of Judgment, if we have not done what we should have done, and if we have not been sincere, but have had ulterior motives, we will not be right with God. God knows what is within our hearts. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). God knows what we think in our hearts.

In John 3 we see a discourse between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews who had come to Jesus by night. He flattered Jesus by saying, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." How did Jesus respond? In John 3:3-5 Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus was confused and said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Jesus went straight to the heart of the matter by saying, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know that unless he submitted to Christ's will and was born again, he could not enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus did not understand, which is why he asked, "Can a man enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" In verse 5 Jesus clarified His statements by saying, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This is powerful teaching regarding how to get into God's kingdom. People sometimes say, "I hear what you're saying about baptism, and those passages are all good and well, but you cannot find a passage in the Bible that says you can't go to Heaven unless you're baptized." I beg to differ, and so does John 3:5. If, and only if, a man is born of water, can he enter the kingdom of God. If a person does not do that, he will not be a part of God's kingdom. How do we know that being born of water refers to baptism? Titus 3:5 tells us that we are to undergo a washing of regeneration. Ephesians 5:26 tells us that we are to be washed and cleansed via the new birth. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we are told, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." How do we get clean, remove our sins, and enjoy the washing of regeneration? Acts 2:38 tells us—"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." At

what point are our sins removed? It is at the point that we go down into the water and obey God in baptism. Acts 22:16 is so clear. Sin separates us from God and stains our character. We must have our character cleansed by the blood of God's Son in order for us to be right. When does that happen? Saul was told by Ananias, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Are we saying that baptism saves? We are saying that Jesus said that baptism saves. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Are you saying that to get into Christ we must be born again through baptism? That is what Paul, by inspiration, said. In Romans 6:1-4 Paul said that we are buried with Christ in baptism, and are raised to walk in newness of life. That is the new birth. We are born again by the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:25). God's Word tells us to submit to God in baptism. What, then, does it mean to be born "by water and the Spirit"? How are we "born by the Spirit"? When we let the Bible define terms, it is so much simpler than when we let men do it. In 1 Peter 1:23 we find a divine commentary on how we are born by the Spirit. We are "born again by the word of God, which lives and endures forever." The Holy Spirit inspired God's Word. Jesus said, "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). The Holy Spirit did that in the first century. Jude 3 said that "the faith" had been "once for all delivered" to the saints. When we submit to the Word of God, we are born again by the Word, which was given by the Spirit. When we submit to God said by being baptized, then we are born of water and the Spirit.

But what if a person was baptized, but thought that he had been saved before he was baptized. If that is the case, things are backward, and that person is not right with God. That person has not yet done God's will, but he can. A lot of people think they are saved, and then later are baptized to be added to a denominational group. But that is not what the Scriptures teach. In 1 Peter 3:21 we are told that baptism "does also now save us, not the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." I am not saying that there is something mystical or magical in the water. Rather, when we submit to God's will, He knows that we have done what He wants us to do, and thus He forgives us of our sins. Peter said, "Baptism does also now save us." A person is saved at the point of baptism. Does a person "earn" his salvation? No. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). We do not earn our salvation. We do not deserve it, but receive it through the grace of God. But must we do exactly what God said? Absolutely! Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." This is in contrast to what so many people teach and believe about being saved. People often quote passages like John 3:16, which is indeed a powerful verse on the love of Jesus. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." People take this one verse and then say, "All you have to do is believe, and then you'll be saved." That is not even what the context is teaching. The context takes us back to the time of the serpent in Israel when people had to stop what they were doing, physically go find the serpent, and look at it to be saved. They had to meet certain requirements. If they had been bitten by the serpents, they could not say, "Well, I know God said that I should go look on the serpent, but instead I'll just believe in my heart." Would those people have been healed? No. They had to stop what they were doing, find the serpent, and look upon it. John 3:36 helps us when it says, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him" (ASV). What is the synonym for "believe" in John 3:36? It is the word "obey." True belief is trusting obedience to God. It is not just mental acceptance. You will never find that in the Bible. You must obey what God says in order to be saved.

So, I ask you today: Have you submitted your life to Jesus? He is the Word, the light, and the life. Have you obeyed the Gospel the way Jesus teaches us to? Have you heard the Word of God (Rom. 10:17)? Have you believed in Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 8:24)? Have you repented of those things in your life that are not right (Lk. 13:3)? Have you made the good confession (Mt. 10:32-33)? Have you submitted to God's will in baptism (prior to being saved, not after you thought you were saved; Mk. 16:16)? If not, I beg you today in light of the facts to do so. Only those who submit to Jesus as the Son of God, and who obey His will, can be saved. In view of these facts, make sure that you are right with God, that you have obeyed the Gospel, and that you are a child of His. Jesus is the Son of God, and He promises to take His children home with Him. Are you a child of the Son of God? If not, won't you become one today?

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR JOHN LESSON 2 (CHAPTERS 1-3)

1. According to John 1:1-3, who was “in the beginning with God”?
2. According to John 6:68, who has “the word of eternal life”?
3. When we read in Genesis 1:26, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness,” to whom does the word “Us” refer?
4. What important point is presented in John 10:30?
5. According to Philippians 2:5-7, with whom does Jesus share equality?
6. In Hebrews 1:8, how did God address His Son Jesus?
7. According to this lesson, what important point is made in John 1:12?
8. What did Jesus say in Matthew 7:21?
9. When John the Immerser saw Jesus approaching (Jn. 1:29), what did He say?
10. According to Hebrews 9:12, what did Jesus do for us?
11. What does Habakkuk 2:15 say?
12. How does Habakkuk 2:15 impact the view that, in John 2, Jesus made alcoholic wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee?
13. According to Matthew 5:16, what are Christians to be?
14. In John 2:5 we find a good motto for all Christians. What is it?
15. What important point is made at the end of the passage found in John 2:25?
16. What does Proverbs 23:7 say?
17. In John 3:5, what did Jesus tell Nicodemus?
18. What does it mean to be born “of water and of the Spirit”?
19. According to Titus 3:5, people who want to become Christians must undergo “a washing of regeneration.” What does that mean?
20. In Acts 22:16, what did Ananias tell Saul of Tarsus to do to get rid of his sins?
21. In Acts 2:38, what did Peter tell the Jews on the Day of Pentecost to do to get rid of their sins?
22. In 1 Peter 3:21, what did Peter say “does also now save us.”