

The Reason Why

John 20:30-31

Introduction

The words were splashed in bright colors across the cover of *Time* magazine, “Can We Still Believe in Miracles?”. This feature article asked the question, “Did the miracles of the Bible, and the miracles of Jesus really happen?”

The article goes on to discuss,

The modern skeptic is still searching for evidence of a volcanic eruption that could have caused the Red Sea to part. Perhaps a comet swept across the Bethlehem skies, disguised as the Star in the East. The belief in Jesus as healer would have been enough to cure ailments that were psychosomatic to begin with.

Scholars quoted included the infamous Jesus Seminar. In fact, at the time of this article, just in time for Easter, the Jesus Seminar, a council of self-appointed biblical “scholars,” met to take up the subject of the resurrection, “Did Jesus really rise from the dead?”

Different colored marbles are given to each council member. Black if he or she is certain the event never happened but was made up; gray if the event might have been fabricated; pink if the event might actually have occurred; red if it certainly occurred. The vote was unanimous – the cup was filled with black marbles – Jesus was still dead.

With clinical, scholarly typed words, they reported, “The Bible’s account of the resurrection of Christ is a poetic rendering of a devout wish, but certainly not an authentic record.”

One professor from Duke Divinity School, Go Schevsheski, wrote, “The Gospels were talking not about the resurrection of the flesh, but about the resurrection of Christ’s selfhood, His essence!”

That makes me want to break into a John Denver song and meditate under a sacred oak tree. We have a few of them in our town.

Jesus was a great moral leader and wilderness prophet; inspired, but not divine!

I was glad the article ended with a quote from C. S. Lewis, who was blunt,

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn’t be a great moral teacher. He’d either be a deranged lunatic . . . or else he’d be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is the Son of God, or else a madman.

Believing in the miracles of Jesus is not any easier today than in the first century. With not only secular society wrapped up in its idolatry, but all of Judaism firmly entrenched and antagonistic against the claims of Christ – to say, in that day, “I believe Jesus was the Messiah,” would have been an invitation to ridicule and scorn.

“Oh?” they would say, “If He was our Messiah, where is His kingdom? I still feel the yoke of Rome about my neck. The last time I saw Jesus, He was heading toward Golgotha . . . He was nearly half dead then.”

Let me say this – the issue has never been, “Can you still believe in miracles?!” but, “Do you believe in the Messiah.”

This has been the passionate issue in the heart of the apostle John as he, under the inspired direction of the Holy Spirit, penned his gospel account.

Why John Wrote The Gospel According to John

Today, we arrive at chapter 20, verses 30 and 31, to once again be confronted with his passion.

Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

You ought to write, in the margin of your Bible, the words, “Purpose Statement.” Verse 31 is the reason why John’s gospel was written, so,

. . . that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Why Other Books Are Written

There have been countless books written throughout the ages. I asked my secretary to call the Library of Congress – she did and found that 151,000 books were published last year, or that approximately four hundred new books were published every day in America.

Why are they written?! What is their purpose?!

To enhance the reputation of the author

1. There are books that are written to enhance the reputation of the author.

One book that I read about was entitled, *Dear Me*. It was all about the author, so he humbly entitled it, *Dear Me*.

John is so immersed in his passionate theme that he forgets, or refuses, to talk about himself at all!

He was part of the inside circle – the intimate three – who experienced things the other disciples did not get the opportunity to experience. Peter, James, and John were the privileged minority who got closer to Jesus than any other human being.

John could give us the inside scoop. Imagine the book title, *My Life With God On Earth – I Was God’s Closest Friend*.

But instead, John recedes into the background and focuses the spotlight on Jesus Christ. He wants people to be impressed with Him.

So, John was one of the three disciples who saw Jesus raise Jairus’ daughter from the dead. Jesus had asked all the family, relatives, mourners, and disciples to leave, but asked John to stay and watch. John never mentions the account.

One of the most incredible moments in John’s life was when Jesus asked him, along with Peter and James, to go with Him to a mountain top where He was transfigured before them. Jesus’ face shone like the sun and His garments became as white as light; Moses and Elijah appeared and talked to Jesus. There was John, seeing the greatest Old Testament prophets, as well as Jesus shining as the sun – but no mention of it in his gospel.

John would have said, as he did in chapter 3, verse 30, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

In other words, “Shine the spotlight on the Messiah – I’m just His messenger.”

To answer to the curiosity of the public

2. Another reason books are published every day is to simply answer to the curiosity of the American public.

I am guilty of this myself. I bought a book, not too long ago, entitled, *Whatever Happened To Their Kids*, by Malcolm Forbes. In this book, you can find out what happened to the children of Karl Marx, Charles Lindbergh, Abraham Lincoln, William Hatfield, Clark Gable, Warren Harding, Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill, Doris Day, Pat Boone, and many others. I always wanted to know what happened to them – and there is all kinds of good stuff in this book! You cannot borrow this book until I am finished, but it is all there! It does nothing more than satisfy the curiosity of people who want to know. Millions of dollars are made every week, because we are curious.

Well, here is John the apostle, and he knows things that we curious people would like to know.

“C’mon, John, fill in the pages with interesting details about God in the flesh . . . what did He look like . . . how tall or strong was He . . . was His voice tenor or bass . . . what about His childhood . . . was He outgoing or quiet . . . was He artistic . . . was His hair long or short . . . did He have a sense of humor . .

. and what happened inside the Sanhedrin after He arose – did heads roll . . .”

“And John, what was life like for you? How did your father react when you left the family business? What did you and the other disciples do during the day? Give us the inside scoop.”

Can you imagine?!

There is a book entitled, *I Was President Eisenhower's Barber*. People bought it. Well, so what – Eisenhower had hair – big deal.

“John, you were the King of King's closest confidant. What was that like?!”

This gospel was not written to satisfy our curiosity, but to save our souls; not to entertain, but to evangelize and to edify.

You need to understand that, while John did not record everything we would like to know, he included everything we needed to know to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, through whom we can have eternal life.

We do not read John as historians, seeking information, we read John as worshippers, seeking intimacy with God.

The Purpose Statement of The Gospel According to John

Look again at verse 31 – the “purpose statement” of John's gospel.

but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

Titles reveal the purpose

John referred to Him by all three titles:

- Jesus – this declares His humanity; and He was a human being – God in real flesh.
- The Christ – “Christos” – “anointed one” – this designates His office as Messiah.
- The Son of God – John then defends Christ's deity by calling Him by this title.

John declares, in this verse near the end of his gospel, “In case you missed it – Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to give you eternal life.”

I like the way James Montgomery Boice paraphrases these two verses. It strikes at the heart of

everyone who has been studying John's gospel for any length of time.

Look, 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 . . . you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name.

From the beginning of this gospel to the end, John's theme is consistent – “I've presented witness after witness; testimony after testimony; sign after sign . . .”

Witnesses reveal the purpose

The witnesses are lined up in this account. Let us look at some of them.

- Chapter 1, in verse 29b, John the Baptist sees Jesus and declares,
. . . Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
- Chapter 1 also, in verse 41b, Andrew says to his big brother Peter,
. . . “We have found the Messiah” (which translated means Christ).
- Chapter 1 as well, in verse 49b, Nathanael declares,
. . . Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.
- Chapter 2 opens with miracles of Christ which impact the disciples, so that, according to verse 11b,
. . . His disciples believed in Him.
- Chapter 3 gives to us the best known words of scripture, in verse 16,
For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.
- Chapter 4 shows the startling conversion of an alley cat, simply known as “the woman of

Samaria". After Jesus told her about her past and present, she went to her village, according to verse 29, and said,

Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?

The villagers flocked out to see Him. They probably wanted to hear the stories of everything she had done. There were most likely a few nervous people in the crowd, but frankly, this woman had turned into an evangelist – Jesus must be the Messiah! Something unusual must have taken place – after meeting with Jesus, they said to this converted woman, in verse 42b,

It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world.

- Chapter 5 includes Jesus' list of the testimonies of John the Baptist, His own miracles, God the Father, and the Scriptures, which He says, in verse 39b, all,

. . . bear witness of Me

- Chapter 6 tells of five thousand people being fed the best fish dinner they have ever had and, in verse 14b, they declare,

. . . This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world.

- Chapter 6 ends with Peter saying to Jesus, in verse 69,

And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.

- Chapter 7 tells of the multitude engaging in a debate over the origin and mission of Jesus, and in verse 31, we read,

But many of the multitude believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

In our vernacular, that would be like saying, "C'mon, what does He have to do next for us to believe – stand on His head?!"

- Chapter 8, reveals, in verse 30, that,

As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

- Chapter 9 tells that a man, blind from birth, is healed, and that he falls at Jesus' feet and worships Him as Lord.
- Chapter 11, contains the amazing story of the resurrection of Lazarus, and in verse 45, we are told,

Many therefore of the Jews, who had come to Mary and beheld what He had done, believed in Him.

- Chapter 12 shows Jesus entering Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, as the crowd cheers, in verse 13b,

Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel

After the resurrection, we have the witnesses of Peter, John, Mary, and the disciples as a whole, and eventually, the climax of the great confession by the apostle Thomas, in chapter 20, verse 28b,

. . . My Lord and my God!

John's gospel opens in chapter 1, verse 1, with,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

It climaxes with the testimony of Thomas, declaring to Jesus,

. . . My Lord and my God!

It is as if John is hoping that all who read this gospel will come to that same conclusion, bow before Jesus Christ, and declare, "My Lord and my God!"

May I ask you a question? Has the purpose of John failed where you are concerned? Or, has he succeeded?

Dr. Harry Ironside, a beloved Bible teacher of a generation ago, used to tell a story that I would like to tell to you.

Many years ago, Czar Nicholas I of Russia knew a young man for whom he cared a great deal. He was the son of a good friend of his. Because of his interest in this young man, Nicholas had him assigned to a border fortress of the Russian army and appointed him to be given charge of the money used for paying the soldiers. The young man started well, but he fell into bad company and began gambling. Eventually, he gambled away not only his own wealth, but also a great amount of money taken from government funds.

He had taken just a few rubles at a time, but these had mounted and eventually, became an enormous debt.

One day, he received notice that, on the following day, an official would be coming to inspect the books.

The young man knew he was in trouble. He took out the records to find out how much money had been given to his payroll accounts. He totaled the amount. Then he went to the safe, took out the money and counted it carefully. He subtracted the money he had in hand from the money the books revealed he should have on hand. The difference was astronomical. As he sat looking at the final figure, the young officer picked up his pen and wrote in large letters, "A great debt, who can pay?"

Because he did not see how he could face the Czar and the terrible dishonor the next day held, he determined to take his life with his own revolver at the stroke of midnight. The night was warm and he was drowsy and, as he waited for the midnight hour, in spite of himself, the young man's head dropped lower and lower and he fell asleep. His head rested next to the ledger on one side and his pistol was still in his hand on the other side.

It happened that Nicholas himself, who was in the habit of sometimes putting on the uniform of a common soldier and visiting the troops to see how they were getting on, did so this night. He was coming to the halls of the very fortress in which the young officer was sleeping. Most of the lights were out, as they should have been, but when Nicholas got to the door of this one room, he noticed the flickering light showing under it. He knocked, but there was no answer. He tried the latch and opened the door. There was the young officer, whom he recognized, asleep.

He walked over to the desk and saw the books and the money stacked in rows on the desk. He read the totals and the whole thing became clear in a moment. His first thought was to awaken his young soldier and place him under arrest. But he read a little further and noticed the young man's note, written at the bottom of the ledger, "A great debt, who can pay?" Moved, at that moment, by mercy and grace, Czar Nicholas I leaned over, picked up the pen that had fallen from the

hand of the sleeping officer, wrote just one word, and tiptoed out.

For an hour or so, the young man slept. Then, he suddenly awoke and, seeing that it was long past midnight, reached for the revolver. As he did so, his eye caught sight of his note, and someone else's writing underneath his. His note read, "A great debt, who can pay?" Underneath was one word, "Nicholas."

He was astonished. Dropping his gun, he raced to the files where the signature of the Czar was available. He pulled this out and carefully compared it with the signature on his ledger. It was the same. He thought to himself, "The Czar has been here tonight and knows all of my guilt, yet he has undertaken to pay the debt. I need not die."

So, instead of taking his life, he rested upon the signature of Czar Nicholas I. He was not surprised when, early the next morning, a messenger came from the palace bearing precisely the amount of money needed to satisfy the debt. A few hours later, the inspector arrived. Everything was found to be in order.

That is quite a story – for every one of us – is it not? We are headed to eternal death because of our debt of sin. Written across the ledgers of our lives are the words, "A great debt, who can pay?"

John spent more time than any other gospel writer declaring the message of the cross – which was God's way of settling the debt.

Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;

Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it, white as snow.

At the bottom of that ledger sheet is one name – Jesus.

This is John's gospel – that everyone who will trust in His signature, His name will be forgiven and will receive the gift of mercy and grace; the gift of forgiveness and eternal life.

John said, "This is why I wrote the gospel to you, . . . ***that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.***"

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 4/9/1995 by Stephen Davey.

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