

Commentary on the Epistle to the John

written by Murray McLellan

The Gospel of John

Presented by Murray McLellan [an unworthy sinner upon whom has been bestowed the mighty grace of God. 'But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that as it is written, He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.' (1Cor. 1:30-31)]

I do not claim to be, nor seek to be original in the following manuscript. I seek to magnify and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Unto Him belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The following writings were originally preached in Grace Fellowship and are provided freely for the glory of God and for the edification of His people. There is little that is original with me. By His grace, God has molded me through His Word, the people I have met, and the books I have read. I am indebted to many brothers and sisters of the faith whom God has blessed with insight and wisdom and I am thankful that He has allowed them to share with people like me. To all these friends, some of whom I have never met, I offer my thanks. To God be the glory.

----- Murray McLellan -----

Introductory comments (Part 1)

This beloved disciple's beloved gospel has blessed the hearts of God's people through the centuries. Some of the most widely known and best-loved texts are from this 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."

John 6:35 - "I am the bread of life, He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

John 10:11 - "I am the Good Shepherd."

John 11:25 - "I am the resurrection and the life."

John 14:1-4,6 - "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 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. ... I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

John 15:1 - "I am the true vine."

Some people believe that John's gospel has been the means of more sheep being gathered to the Good Shepherd than any other single portion of Scripture. Whether or not this is true, God Himself tells us that this is the purpose of this gospel.

"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."

(John 20:30-31)

So John tells us that his purpose was for both initial faith and continuing in faith. May this ongoing study be used of God to achieve this purpose. May sinners look unto Christ and find life. May saints look unto Christ and be edified, having abundant life in His name.

John's gospel is above all a presentation of Jesus Christ. It is this that whets my appetite for this book. In it we behold the Word, the Light, the Lamb of God, the I Am, the Good Shepherd, the Vine etc. And in beholding Jesus, we behold the Father (John 1:14; 1:18; 5:17; 7:16; 8:28-29; 8:38; 10:30; 12:45; 12:49-50; 14:7-11,13; 15:15,23; 17:4-8; 17:25-26), for Jesus is the Son of God!

In this gospel, we behold not only the character of our God, but also His so great salvation which grows from the root of God's character. Jesus is presented as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In fact, God sent His Son into a condemned world that the world through Him might be saved. He is the way through whom slaves to sin can be set free. All of John's gospel moves along to the point of the cross and the resurrection. It is here that we gaze upon and learn of the death of the Shepherd for His sheep; the sacrifice of one Man for His nation; the victory of the Lamb of God; the triumph of the obedient Son, who bestows His life, His peace, His joy, and His Spirit, to His offspring.

John is clear that his purpose is not just that his readers might believe, but that his readers might believe that the Christ, the Son of God, is Jesus and that in believing they might have life in His name. The signs that are written about, reveal that this Jesus is the promised One. God "has visited and redeemed His people, and raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets who have been since the world began." (Luke 1:68-70) As we go through this gospel, we will see that this is the fruition of all that the Old Testament Scriptures pointed and looked forward to. In fact, this is exactly what John told us is his purpose in John 20:30-31. "... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ..." The Christ! The Anointed One! The Theme of the Scriptures! Jesus is that One spoken of in all the Scriptures (See Luke 24:25-27; 44-49). This gospel of John is that "gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of

David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power (or authority - see Matt. 28:18) according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:1-4)

Not all have eyes to see this glorious truth. If we are going to grasp the intended meaning of this gospel, we must understand the nature of Christ's speaking and the signs that He did. Matthew gives us a key to understanding as he tells us in Matt. 13:34-35, "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.' "

People (natural men) see the physical signs and hear the natural and literal interpretation, but there is a treasure far superior to the physical that He is referring to, for those He gives ears to hear and eyes to see.

John 1 speaks of the Word and a Light that begins to shine in Galilee. Is it a physical light or the beginning of spiritual light where God, who is light, is declared by the Word who became flesh and dwelt among the sons of men?

John 2 tells of a wedding where Jesus turns water into wine. The people saw and tasted; but is there a spiritual message of a new and better covenant having now arrived in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ? Indeed the last is best!

He then tells them in the temple that if they destroy this temple, He will raise it up again in three days. Natural men were confused for it had taken 46 years to build that physical temple. However, Jesus was talking of the temple of His body. He was speaking in parables - in riddles.

In John 3, He then talks to a man (Nicodemus) at night and He starts talking about being born again. What? Can a man enter his mother's womb and be born again? No, Jesus is looking at the eternal things not seen by natural eyes. He was talking about being born of the Spirit.

In John 4, we meet the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus talks of water and thirst and drinking. Where is this water? It is not in the well. He is speaking of living water that if a man drinks, he will never thirst again!

On and on the gospel presents to us the Christ of God. Sign after sign - parable after parable where Jesus

- - heals a blind man,
- - talks about eating His flesh and drinking His blood,
- - talks about freedom from bondage,
- - talks about sheep and shepherds,
- - talks about grain dying,
- - washes feet,

- - and declares a Kingdom not made with hands; a kingdom without end (See Daniel 6:26-27); a kingdom not of this world (Jn. 20:36).

Jesus, affirms John, replaces the Old Testament figures and institutions. He is their fulfillment! He is the new temple, the One of whom Moses wrote, the true bread from heaven, the true Son, the true vine, the tabernacle, the serpent in the wilderness, the passover, the King. Oh, behold the Man! He is on the throne. His kingdom has come. It is in the world. The wheat and tares are growing together. The final harvest is coming, in which the King will be unveiled for who He is in truth - the Lord of glory, high and lifted up. All things will be uncovered.

Yes, this is a spiritual book. The Spirit is present with His people until our Lord returns, as our guide, our earnest, our teacher, our comforter. May He lead us unto all truth as we study this gospel. May He testify of Christ to our hearts (Jn. 15:26). May He declare to us, "Jesus" and glorify Him in our midst (Jn. 16:14). For it is the Spirit who anointed Jesus at His baptism and Jesus baptizes His people with the Holy Spirit that we might live - that we might have eyes to behold the Lord of glory; that we might have ears to hear the Good Shepherd's voice; that we might have the ability to follow Him. Oh the blessed Spirit of the promised New Covenant! By this we know that the fullness of time has come. (See Ezek. 36:26-27; Jer. 31:31-36; Gal. 4:1-7; Gal. 3:13-14; Acts 2:16; Acts 2:29-36; John 7:37-39).

Let us take off our shoes, for we will find as we read this gospel of John, that we stand upon holy ground. Praise God, that there is One who can wash our feet! Praise God that there is One who has washed us clean in His own blood! Praise God for the Spirit, because this book abounds in the deep things of God and the glorious parables of our King. Who is sufficient for these things? "And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor. 3:4-6) Or in the words of Jesus in the gospel of John, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63) "... when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:16-18) May it be!