

DATE: May 10, 2009

TEXT: John 1:1-18

TITLE: "John III: Receive the Lord Jesus"



I am continuing a sermon I began last week. We are looking at one of the richest text in all of scripture. We are looking at John's prologue. John begins his gospel with one of the richest statements about Christ in all of scripture. He does this through a series of contrasts. A total of 5 contrasts are given. Last week I gave the first two... this week I will share the final three. I will begin with a brief review of the first two.

Contrast # 1 John contrasts the divine Word versus the incarnate, present Word. We begin our study with *verse 1 of John 1*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning.

We saw two amazing truths. First, we saw the amazing truth that the Logos... The Word, who is Jesus Christ.... is God. The Word was God. This is the fundamental belief of Christians, Jesus Christ is God.

But there is a contrast in this verse...The Logos... who is Jesus Christ...who is God....

became man. *John 1:14 states...*

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Again, we see a fundamental statement of Christianity. We believe in the incarnation. We believe God clothed himself in human flesh and revealed Himself to His creation. This is an amazing truth.

Contrast # 2 Jesus was the creator... but was not created himself. *John 1:3 states...*

“Through Him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made”

Again, we saw this truth. God is a trinity. One God in three persons... three expressions. God has always been a trinity. The Logos... the second person of the Trinity... who became Jesus Christ..... is also the creator of the World. The Word Became flesh.

Contrast # 3 Light versus darkness. This is a very basic contrast. *John 1:4,5 states...*

4In him (Christ) was life, and that life was the light of men. 5The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood (or overcome) it.

Have you ever seen your children struggling to make right decisions? I remember again and again seeing Erin in this struggle. Much more so than Adam. Adam was much more

compliant to authorities. Erin again and again weighed the consequences of disobedience versus obedience to something she did not want to do. I could give hundreds of examples from almost all of Erin's childhood. Bedtime was one. Erin did not like being told when to go to bed.

Beginning at age two and continuing to age 3 or 4 Erin would fight us on bed time. You could see the thought process in Erin's face. "I do not want to go to bed now.... I know Mom and Dad want me to go to bed..... I'll be punished if I cry and make a fuss... but maybe I'll win and not have to go to bed... yes... I'll cry and fuss." This went on for weeks and months. Finally, she got to the point that she realized she was never going to win and life was easier if she just listened to her parents. Erin had to learn this lesson again and again. What does this have to do with our text about light? In a sense this was a battle between good versus evil. Kim and I knew what was good for Erin. If Erin would have allowed to grow up being rebellious and insensible great harm would have come to her as a teen and as an adult. As loving parents we had to win these battles or surrender to disrespect and harm to Erin.

We have a loving Father. Believe it or not, god the Father know what is good for His

creation. Notice how *John* phrases this sentence... **“In him (Christ) was life, and that life was the light of men.”** Christ brings life.... abundant, full life. This is the light of the world. But there is a battle. The battle is against understanding the truth... and accepting the truth. (See verse 5 of our text). Will creation accept the light?

I know that 21st century people tend not to think like 1st century people. In the 1st century a battle versus good and evil was seen in the world. John in our text and throughout his writings sees this battle. And he begins his gospel with this wonderful good news.... good wins. God overpowers evil. Jesus is life.... Jesus is light... and darkness has not overcome it.

For a while it looked as if darkness was going to win. Jesus hung on the cross. The powers of evil were rejoicing. Darkness spread throughout the land. But death was not victorious. Christ overcame the cross. Christ overcame death. Christ overcame evil. Victory is provided. John is sharing a statement of victory. *In 1 John* we read this...

3This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, 4for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

I believe this battle continues to rage today. Good versus evil. It can be seen on the global scale. Hatred and hunger and anti-Christianity is still very evident. It can be seen on the local level... and yes, as you can see with my illustration with Erin... I believe it takes place in our families and even in us as individuals. This leads us to the next contrast

Contrast # 4 John gives us a contrast between those who recognize and receive the Son of God and those who do not recognize and receive the Son of God. *John 1:12-13 states...*

12Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Here is what I believe the most important question that faces our society today. It is the question that people, at almost all cost, avoid. It's a simple question... what makes a person a Christian? Truthfully, answering this question causes more anger and division in society and in the church than any other question. So much so that many, many churches refuse to address the question. The church, in order to avoid conflict within the church and to avoid the criticism of being narrow minded, has almost come to the point that it says... "If you call yourself a Christian.. Then you are a Christian.. Who are we to question that." The end result of this

attitude is that Christianity becomes anything and, truthfully, Christianity becomes nothing. The end result is you are a Christian if you “believe in Jesus (at least something about him) and try to be a good person.” In my opinion, when this becomes the definition of a Christian then the forces of evil have won. The knowledge of light has left the world.

John understands this. He was writing this gospel in the midst of a battle over the definition of Christianity. There was a popular belief system that had combined Christianity with Greek philosophy and this belief system was claiming the name Christian. This false belief did not believe in the divinity of Christ... it did not believe in the incarnation... it did not believe in the victory of good over evil. It tried to synchronize biblical Christianity with the culture. It almost was victorious.

I believe we see the same battle going on today. Truthfully, the same battle has always raged.. The difference today is that it is raging within the church. Allow me to quote from *The New American commentary* on this verse... Let me say this is a fairly long quote... but again I have discovered the author summarizes the truth in a wonderful way.

So far the text should be fairly clear. But the concluding clause of John 1:12 has been the focus of a great deal of misunderstanding, particularly among evangelicals. The misunderstanding derives from the KJV translation “even to them that believe on his name.” Evangelicals anxious to explain the what of salvation have often stressed the “even” in the text of KJV. It is not uncommon for preachers to say “all you have to do to become Christian is to believe in the name of Jesus!” Now the present writer is a strong supporter of evangelism, but evangelism and Christian life must be built on a solid footing; otherwise the results will be as flighty as the wind. There are two basic problems with this perspective. First, “even” is not in the Greek. The statement therefore is not a statement of minimums of belief necessary to obtain salvation.

The second, more pressing problem concerns “believing.” Believing, like knowing, in John does not stress “head-type” information. By the time the evangelist wrote the Gospel, he recognized that great care had to be taking in communication the idea of believing because the wrong perspectives that were infiltrating Christian communities. But John knew that the core of the Gospel was focused not so much on “what” you know or what you believe but rather “whom” you know and in whom you believe.

To be a child of God, however, means to accept personally the incredible reality of the coming of the Logos into human situation. Clearly to know and believe personally that the power of the universe is able to touch your life means that one can be adopted into the family of the Logos and become a child of God.

Here is the biblical definition of a Christian. I will sum it up in 3 verses

Romans 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

Proverbs 3:5-6 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

We of course do not want to be judgmental. We of course want to be loving in sharing the truth of Jesus Christ. But we must not compromise the gospel of Christ. To do so allows evil to win. To do so allows a false sense of security.

But hear this wonderful, wonderful news. When we do indeed surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ... we become his children. We become his sons and daughters. Again, let us never take this for granted. The God of the universe... the God of all creation has adopted us into his family for eternity. We can say “Abba, Abba... Father, Father....Daddy, Daddy. Praise be to God.

Finally Contrast # 5 We see the contrast between law and grace. *John 1:15-17 states...*

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. 17For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Do you understand this difference. Laws are a series of do and don'ts. Law says... go to church..... be good..... be moral..... don't sin. Grace is a gift to be received. Surrender. Build relationship. Not cheap grace... not surrender and do anything you want. No, surrender to the love of Christ. Make him Lord of you life. Allow him to change your desires and your will. Have the “mind of Christ.” Have every thought, every action every desire captive to Christ. That is grace. He died that we might have life. He lives that we might have eternity. We are his adopted Children. Praise be to God.

AMEN