

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

John 1:1-18

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. I've entitled this sermon "The End of the Beginning" because today we will finish our study of the prologue (introduction) to the gospel of John. The prologue includes the first eighteen verses of John 1, and today we wrap it up with three final truths about Christ.
2. Who is Jesus Christ? For centuries there was widespread agreement that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, but then a movement called Protestant Liberalism was birthed in Germany in the nineteenth century, and it spread to throughout Europe and the United States.
 - i. The father of Protestant Liberalism is Friedrich Schleiermacher, a German pastor. He taught that Jesus was merely a prophet who proclaimed great universal truths: the kingdom of God; the fatherhood of God; the brotherhood of man; the infinite value of the soul; and the higher righteousness of love.
 - ii. Schleiermacher and other German scholars called into question the trustworthiness of the Bible. They said that the Bible contains truth, but it is not totally true.
 - iii. Still in the nineteenth century a scholarly movement arose with the goal of constructing an accurate biography of Jesus (with the presupposition that the four gospels of the NT were inaccurate). The movement was called "The Quest for the Historical Jesus." It was led by the German theologian Albert Schweitzer. The idea was to use modern historical methods and discoveries to uncover the real Jesus who is hidden underneath all of the supernatural mythology in the NT. The "real" Jesus is not divine, not supernatural, not the Son of God, not the Messiah, not a Savior, not a Redeemer. He was a righteous example. A great moral teacher. An encourager toward righteousness.
 - iv. German theologian David Strauss wrote *The Life of Jesus* in 1835. He denied Christ's deity and miracles. He proposed that these myths were invented by the early church to convince people that Jesus was the Messiah. Strauss's goal was to de-mythologize the historical Jesus. He found that Jesus was a wonderful man who held to essential ideas of God, love, man, and the soul.
 - v. Eventually Protestant Liberalism made its way to the United States. You can see its influence on people like Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson admired Jesus, but He didn't accept the deity of Christ. So he took a razor, glue, and a notebook, and two copies of the Bible. He took the gospels and cut out what he thought he would like to hear from Jesus. And he pasted it into his book. By 1804 he published a little book called "The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth." 16 years later near the end of his life, 1820, he published "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth." He described Jesus as revealing "the

most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man.” Jefferson’s work was not a bestseller.

- vi. Protestant Liberalism continued to spread into the twentieth century and led to the split of many of the major denominations in America.
- vii. Fast forward to the 1980s and 1990s, to the Jesus Seminar, led by a liberal professor named Robert Funk. He gathered other NT scholars who did not believe the NT was the word of God, but believed it was “the Christian document.” They used the phrase “the Jesus material.” The idea was that in the NT we have a lot of Pauline material, Peter material, and those should be set aside. Inside the synoptic gospels, there was some genuine Jesus material. Using their research skills, they voted on every passage from the Jesus material. They voted on whether the red lettering should be red. Was it genuinely said by Jesus? They sat around a table with the Jesus material, and they each had four colored marbles – black, grey, pink, and red. They would have a paper presented about one of the statements of Jesus. Then they would vote, putting your marble in a box in the center of the table.
 1. Black: I am sure Jesus didn’t say it.
 2. Gray: It doesn’t sound like Jesus, but I’m not sure.
 3. Pink: It sounds like Jesus, but I’m not sure.
 4. Red: I am sure that it is Jesus.
 5. The Jesus Seminar sold a New Testament with the Jesus material in red, pink, gray, and black. There’s not much red. Anything about Jesus being divine, about the church, the son of God, anytime he received worship, anything supernatural is black.
- viii. So, for the past two centuries the person of Jesus Christ has been under attack. And it has led many in America and around the world to reject Christ and Christianity.
- ix. Who is Jesus Christ?
- x. The best place to learn about Jesus is the Four Gospels of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Mark and Luke were written shortly after Christ’s death by men who knew Jesus’ disciples. Matthew and John were also written a few years after Christ’s death, but by Jesus’ disciples – eyewitnesses who knew Jesus personally.
- xi. Perhaps the best of the four gospels is the Gospel of John. John was Jesus’ best friend. He spent three years living with Jesus. He witnessed the glory of Christ’s teachings, miracles, holiness, love, transfiguration, death, resurrection, and ascension. Of the twelve disciples, Jesus chose three disciples as His inner circle, and John was among them (Peter, James, and John). It is believed by many that John was perhaps Jesus’ best friend. So the Gospel of John may be the very best place to go to discover the real Jesus.
- xii. Within the Gospel of John, the best place to discover Jesus is probably the prologue – the introduction – John 1:1-18.

II. TEXT: John 1:1-18

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light. 9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, 13 who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, "This was the one of whom I said, 'The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'") 16 Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, 17 for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.

III. RECAP

1. So far we have found eleven truths about Jesus in the prologue. Let's do a quick recap:
 - i. John 1:1 teaches that 1) Jesus is eternal, 2) Jesus is the Word, 3) Jesus is with God, and 4) Jesus is God.
 - ii. John 1:3 teaches that 5) Jesus is the Creator.
 - iii. John 1:4 teaches that 6) Jesus is the source and sustainer of eternal life, and 7) Jesus seeks believers.
 - iv. John 1:10-11 teaches that 8) Jesus was rejected.
 - v. John 1:12-13 teaches that 9) Jesus is the Savior of those who believe.
 - vi. John 1:14 teaches us that 10) Jesus is human, and 11) Jesus was observed by the disciples.
2. Today we are going to look at three final truths about Christ.

IV. THREE FINAL TRUTHS ABOUT CHRIST

1. Jesus is the one and only Son from the Father.

- i. **John 1:14** "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."
- ii. KJV "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

1. Some have misinterpreted the word “begotten” to mean “created,” and use this verse to assert that Christ is not eternal, and therefore not God.
2. “Begotten” means “one and only.”
3. Question: How is Jesus God’s “one and only” Son if everyone who believes in Him becomes a child of God?
4. “Begotten” means “one of a kind; unique.”
5. **ESV Study Bible** “Jesus is the Son of God, not in the sense of being created or born, but in the sense of being a Son who is exactly like his Father in all attributes, and in the sense of having a Father-Son relationship with God the Father. The Greek word underlying “only,” *monogenes*, means one of a kind, unique.”
6. We are God’s children, but Christ is God’s one of a kind Son. He is exactly like the Father in character and nature. We are very different from God. Jesus has always been God’s Son; we only become God’s children when we believe in Christ.

2. Jesus is full of grace and truth.

- i. **John 1:14-17** “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’”) 16 Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness, 17 for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”
- ii. Verse 14 Jesus is “full of grace and truth.” What does that mean?
 1. Grace:
 - a. Gk *charis*.
 - b. Mounce: “The acceptance of and goodness toward those who cannot earn or do not deserve such gain.... It means that God has an attitude of kindness toward someone, wishing to prosper them.”
 - c. Jesus has an attitude of kindness toward you. He wants you to prosper. And He feels this way about you knowing how much you don’t deserve it.
 - d. Jesus is for you. He wants you to have eternal life. He wants you to walk in victory over sin. He wants you to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He wants you to experience forgiveness and reconciliation with God. He wants your joy. He wants you to have a full and meaningful life. He wants what is best for you. He does what is best for you. Jesus is not against you. He doesn’t want you to fail. He doesn’t want you to be

humiliated and shamed. He does not want you to go to hell. He does not want to punish you. He does not want you to walk in bondage. He takes no pleasure in your misery and adversity. He is full of grace.

- e. This is why we should follow Jesus. He always leads us in the right direction; the best direction. This is why we should trust Jesus when He tells us to do something. His will for us is best. This is why we should love Jesus. He loved us first even though we don't deserve it.
- f. Verse 16 "We have all received grace upon grace from his fullness." What does this verse mean?
 - i. An abundance of grace.
 - ii. We have all received (believers and unbelievers) an abundance of grace from Jesus.
 - iii. Two kinds of grace:
 - 1. Common grace: God's kindness to everyone, both believers and unbelievers. Providential blessings to mankind. God's gracious provision for His creatures. God has given the institutions of marriage and the government to all mankind. He gives rain and sunshine to all people. He gives the gifts of food, and sex, work, and the arts to all people. He reveals Himself to all people through His Creation. He gives people time to repent; He doesn't punish people for their sins immediately. Even human advancements, such as technology and medicine, which are enjoyed by all people, come from Jesus Christ. All of this is through Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Special grace: God's grace through Christ to those who believe in Him. A special grace is given to those who put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Forgiveness of sins; a clear conscience. Adoption into the family of God. A new heart with the desire and power to please Him. The indwelling Holy Spirit and His constant power and encouragement. The wisdom of God's word. The hope of eternal life.

2. Truth:

- a. Jesus always speaks the truth, in particular about God.
 - b. Even His enemies admitted this. **Matthew 22:16** “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are truthful and teach truthfully the way of God. You don’t care what anyone thinks nor do you show partiality.”
 - c. Jesus even claimed to be the truth. **John 14:6** “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
 - d. This is why we can trust Jesus. He is full of truth. He always and only speaks the truth about God, us, salvation. He is the truth.
- iii. Verse 17 “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”
- 1. John compares with ministry of Moses with the ministry of Jesus.
 - 2. Through Moses God gave us the law. This was a wonderful act of grace. The law teaches us about God, and it teaches us the best way to live. However, the problem with the law is that no one can live up to its standard. We have all fallen short of the law. And the punishment for breaking God’s law is eternal separation from God.
 - 3. Through Jesus God gave us grace and truth. Through Christ and His death in our place for our sins, we can receive forgiveness and reconciliation to God, and eternal life with God in heaven.
 - 4. **Pastor Mark Driscoll** spoke about the contrast between Moses and Jesus “Jesus is the greater Moses and the one who alone fulfills the law; the greater leader who did not kill his enemies like Moses but died for His enemies; the greater Passover lamb who was slain to remove God’s wrath from us; the greater firstborn son who died for our sins and none of His own; the greater pillar and cloud who walks with us day and night; the greater victor who defeated the greatest Pharaoh ever, Satan; the greater Savior, who redeems not millions from one nation, but billions from every nation; the greater Redeemer taking us to a greater promised land, the eternal kingdom of God; the greater law giver, not only writing his law on stone but also on the new hearts that He gives us, hearts that want to obey His law.”

3. Jesus is at the Father’s side.

- i. **John 1:18** “No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.”
- ii. What does it mean that Christ is at the Father’s side?
- iii. This phrase speaks of Christ’s resurrection and exaltation.

1. First, Christ is alive. He “is at the Father’s side.” Jesus died on the cross on Friday, and He rose again on Sunday. The tomb is empty.
 - a. **Mark 16:6** “Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him.”
 - b. This means that one day we will Jesus face to face. **1 John 3:2** “Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is.”
 - c. Jesus is coming back, and then we will see Him and be with Him for all eternity.
2. Second, Christ is in charge.
 - a. The NT repeatedly says that Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father.
 - b. After He rose from the grave, He spent forty days training and equipping His disciples to carry on the Great Commission, and then He ascended into heaven.
 - c. **1 Peter 3:21-22** “Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.”
 - d. The right hand of God means that Christ all of the authority as that of God the Father.
 - e. Right before His ascension Jesus told His disciples about this. **Matthew 28:18** “Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.”
 - f. This truth has two important applications for us.
 - i. First, since Christ has all authority, then we must submit to Him. We are not in charge, He is. We must do what He says.
 - ii. Second, since Christ has all authority, He has the power to do whatever we ask of Him. We must go to Him boldly, with audacious requests, believing that He can do the impossible.

V. CONCLUSION

1. As we conclude our study of the prologue to John’s gospel, I want to point your attention back to John 1:12.
2. **John 1:12** “But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name”
3. Jesus is the source and sustainer of eternal life. He is full of grace and truth. But none of that makes a difference in your life until you receive him, believing in His name.

4. What does it mean to receive him? It means welcoming and trusting and submitting to Jesus in a personal relationship. It means inviting Him into your life to be your Savior and Lord.
5. What does it mean to believe in His name? Christ's name refers to all that is true about Him. To saved and receive eternal life you must believe and receive all that is true about Jesus. He is God. He is the Savior. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.
6. Have you received Christ into your life? Do you believe in His name?