

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of June 2017

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Chapter 2:10-23

What's been happening?

A relatively small party of Israelites has been allowed back from the 'exile' to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

They begin, with enthusiasm. But the work is suspended due to external opposition. Though this is resolved the work is not restarted!

Sixteen years elapses during which palatial houses (panelled) are built, but not only are agricultural seasons bad; the people also find they are frustrated to the point where no matter how much they actually have. They want more and more and are no closer to being satisfied.

This is God's curse and mercy:

Curse because they have not fulfilled their side of the 'covenant'. And mercy because the frustration and dissatisfaction they feel, is God's way of waking them up, and causing them to change their ways. To in fact 'Seek the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness'. From which all other things will become 'satisfaction' and not frustration.

God sends them a message, through Haggai. They repent! And immediately God comforts them with: "I am with you".

Careful consideration and reasoned dedication, leads, 23 days later, to a resumption of 'the work'. They begin to put God in the proper place: first!

A month later God sends another message: He knows us well! They need encouragement. But first he reminds them of past glories and in fact brings their thoughts out into the open. They have to face the enormity of the task. They have to recognise that they **MUST** have God's help. The presence of His Spirit. The guarantee of the continuation of His Covenant promise.

And what about that past glory of the earlier Temple?

The Temple they are about to build, will have even greater glory. Christ will come to it as a baby, child, teacher, judge and sacrifice. Christ and His church will become the new Temple. The 'living stones' in which God dwells. This the ultimate Temple where God is revealed through the person of Christ.

The living Temple, you and I, under Christ, where we are able to enter into the

presence, and have peace, with God, through the mediation of Christ.

Haggai 2:10-23

Two months later: 24th Day of the 9th month.

Previously God's messages have been of rebuke (Chapter 1) and then encouragement (Chapter 2:1-9). Now both are combined together. The rebuke looks back on the total history of the 'Children of Israel' and their failure to keep God's Covenant. As well as their own sin of the inactive 16 years.

But it is not a rebuke just for the 'sake of the record' or 'rubbing it in'. It is also an explanation of what has caused the problems of the distant and recent past. With a warning of what could happen in the future. You know, God brings His 'word', just when He knows it is needed.

Now, a very significant spiritual principle is to be revealed:

Two questions are to be asked of the priests. Who at that time were the only legitimate interpreters of 'the Law'.

1.

¹¹ "Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: ¹² 'If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?'" The priests answered and said, "No."

The 'consecrated' meat was set aside as holy, through one of the religious observances instructed by God's law for that time (dispensation). However it had no power to pass on it's special state of being holy, by touch, to something else.

Holiness does not pass from one thing to another by association, contact or touch!

2.

¹³ Then Haggai said, "If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered and said, "It does become unclean."

A person is made ceremonially unclean or defiled, for example by touching a dead body, and is prohibited from contact with holy ordinances and objects, by the Law. Incidentally a Law which Jesus indirectly places as inferior to the saving of the Samaritan. The priest and the Levite both possibly using that Law

to justify ignoring the apparently dead traveller.

Defilement can be transferred from one to another by association, touch or contact.

So God intervenes after 2 months, just before the walls of the Temple are to be built. Once the foundations are complete.

He wants them to recognise a most relevant and important principle:

Holiness cannot be passed to another by contact;

But defilement can be passed to another by contact.

We would have no trouble understanding this principle, with our knowledge and experience of contagious disease:

A healthy person cannot pass on their health through association or contact with another. But a diseased person can.

Spiritual health is not passed to another;

But defilement, spiritual disease, is.

This then explains to the Temple builders what has been happening:

They had been unclean, sinful, defiled through their neglect of God and His Temple. They had failed the prime Law: (Matt 22)

³⁶ *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”*

³⁷ *And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.*

To love and obey God first!

Being defiled, everything they touched (or did) was defiled. Their work on the Temple would have been defiled. Even the sacrifices they had still performed at the site of the Temple were defiled and unacceptable!

Not only this, but all their sowing and fruit gathering and processing were defiled. They harvested expecting 20 measures, but got only 10; they pressed the grapes to get 50 pitchers of wine and realised less than half. Everything they touched, spoilt! Defilement IS passed by contact.

Moreover, they could not expect that just because they were in contact with holy ordinances – the Sacrifices – that this would make them holy.

Holiness is NOT passed by contact.

Attendance at the altar did not make them holy. But in their defiled (sinful) state they made the altar defiled.

And they could look back longer – over all Jewish history – and discover the very same principles at work.

This was the timely explanation and rebuke of God's 'word' brought by Haggai on the 24th day of the ninth month. An explanation of the past and a warning for the future.

Especially so that they may not go back to expecting that just because they were in association with God's works: building His temple, serving at the Altar, doing good works for one another, this would transfer holiness to them.

Over the past two sermons we have made the point that the stone Temple then, was a temporary entity, a shadow, a picture, a forecast a *type* of the future, of the complete and permanent fulfilment of where we feel God's presence to be. And this now is in Christ and His Church. You and I. Believers.

In addition we have to recognise that if it was so important in Haggai's time when a stone Temple was at stake, how much more now, that a living Temple: our souls; the souls of those around us; and the adding to this living Temple of new souls, is at stake!

Christian People: here is God's 'word' to us --

“If I nurse a sin, whatever I do will be defiled:

- coming to Church the Service is defiled;
- teaching Sunday School ... the Sunday School class is defiled;
- do Christian work during the week, (evangelism,say) ... the effort is defiled.
- Home life; leisure activities, Church life all defiled.

Its not enough to be associated (to even be doing) holy things. Holiness does

not pass by association.

God doesn't just want a house (Temple) but a holy Temple.

Let's be even more specific and even more harsh! We read from 1 Corinthians:¹

See the application of the principle to this very important Sacrament.

I harbour a resentment against a brother or sister. Nurse a sin. In this state I, ignore the warning often read during the introduction to the Sacrament. I defile the Sacrament, perhaps for all present. And bring judgement on myself.

At a Communion Service several years ago at Mildura, we brought along a Taiwanese young man who was on a two year working visa. The night before he had been attacked in his room at a 'backpacker's hostel'. He admitted to retaliating!

I noticed during the Service that he declined the elements. I asked why, because I had recognised him as a conscientious Christian. Having first met him at Kerang six weeks earlier. He said, "My mother taught me not to take Communion, if I had been naughty!"

So we have ample evidence that God's word can rebuke and challenge and even break us down. But it also builds us up.

The people at Jerusalem in the second year of the reign of King Darius, had had plenty of breaking down. Nor on the 24th day of the ninth month were their prospects much better. It was towards the end of our month of December. The first rains were virtually over-due. For successful crops they had to have these first rains and then a later one in March to swell the grain prior to harvest. If they missed either one, the crops would fail. Also past poor seasons had left their vines and trees in very poor condition.

¹⁹ Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. ...

1 ²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement on himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

What little seed they had from past, poor seasons had been planted in the dry ground waiting these 'first rains'. Their trees had not borne fruit in the past season. They are now in the middle of this year's growing cycle. The die is cast as it were. And it looks bad!

In His tenderness and grace God gives His promise: "You have changed towards me. I will change towards you." "Despite the appearances of the weather, and the condition of your trees and vines.

But from this day on I will bless you."

And so we see a corollary of the principle:

We do not receive God's blessing, holiness, by contact with holy things. But what ever 'obedient' hands touch, will be directly blessed by God.

God makes people and things holy, when obedient hands are put to God's holy work. Then all righteous activities we undertake shall prosper.

In obedience then we turn our backs on ungodliness. We have a right heart and spirit within us. Whatever the obedient heart and hand touches, then God blesses.

Paul knew this. Look back at our second New Testament reading:

He knew that the human 'flesh' is deceitful, above all things! He felt he had two persons. The inner one who sincerely honoured and served God and the other, the 'flesh'.

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

(and immediately gives the answer)

²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Then he goes on with that glorious chapter eight with its assurance, that begins:

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

How then is the true Church built up?

- Special formula of activities,

- better organisation,
- more property and resources.

The Church will be added to and Spiritually strengthened, only when its members are holy through being obedient.

God spoke again on that 24th day.

Zerubbabel had, like the others been defiled, but now was obedient. God was to bless him in a like manner to the bestowing of a signet ring by a great king to a loyal overseer. Great blessings would follow through his descendants. Christ would be the ultimate wearer of the ring. His Kingdom would last forever, while all other kings, then as now, fall, because they all have defiled hands.

Christ and those who are 'in Him'. Who are guided and kept holy by the indwelling of the Spirit are the living Temple. The 'here and now' but also 'yet to be fully consummated', Kingdom of the Lord most High. To the Glory of God Alone.

AMEN

[2058]

John 1:1-18

A Profound Summary of the Truth (part a)

Per S Olyott

In the Beginning was the Word. These insightful words begin one of the most profound books ever written, the Gospel According to John.² (An assessment repeated by many writers.)

John was one of the first Disciples of Jesus and by his old age he had outlived the rest of the 'twelve'. He had the most intimate three and a half years with the Saviour and this eye witness experience was still vivid and dominant in his memory. By the time he writes this Gospel, the three synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke have been written and circulated. They have a lot about Christ's Ministry in Galilee. John's close and constant association with Jesus during the three years puts him in possession of memories of things left out, especially those occurring in Jerusalem. Specifically:

- he remembers speeches of Jesus – especially the frequent use of “I AM”, culminating in, John 8:58, ⁵⁸ *Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM”*, the ultimate and indisputable claim to Deity;³
- of Jesus lifting His eyes to heaven to pray with Golden Words⁴;
- about additional appearances of Christ after the resurrection;
- the seven signs (miracles – acts of power) each having an inner meaning, telling us all about the true identity of Jesus.⁵

Later in 20:31 John reveals his purpose in writing: ³¹ *but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

2 *Come and See: The Gospel of John.* Joseph Ponessa & Laurie Watson Manhardt

3 Seven other quotes of Jesus which pointedly use the God title I AM - **ἐγὼ**(egō) **εἰμι**(eimi) [being in parallel with the Hebrew Old Testament, reference (Exodus 3:14), where Moses is given a name for God that means I AM

(אהיה), which is immediately followed in the next verse by the more common name (as a teragrammaton), the LORD or Yarweh – from a transliteration of **(יהוה)** YHWH] are: 6:35, 8:12, 10:9, 15:1, 10:11, 11:25 and 14:6

4 Golden Words as JC Ryle describes John 6:35-40: ³⁵ *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger; and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”*

5 In the Gospel of John, Jesus performs seven significant miracles that John refers to as “signs.” These signs form the backbone of the first half of the book, and each sign is meant to reveal something about the person of Jesus.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Who Turns Water into Wine? (John 2:1-11) | 2. Who Heals the Sick? (John 4:46-53) |
| 3. Who Heals on the Sabbath? (John 5:1-29) | 4. Who Feeds the Multitude? (John 6:1-14) |
| 5. Who Walks on Water? (John 6:16-24) | 6. Who Heals the Blind? (John 9:1-12) |
| 7. Who Raises the Dead? (John 11:1-44) | [Who Raises Himself from the Dead?] |

Prologue: (the first 18 verses)

Here we have all the great themes, that will follow, in summary. The detail of such an eye witness as John will bring us to know the Christ. These 18 verses are worthy to be "written in letters of gold".⁶

These 18 verses serve to answer three questions:

1. Who is John's book about?
2. How this Person was heralded to the world? and
3. What were the results of the Person's coming into the world?

Question 1, Who is it about?:

From verse 1 there is a unique way of describing Christ, which John continues to use in His letters and the Revelation – 1 John 1:1 Word of Life and Rev 19:13 the Word of God.

What is the meaning of the use of the word, Word?

The essence of a person, their inner thoughts, what makes them what they are, is their thoughts. But how are such thoughts communicated to others? Through the words they speak.

The essence of God, is revealed by the Person of Christ. He is the Word that is God to us. No one has seen God the Father. God the Son reveals Him. The Word is the perfect expression of the non see-able Father. John states this plainly by the 18th verse. ¹⁸*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.* (or the more familiar translation:¹⁸*No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

Who is your book about, John? About the Word who is God.

⁶ It was in Matthew Henry's commentary on John that this description was reported, as was the thrilling effect the first verses had on the early errors of a future saintly Christian:

Austin says (*de Civitate Dei*, lib. 10, cap. 29) that his friend Simplicius told him he had heard a Platonic philosopher say that these first verses of St. John's gospel were *worthy to be written in letters of gold*. The learned Francis Junius, in the account he gives of his own life, tells how he was in his youth infected with loose notions in religion, and by the grace of God was wonderfully recovered by reading accidentally these verses in a bible which his father had designedly laid in his way. He says that he observed such a divinity in the argument, such an authority and majesty in the style, that his flesh trembled, and he was struck with such amazement that for a whole day he scarcely knew where he was or what he did; and thence he dates the beginning of his being religious. Let us enquire what there is in those strong lines. The evangelist here lays down the great truth he is to prove, that Jesus Christ is God, one with the Father.

Verses 1 & 2, together, reveal: the Word is as **eternal** as God is. “In the beginning” – the very same start which introduces God in Genesis 1:1. Before anything (matter, energy, space or time) the Word already was! This can only be said of God. Yet that Word was with God. This great mystery again and again in this Gospel. While Jesus Christ is truly God – of the same mind, the same essence – He is somehow distinguishable from the Father. The Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. Not created!

The following verses 'drive home' that Christ is God. V3 – He made the world. Everything that was made. V4 – He has life in Himself. We owe our life to God, but who does He owe life to. No one, He is life. He is God.

Then (still in verse 4) that *life was the light of men*. If anyone has any form of intelligence, thinking ability, at all, it's because Christ is the light of men.

Again at verse 9: ⁹ *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*

Perhaps we might imagine an old fashioned pottery lamp. Like a teapot with a wick in the spout. A single lamp may be lit from a burning stick and then many others can be lit from the first lamp and so on. Christ is like a burning lamp in being able to light others, but one important difference. His lamp was never lit. He is the true light and every other 'light' has been lit from Him.

Is there any spiritual light? Christ gave it.

Is there any light (understanding) in any field – science, art etc ? Only that which comes from Christ.

No wisdom at all in anyone, Christian or non Christian apart from that which comes from Christ.

Who is your book about, John? About the Word who is God & who is the true Light.

Verse 14. ¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh ...* What He was (from the beginning) He continued to be – in very nature God – but He added a new Nature, that wasn't there before: human nature.

And, wonder of wonders, *dwelt among us ...* Not just 'out there' and remote, observing us from a distance. But immersed in humanness: born (but without sin) of a woman ; born in a manger; lived in a country town; went to a synagogue school; worked at a carpenter's bench; walked amongst the hills of Galilee; knew the flowers, animals and smells of the countryside.

Imagine! People actually, 'rubbed shoulders' with the eternal God!

Truly a man (and still a man) but on earth only a short time.

Verse 14 continues: *and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

While here, His glory was seen (not by all). John the author saw it as did James and Peter. Especially at the transfiguration. But they, with others, saw Christ's glory in other than physical ways. They saw His glory in His character. They saw His grace – pardoning, forgiving, loving. They saw His truth – never was He wrong. He was in fact, *full of grace and truth.*

Who is your book about, John? About the Word who is God & who is the true Light, whose glory we saw. Who has fully declared God.

As quoted earlier, No man has seen God at any time (The references in the Old Testament, where the **LORD** – in capitals – is seen, were God the Son – the Word.) God the Father was never seen. God the Son is fit and qualified to declare God to the World and has been doing so even before the incarnation. The Son has a unique relationship with the Father in the Godhead. Ever being born of God, but by a process that never had a beginning. Variously this mystery is described as 'eternal with God the Father'.⁷

An outcome of the unique relationship of the Son to the Father means that looking at Christ we 'see' (that is discern) the character of God, in a way that no prophet could convey. Moses carries the Law which tells us the will of God but not what God Himself is like. Christ does!

That's who John's book is about. The Christ, about whom, Philip was told, "*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*" (John 14:9)

Now we start to consider the second question that the first 18 verses of John's Gospel answer:

Who was your book about? A God/man.

Who heralded Him? A godly man.

In ancient times an important person, when travelling, might be preceded by a 'forerunner'. This person would go first, to check out the road and make the arrangements for the dignitary who was to follow. Sometimes he would take equipment with him with which he could fill in pot-holes and smooth off the bumps in order to 'make the path straight' for a chariot. Even today no major Head of State, just arrives at a formal destination 'out of the blue'.

⁷ Two of many passages that support this 'before the world began', the eternal Son, tenet of the Trinity are John 17:5 and 17:24.

⁵ *And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.* ²⁴ *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

John the Baptist, was the equivalent of the 'forerunner' for Jesus. ⁶ *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*

He was a great, yet unusual man, who called the religious leaders of the day, hypocrites. A man of no miracles, no tongues, no visions, no special dreams or marvellous trances. But a man who spoke with authority against sin. People quaked because their consciences told them that he spoke the truth, when he called them to prepare for the coming Christ. And many did. His authority was his credential – the truth that he had come from God.

As we read on to verse 7, we are told he came as a witness. Previously prophets had come to **say** that Christ would come, but they never **saw** His coming. They were not witnesses.

All the religious ceremonies, the teaching throughout centuries, the reading of Scripture: all said Christ would come. They were not witnesses. Then 400 years of silence: no prophet spoke; Temple observances became dead rituals.

Then this unusual man came saying that Christ will come. Then! One day he witnessed, "He's here". And pointed Him out.

We read about 'night watchmen'. No watches and alarm clocks in those days. Yet it was important to get up at the right time to prepare for the day. The right time was the dawn. How to know it was dawn? Look for the sun. The night watchman would stay awake in a position from which the first hint of the dawn would be seen. Then he would go into the street and announce loudly. "The dawn has broken!"

John could see the new Kingdom that was breaking on humanity, like a watchman recognising the dawn. He saw Christ and was witness to His light. (He didn't draw attention to himself – he was not the light). "The Christ is coming and here He is!"

⁷ *He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.* ⁸ *He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

Who is this book about? The great God/man.

How was He heralded? By a godly man.

Like the best man at a wedding, whose function it is to direct attention to the groom.

Like the star that guides wise men to Christ.

That great man, the greatest of the prophets born of woman, by being granted this paramount position and privilege, never over-stepped the mark by drawing attention to himself. He was a 'burning and shining light' but he was not THE light. In being called the greatest, recognition is given that as well as being a privileged prophet he was a subject of prophesy himself.⁸

⁸ John was the messenger that should come before the appearance of Yahweh as found stated in Malachi and earlier in Isaiah: Malachi 3:1 "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts; Isaiah 40:3 "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;

We are to be true witnesses of Yahweh, who has come with light (understanding) among us. First as a man briefly in Palestine. Now glorified – still with a human nature added to the eternal Son of God – with God the Father, in heaven. Now we have the Holy Spirit – that proceeds from the Father and the Son, which our lives are to witness. We have John the Baptist as our model. Draw attention only to Christ. To the glory of God alone.

[1949]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.

make straight in the desert a highway for our God. The translation in each of these verses from Modern English scholarship has rendered Lord in capitals. This is the normal convention when the original Hebrew uses the tetragrammaton. The 'not spoken' name of God, wrongly translated as Jehovah in older English versions and probably more accurately translated as Yahweh if the likely pronunciation of the 4, Hebrew printed characters, is taken into account. יהוה (He Waw He Yod) Transliterated, but now left-to-right, as YHWH – Yahweh. In any event, linguistics aside, both these verses refer to the coming of the true God.

John 1:1-18

A Profound Summary of the Truth (part b)

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week)

The manner and message of John the Baptist are recorded in verse 15: ¹⁵ (*John bore witness about him, and cried out, ...*). [just like in the Old Testament - *A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;*

make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40:3)]

So, they out in the desert, heard a man shouting. The prophesy of Isaiah about John the Baptist was fulfilled. For 700 years it had been lying in their Scriptures: *prepare the way of the LORD* (Yahweh).

Then he pointed the Christ out visibly:

"This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

Christ ranks before John! Because he was before John and before everything – eternally with the Father.

John, (the Apostle) who is your book about? The great God/man who has come into the world. "He was before me", says John the Baptist, "but he's now come into the world", heralded by this godly man.

We now turn our attention to the third question we posed at the beginning, last week. So far: who was John's gospel about? About the word who is God; who is the true light; who was made flesh; whose glory was seen; who was with God the Father from the beginning. How was he heralded? By a godly man crying out in the desert; just as the prophets had predicted; calling the lost people to repentance.

The third question: What were the results of the coming of Christ?

Verse 5. ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Or – comprehended it not (KJV).*⁹

This first result is that Christ, the light, came into the world and the (darkness) tried to remove this light but failed. Christ continued to be true and pure.

However we recognise that when Jesus was living on earth, in a school, in a workshop, with many people, he was not recognised as the 'light'. This is taken further in verse 10: ¹⁰ *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.* You sit down in the village school next to the One who made you and you don't recognise Him. You visit the carpenter's shop as He works at His trade, the One who made everything, and you don't recognise Him.

Verse 11: The Jews didn't receive Him. ¹¹ *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* Not just the world in general but he came to God's special people, with whom God had been working His special purposes for 100s of years. In their hands, in every Synagogue and ever school, were the Holy Scriptures. Every of these Scriptures spoke of Christ. His birthplace; and the place of His ministry had been predicted. All their institutions and ceremonies spoke of Him! When He says who He is they rejected Him as an imposter. And the Nation cried, "Crucify, crucify Him", as they spat and jeered and nailed Him to a tree.

Here we learn what spiritual blindness is. Face to face with Christ: but not knowing who He is.

But thank God the text goes on, this rejection is not total – then or now: (verse 12) ¹² *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,* There were some who believed what He said He was. Believed in their minds and **received** Him in their hearts. Didn't just offer intellectual ascent, but went to Him and **received** Him. Took Him and embraced Him.

Not just, "You are God," but "You are **my** God!"

Not just, "You are the Son of God who has come to save the world." but "You are my Saviour."

They didn't just receive the truth. They **received** Him!

That's what the Gospel is about.

Then in addition, all who receive Him have a priceless privilege (verse 12) ... ¹² *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become*

⁹ Is there a contradiction here? By and large the more recent translations use "overcome". Looking at original words in the Greek, to comprehend seems to be correct. Those who are exposed to the light often (perhaps mostly) do not understand, and reject the 'light' that Christ brings. However if we consider beyond an individual word and look at the construction of the phrase, the shining of the light is in a continuing tense of the verb – that is Christ's light continues and just as when a light is lit, darkness is banished – while the verb comprehend is in the past perfect tense. We might expect the two verbs to agree. This construction draws to the mind two cases: as far as the light shining is concerned darkness is continually being 'overcome', as far as the person in darkness is concerned – initially at least – they did not 'comprehend' and accept the light. Perhaps Greek can convey fuller meanings than a similar number of words in English can! Olyott says that historically the word 'comprehend' has had dual meanings and goes on to explore the implication of 'overcome'.

children of God, ... There He is the only begotten Son of God and He brings others into the family. He is the ever-being-born Son of God – a process which had no beginning and no ending, but always going on. That's how the Scriptures describe the relation of Jesus to the Father¹⁰. He's the Son of God by nature and He brings others into the family by adoption: they are brought into the family to be with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

- God as their Father,
- God as their Saviour, and
- God as their Life.

A final question.

How was it John, that some people could see it and some couldn't? Some could see the truth while most were blind to it?

(Verse 13) Some people had a spiritual birth, by which they were born again; by which they were new creatures; by which they were introduced to the spiritual realm, becoming spiritually alive and able to 'see' spiritual things: these were they ¹³ *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*. Born again but not because of some outward exertion or some inward intention – works or heritage.

God who sent the Saviour, opened their eyes, opened their understanding, bringing them to understand who Jesus was, believe who He was and, above all they, **receive** the Lord Jesus Christ. Such people, then, can say (verse 16): ¹⁶ *And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace*.

Every 'born again' person who owes his conversion, and change in his life, to God's grace has found that Jesus Christ is like an overflowing fountain. What flows out of Christ is grace – blessings and riches that we do not deserve. When we have drunk at this fountain, we find that there is still more grace flowing (*grace upon grace*). As we continue to drink, still more and more grace. Even if we think we have satisfied our 'thirst' there is still more! There is never any ending to what we receive from Christ.

That's how 'born again' people talk! This is the Christian experience.

When you first came to Christ it was because you feared hell and you wanted pardon for all of your sin. You came to the fountain and received that. Immediately then you realised that you still needed daily cleansing, because you kept falling from what your new 'heart of heart' desired. Every time you have come to Christ you have received that!

You've found that He's a wonderful Saviour and you wish to speak of Him, but you need courage. Every time you've come to Him and asked for courage, you've received that!

Your life has had many fears and every time you've come to Him for comfort from

¹⁰ For a thorough set of Biblical references for the 'eternally begotten Son of God' see:

http://www.answering-islam.org/Shamoun/eternal_generation.htm

those fears you've received that. You keep coming and the fountain never dries up. This is the Christ that you recognise that is portrayed in the Scriptures. *Grace on Grace!*

Verse 17: From the law we learn God's will, but can never keep it. From Christ however we receive grace and truth. Power to live the Christian Life by the Spirit he sends. We have learned all we need to know. We have received and received and received, from Jesus Christ. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, God as given and given and given again: ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

That's how John ends His prologue:

John, who's your book about? A marvellous Person..

How was He heralded? By a modest man.

What were the results of His coming? Most rejected, some **received**.

John, who's your book about? The God/man

How was He heralded? By a godly man.

What were the results of His coming? The world is divided into those who have **received** Him (so few in any generation) and the majority who can't even see the need of Him.

Bless God that His grace reached into your life, opened your eyes to see the truth of the Son of God who has brought you into the privilege of an adoptive son-ship, by which God is your Father. Bless God for the day He opened, even your eyes, to see the truth of the Gospel He has brought. Bless God that John has written this book to tell you how we might receive life from Christ. The life you have already received and have begun to experience.

Some may say, "Perhaps not".

You still can come to Christ and say, "I believe that You are who the Scriptures say You are." Why not continue and say, "I come in my need, because left to myself I am lost and perishing, for there is no other appointed Saviour."

Why not say to Jesus Christ, an ever-flowing fountain to sinners, "I ask for pardon, forgiveness and grace to live in a way that pleases You."

Be of very good cheer! Later in this Gospel of John (John 6:37) it is declared, Christ has said: ³⁷ ***All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.***

Jesus Christ: who He is; why He has come (part a)

Per S Olyott

(Review of last week)

The Gospel according to John: the most profound book in the world some have said. The Apostle John, when he writes is an old man, he sits down; calls to mind the 3½ glorious years he has spent with the Lord Jesus Christ; he reads through Matthew, Mark and Luke – since they have already completed their Gospels, and have had them circulated; then he wrote down many of the things they have not included and further – the things that fill his own memory years and years later. Then 2000 years later we still have what John wrote in a book!

John's Gospel, as a consequence, is sometimes so vivid that we feel that we can almost touch the Son of God. A marvellous book which began, as we have noticed over the past two weeks, with a prologue.

In the prologue, John answered our questions:

- “John, who is your book about?” It's about the eternal Word; who is God; who is the true light; whom became flesh; who has made God known.
- “John, how was this Person heralded?” This God/man was heralded by a godly man; who was a witness; who was not that true light, but came as a witness to that light.
- “John, what way has the world been affected by the coming of Christ?” Since Christ came the world has been a divided place. The Jews, by and large, didn't receive Christ. The Creation, men and women everywhere, by and large didn't receive Christ. But there have been some (and thank God there are still some) that have received not just the truths about Christ, but have 'received' Christ! Having then entered into the priceless privilege of entering into the Family of God.

All this in the first 18 verses of John chapter 1.

Now we continue from verse 19:

John has already told us a great deal, so far, about Jesus Christ, but we don't as yet have any 'picture' of Christ. Now, on a new page of his Gospel John starts to fill out this picture. How does he do this, so that by it, Christ is seen?

He tells us about two eventful days (which we will recount this week) then (next week) we will be shown two important truths which follow. Christ is being introduced to us from the pages of this Gospel.

Two eventful days.

Day one: (verses 19 -28)

Remember we're in a period that the other Gospels don't tell us very much about. Jesus was baptised. A year later John the Baptist was put in prison. Matthew, Mark

and Luke, tell us almost nothing about that year, but John does.

This John the Baptist had caused quite a stir. A real stir, everyone in the Nation was talking about him. Lots hadn't seen him but they had heard about him. There in the desert with a great leather belt, dressed in camel's skin, eating locusts and wild honey, his hair uncut, baptising people in the river, shouting at the top of his voice, and speaking in the most direct terms to the religious authorities, was John the Baptist.

He was creating a tremendous stir. Although he was preaching out in the wilderness, people were coming from the capital city and trekking the long journey, to find him in the desert so that they could hear what he had to say. From Jerusalem! But not only from Jerusalem, but all the towns and villages and little cottages in Judea – which was the province. People were making their way out into the desert to hear this strange and straight preacher. And not only so: but some even came from further afield. Even King Herod had sought out this strange preacher. Because we read elsewhere that Herod heard him gladly. (Mark 6:20)¹¹ So he was attracting terrific attention, he was a National phenomenon.

Eventually the religious authorities, thought that they had better find out who exactly this John the Baptist claimed to be. And so from Jerusalem came some people with a different motive from the rest. The Priests and Levities came together, sent by the Jews. (Incidentally the only time in the New Testament when you have mention of them both together.)

There were Priests, who every day were slaying sacrifices; and Levities, who by roster, were conducting some of the other services and rituals, who were sent by the Pharisees – the religious authorities – as a deputation, to come to this strange man in the desert to ask him who he is.

That's the only question they had! This then is the record from John (the Apostle) when these Priests and Levities, sent from Jerusalem asked John (the Baptist): “*Who are you?*”

He, John knew quite well what was behind the question as verse 20 makes clear. Everybody had heard that the Christ was to come. Everybody lived in daily expectation of the Messiah. Especially now that the Romans had the country under their authority and rule. The Jews were excited about the possibility that, at last, it might be the time for God's promised deliverer to come. The deputation from Jerusalem is saying, “Who are you. John?” But what's laying behind the question is: “Are you the Christ?” “Are you the Messiah?” “Are you the promised deliverer?”

He gives a straight answer: ²⁰*He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”* So they decide to press him a little. These men were scholars of the Old Testament. They spent a great deal of time studying those 39 books. They knew that the last of the 39 books, called Malachi, says that (Malach 1 4:5) ⁵*“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.* So they ask in verse 21: “If you're not the Christ” *“What then? Are you Elijah?”* He

¹¹ ... for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

said, "I am not." A man of few words was John in the manner of the equivalent of a 'press conference'!

They also knew, that earlier on in the Old Testament at Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses had said: ¹⁵ *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—"*

Having determined that he is not Christ and not Elijah, they think, "Well perhaps he is claiming to be that prophet that Moses said one day would come." They put that question to him as well in verse 21: *"Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."*

Well they're taken aback. They can't go back to Jerusalem to say all the things he's not. Because they were sent to find: "Who he is!"

So they say in verse 22: ²² ... *"Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"*

"Well," says John verse 23, (recognising where their questions had come from: Malachi and Deuteronomy) but did they recognise what Isaiah had said: ²³ *He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord', as the prophet Isaiah said."*

"Remember that verse from Isaiah 40:3, well that verse has been fulfilled in me."

Isaiah pronounced that someone would come and prepare the way for the coming of Yahweh¹². "I am the one who has come to prepare the way!" "Isaiah proclaimed that someone would come to prepare the way for the coming of God. I am that voice crying in the wilderness! Make straight the way of the LORD, as said the prophet Isaiah."

"I'm not the Christ, not Elijah, not the Prophet, just the voice crying in the wilderness that Yahweh is coming!" "God is coming. Get Ready!"

Just like a press conference. They ask a question you answer it but then they are never satisfied. They ask again. These people sent by the Pharisees did just this. They had another question ready. Verse 25. ²⁵ *They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"* "If you're only a voice crying in the wilderness, you're not the messiah, you're not Elijah and you're not that Prophet, then why are you baptizing?" They didn't like John the Baptist. The religious hierarchy have never liked attention-attracting ministries. Anybody who wasn't one of them.

They didn't like John the Baptist, especially since he was attracting so much attention. "What authority do you have, to be baptizing?" They knew the answer to that question, John had been at it for months. He'd been telling people that Christ was coming and the Christ who was coming was God. He's been telling people that they weren't ready. That their sins cried out for God's punishment. (see Malach1 chapter 4) He'd been telling people that as a sign that they were finished with sins and a sign that they needed forgiveness from sins that they were to be baptised. He was telling people to

¹² Once again the 4 consonant word for Almighty God in the Hebrew text.

put their lives straight, and as a sign of this to be baptised to show they were ready for the coming Christ who was God. He'd been telling them that for months.¹³

The question and challenge for authority was just a 'red herring', by the people who had been sent from Jerusalem. So John didn't argue the point, they said, 'Why are you baptising?' and his answer was: "I baptise, with water". But he wasn't to be distracted from his ministry, by awkward questions from awkward people. His position isn't to defend himself. His position is to preach Christ. So immediately, he says in verse 26: "*I baptize with water, but* (then comes this astonishing statement) *among you stands one you do not know*, (in this crowd today standing among you is a man – someone you don't have the eyes to recognise. He it is who even though he follows me is preferred before me. In this crowd today, says John with his spiritual perception, stands the man I've been talking about. It's true He's appeared after me, but he ranks before me and I'm not worthy to go to His sandals and untie them.) That's what happened that first day in Bethabara¹⁴, beyond Jordan. (verse 28) An honest man; a spiritually perceptive man; a self-effacing man – made it clear he was not Christ, not Elijah, not the promised Prophet, just a voice crying in the wilderness. And he made it clear standing, unknown, undiscovered, amongst them that day, was the pre-existent One, of whom he had been preaching throughout his preaching.

Second day: (verse 29-34)

Specifically the next day as John states.

But first some background: Six weeks before, John had baptised Jesus. What happened immediately when Jesus was baptised, was that He went into the wilderness for 40 days, very nearly the six weeks. Now He had come back and John had recognised Him in the crowd the day before. And on this second day he actually sees Jesus coming towards Him (Verse 29). What we should realise is that John had baptised Jesus and as we read in Matthew (3:16) and here in verse 30-33, when John baptised Jesus, when Jesus came from the water the Spirit of God descended, like a dove, upon the Lord Jesus Christ. When John saw that he knew precisely, who Jesus was, because presumably in his secret communion with God, it was revealed that this was how the Christ was to be recognised (verse 33b). John has seen it so he KNEW!

Just before, when Jesus had come to John, he knew that the person seeking baptism was sinless already. But so far he didn't know that He was the Christ. A surprise but true. John was afraid to baptise Jesus. He was reluctant, saying that rather he (John) should be baptised by Jesus. Nonetheless, Jesus says, ¹⁵...“Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.” Then and there John realise something. That the sinless had to take the place of the sinful. So the baptism took place and then the descending of the dove made it clear that this sinless one who would take the place of the sinful ones was not only this but the Messiah – the Son of God. The

13 Our recent study of Galatians drew attention to the effect of John's 'crying in the wilderness': the tax-collectors and the prostitutes had heeded and repented while the religious authorities had heard but not heeded. The contrast was drawn in the parable of the two sons, where the initially disobedient son obeyed. The Pharisees, who by profession should have been the obedient ones, failed the test.

14 This a transliteration of the Greek text, which is translated in some versions as Bethany – but with margin notes to say this is distinct from the Bethany mentioned with respect to Lazarus - which was just outside Jerusalem and nowhere near the river. 1990 archaeology has found a site just east of the present course of the Jordan that may have been the earlier course of the river in New Testament times

promised incarnation of God – in the flesh!

All this John realised six weeks before our second day and so in verse 29 as John sees Christ coming towards him he sums up that insight of the sinless one who would take the place of the sinful with the words: “*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*”

Before the insights, brought to John, which he describes in verse 30 to 33, he had been preaching, in the urgency of the warnings of Malachi (and others) from the Old Testament, such as we read earlier today. He was warning of the coming of the day of the Lord in terms of condemnation and punishment and this was and is still all true. But from this second day mentioned on, John the Baptist now preaches – the sinless One has come to take the place of the sinful one and He is none other than the pre-existent Son of God. The One who brings this all about through the Baptism of His Holy Spirit.

Can we say with John? “*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” Your sin and my sin. Receive Him and be baptised by the Spirit.

[2280]

May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.