

The Bible... what's the point?

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John 20: 30-31

Welcome - Roger

Update on Lockdown restrictions... in case you were confused or unclear as to what is or is not allowed!!

You can go inside a pub in order to go outside and then sit inside a covered area, so long as this is outside. You can go inside to pay but you must stay outside to drink. If you need the toilet you can go inside, so there is no need to go outside, even though you will have been sitting outside. If you do go inside to use the toilet you can't buy a drink whilst inside even if you intend to take it back outside with you. Staff will go inside to get your drink and then bring it outside to you, regardless of whether you are sat outside or sat inside a covered area, which of course is also outside. If it rains you can't go inside, but you can stay sat inside the outside covered area. When you choose to leave you can go inside the pub in order to get outside again, in order to get home and be back inside again.

Clearly there has been much that has been unclear, even though it was thought that the advice given was quite clear, so it is hoped that this explanation clears up anything that may not have been clear. If things still remain unclear then clear your mind and simply read through the guidelines again in order to be more clear. This should enable what has been unclear to become more clear. It has been recognised that things were not always communicated as clearly as they might have been and so some things that may have been clear became less clear and more unclear. Once you are clear on the guidelines it is simply a matter of following them. Hopefully you will find that this is all very... straight forward!

Martin...

Song • Give Thanks

Song • Raise A Hallelujah

Years ago the British agnostic Thomas Huxley had to leave early one morning to go from one speaking assignment to another, so he got into a horse-drawn taxi to go to the train station. He assumed that the hotel doorman had told the driver of the carriage where they were going. So when he got in, he simply said to the driver, "Drive fast." Off they went. After a short while, Huxley realized that they were actually going in the opposite direction from the train station. He yelled to the driver, "Do you know where you're going?" - Without looking back, the driver replied, "No, sir... but I'm driving as fast as I can!"

It doesn't do much good to go fast if you're going in the wrong direction! Yet, many people, even Christians, can be like that. Going full speed, but they haven't stopped to evaluate where they are going. As God's people, we must live in line with God's purpose for us. We need to know where we are going.

We are looking at John's purpose statement for writing his Gospel. First, he illustrates his purpose with the story of Thomas having his doubts cleared up as he meets the risen Lord Jesus and exclaims "My Lord and my God!" (John 20: 28). Then John states his purpose plainly (John 20: 30-31).

Let's listen to these words now from James...

John 20: 24-31 read by James Smith

Roger - To sum up: The aim of the Gospel is that we would believe in and worship the risen Saviour.

Community Kids slot by Sarah Rome (video sent)

Celebrations led by Devid H

Robin & Jill Rowles - Celebrating today their eldest grandson, Samuel's 13th birthday

Jonny White is now having MA (Hons) now!

Monday 19th it's the birthday of Mo Lee Yap & Jane Fishlock's son Reuben

Song • Great Is The Lord

When John wrote his Gospel he was very advanced in age. He had plenty of time to live and relive the events surrounding the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. There are some 36 miracles recorded in the Gospels. John's Gospel takes 7 of these, 8 if you count the resurrection, for us to consider.

- Jesus turned water into wine at Cana (John 2: 1-11).
- Jesus heals a Royal Official's son (John 4: 46-53).
- Jesus heals the paralyzed man by the pool (John 5: 1-9).
- Jesus feeds the five thousand (John 6: 1-14).
- Jesus in the storm on the lake walks on the water (John 6: 15-21).
- Jesus heals the blind man (John 9: 1-34).
- Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11: 1-44).

Bernard Ramm makes the following incredible statement, "If the raising of Lazarus was actually witnessed by John and recorded faithfully by him when still in soundness of faculties and memories, for purposes of evidence, it is the same as if we were there and saw it".

The question for us is this... do we really believe this?!

Many people, Christians included, have a problem with the miracles of the Bible. One little boy asked his Dad, who had just preached a message on Jonah and the big fish, 'Daddy do you really believe that a man could be swallowed by a fish and stay alive for three days?' The father replied that 'if God could create the universe out of nothing, if He could create the all the creatures of the sea out of nothing, and if He could form man from the dust of the earth and breathe life into him. Then yes, God had the power to make a fish that could swallow a man and keep him alive for three days.' The little boy replied, 'Well, if you're going to bring God into it...sure that's different!'

Those who have a problem with miracles, fundamentally have a problem with God!

It is important that we understand John's purpose in referring to the miracles he lists. He uses the words, "many other signs" which literally means 'miracles with a message', and that message was always a pointer to Jesus and who he was, "that we might believe / continue to believe."

Israel was brought into existence by a series of miracles, the law was given by supernatural wonders, and many of the prophets were identified as God's spokesmen by their power to perform miracles.

Jesus came not only preaching but performing miracles, and the apostles from time to time worked wonders. It was the miracles that were authenticating the Christian faith at every point. If we have a problem with miracles we have a problem, with God, with Jesus, and with the written Word of God!

Let's not just brush over the concept of miracles. Professor Terrence of Poundbury Theological Seminary spoke about some of the potential pitfalls...

Professor Terrence - Vid Clip of just under 3 mins (start & end need cutting briefly please Andrea!)

Problems with Miracles - Deception. Satan is the great counterfeiter. Always has been, and continues to be today. Paul warned of Satanic power. Satan seeks to deceive and blind peoples' eyes to the truth of the gospel. So we need to be discerning if something might not be of God. Also, we need to be careful of promoting the miracle itself, for no one is saved by miracles.

Salvation is the greatest of all 'signs', but there is no saving power in miracles! Salvation is by faith, not by sight. Jesus said to Thomas, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Faith is the heart's response to the character and nature of Jesus Christ as revealed to us in Scripture.

Evaluating miracles - A miracle is "a supernatural intrusion into the natural law that can have no other explanation other than that God is acting." Check the facts. Often people say that to question a miracle is to question God Himself. But if it cannot be tested, it cannot be trusted. Check the focus.

Does the miracle glorify Jesus? Or is it glorifying an individual or movement? Check the fruit. What happens as a result of the miracle? Remember, there were crowds that followed Jesus for the miracles. But it wasn't long before they turned their backs on Jesus...

Song • Goodness of God

Clip???

Back to John 20 and the author's reason or purpose in speaking about the signs or miracles. John reminds the reader that the signs were done 'in the presence of his disciples'. The enemies of Jesus did not dispute the fact that miracles took place. He makes it clear that much more evidence could be presented. But asserts that what has been presented is sufficient evidence to convince anyone of Jesus' divine nature. We can all make a reasonable and sound judgment on Jesus because of what John has written. This is then where faith comes in...

Miracles were not God's way of showing off. Each of the 7 miracles John speaks of points us to Jesus. They speak to us for the purpose that we might believe / continue to that Jesus is the Christ!

THAT is the point of the Bible... and if we believe this we mustn't ever forget it!!

So, after believing in Jesus, are we perfect or do we continue to fail? What should we do then? Do we need to do penance? Do we need to join a monastery and deny ourselves common comforts to merit forgiveness? No, because then grace would not be grace (Rom. 11: 6). We should repent when we sin or let God down and we should confess our sins to God (Ps 51: 17; Matt. 5: 4; 1 Cor. 5: 2).

We must hold on to God's promises to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). So, as Paul told Timothy (2 Tim. 2: 1), "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Experiencing His grace should lead us to believe in Him and to worship Him!

This is the purpose of John's Gospel, it's the purpose of God for us that we believe but also, as the meaning of this expression can be, that we "continue to believe".

Here's how this applies: After we trust in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we may still face doubts over difficult problems in the Bible and in our world. Suffering. Millie pic Covid. Materialism. Stress.

Some problems we may not resolve until we meet Jesus. But we can trust in Him because he was raised bodily from the dead and that fact is attested to by many faithful witnesses whose lives were dramatically changed when they saw Him.

So we rest our faith on the sure foundation of his Resurrection. John wants us to believe specifically that Jesus is the Son of God. He wants us to believe that the risen Jesus is "my Lord and my God."

If Jesus is anything less than the Lord and God, it would be an awful error and sin to worship Him.

If he truly is Lord and God, it would be an awful error and sin not to worship Him.

He was the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. So let's worship him now!

Songs • 10,000 Reasons

Songs • What A Beautiful Name It Is

Prayers led by Mandy Buller

Close by David H