

# Life in His Name

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[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, if you'd like to turn in your Bible to the second reading that Ash read, which is on page 1090 in the Church Bibles, 1090. And we're going to look and focus on the purpose of John's gospel at the end of chapter 20.

And today, what we're going to do is begin a new series looking at the gospel of John. But before we get into it, let me just ask a question. Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus?

How would you answer that question? Or the people you know, the people in your family, the people in your workplace? Who is Jesus? How would they answer that question?

Because I think everybody will have an answer to the question, who is Jesus? Is he a great teacher? A miracle worker? A social revolutionary?

A holy prophet? Is he a tragic failure? Is he a fictional character? Is he the Messiah? Is he the Son of God?

[ 1 : 00 ] Who is Jesus? And how? Can we be sure? He asks because Jesus basically transcends the spheres of religion and the church.

Without doubt, Jesus is the most significant figure in all of human history. It's been said of Jesus that more songs have been sung to him, more paintings painted of him, and more books written about him than anyone who has ever lived in the history of the world.

Jesus Christ, without doubt, has made the greatest impact on our world. And not simply by influencing cultures and societies, but actually in changing people's lives.

Individual people's lives are changed by Jesus. We've just heard Ben share his story of how Jesus has changed him. Jesus also keeps showing up in popular culture.

If you look at the picture on the screen, you probably saw this a couple of weeks ago. Donald Trump posting an AI-generated image of himself as Jesus.

[ 2 : 11 ] But then after he took that image down, he then posted another AI-generated image of himself, this time being hugged or hugging Jesus. And then last week, you may have seen the picture of an IDF soldier in Lebanon taking a sledgehammer to a statue of Jesus.

And then just this morning, I saw this on Facebook, somebody running the London Marathon dressed up as Jesus with a cross on their back. So whether you love him or hate him, you just can't get rid of Jesus.

You cannot ignore him. Jesus is as significant. He is as popular. He is as controversial. But he is also as misunderstood as ever.

And that's why we need to answer the question, who is Jesus? Because understanding who Jesus is, is the key to life itself, according to the words that we just read in the Gospel of John.

Now, there'll be people here who will be convinced of the identity of Jesus Christ. But I guess there's also some here who are curious when it comes to Christianity.

[ 3 : 21 ] But when it comes to Jesus, I find that most people, it's not that they've seriously investigated Jesus and invested some time in researching him, and then they've rejected him.

I've discovered it's nearly always the case that they've never actually looked into who Jesus is. They've never taken the time to investigate for themselves.

Just the other day on Thursday, I had a chat for about 45 minutes with a guy, a young guy, who asked me all kinds of questions about Jesus. Just because nobody had ever told him, he'd never looked into it.

And it wasn't that he couldn't get Jesus far enough away from him, but it's just he'd never really heard about the true Jesus. And that's why we're going to explore the life of Jesus in the Gospel according to John.

Now, Gospel is a simple word that means good news. Whenever you hear the word Gospel, it means good news. It's the good news about Jesus. Now, there is only one Gospel of Jesus. [ 4 : 24 ] There are four Gospel writers in the Bible, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and they each give their account of the life of Jesus. So we get four biographies, four portraits, four takes, if you like, on Jesus.

But there is one Gospel. And so when we read John's Gospel, or any of the Gospels for that matter, we can be sure that we are in touch with the historical Jesus, the real Jesus. Not the Jesus of our imaginations, not the Jesus that some people might present in our culture, but the true Jesus, or the original Jesus.

Okay, today we're simply going to look at the purpose of John's Gospel, because John tells us what his purpose is near the end of his book. And he basically gives us the key to unlock everything that he says.

But just a few comments to introduce John's Gospel, so that we know what it is that we are reading. And that's John's purpose up there, John 20, 30, and 31.

[ 5 : 32 ] Well, the Gospel of John was written by John, who was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. And in his Gospel, he refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

So John is telling us that he's close to Jesus. John had been with Jesus for all of Jesus' roughly three-year ministry, and he'd seen Jesus, he'd heard everything that Jesus had said.

And it's thought that John is the last one to write his Gospel sometime around the 80s. And with all the other Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are quite similar to one another, John's Gospel is unique.

And if you're going to read it in a one hour, like I did last week, it will probably take you about an hour and a half, if you read at the same pace I read that, which I guess you do.

John's Gospel's got a prologue. It's got an epilogue. The prologue introduces Jesus as coming from God, the Father, to bring life to those who will believe in him.

[ 6 : 39 ] And then the book is basically divided into two parts. The first half, chapters 1 to 12, is about Jesus' teaching and Jesus' ministry.

Then the second part, chapter 12 through to chapter 21, is all about Jesus' death and resurrection. Two halves, life, ministry, then death and resurrection.

Just think of it like a U-shape, figuratively. Jesus has come from God the Father to live and die and then rise again to go back to God the Father.

Okay, so the purpose of John's Gospel. Let's read these words again. Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

[ 7 : 42 ] Okay, John's words have got a really simple order here. So there are signs. The signs are to lead to belief. And then believing leads to life.

And so what we're going to look at is three simple things. Signs, believe, and life. Signs, believe, and life. So in the text, you can see, first of all, there's the signs in red, and then believe, and then life.

So first of all, signs. John says Jesus performed plenty other signs that he hasn't recorded. He hasn't written those down. In other words, John selected the signs that he would use for his purpose.

The miracles. Signs meaning miracles. And he wrote them down. And he actually left a load of stuff out. So if you look at the end of John's gospel, his final words, the same page or the next page, chapter 21, verse 25, we read that Jesus did many other things as well.

If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. So John's purpose was not to be completely exhaustive and write down every single thing that Jesus ever did.

[ 9 : 00 ] He's carefully chosen certain statements that Jesus made, certain conversations that Jesus had with certain people, but also certain miracles that Jesus performed.

And it's all with the purpose of giving us plenty of evidence to convince us that Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus is the Son of God.

Why does he need to convince us? Well, he wants to convince us so that we will believe that Jesus is who he says he is. So what are the signs that he's talking about?

Well, notice there that the signs were performed in the presence of his disciples. In other words, none of this stuff about Jesus was done in secret.

It wasn't done behind closed doors. It all happened in front of other people, in this case, the disciples. And the disciples had no reason to make this stuff up.

[10:00] It's just that they were there. And so they could testify to everything they heard Jesus say and everything they saw Jesus do, but also everything they experienced as they were with Jesus.

And so John's gospel is reliable eyewitness testimony that can be trusted. And so for John, believing or faith in Jesus isn't some kind of leap in the dark.

When you believe the claims of Christianity, you're not committing intellectual suicide. And yet that is what some people tend to think, that there is no ground or basis for belief in Jesus, that it's some kind of fairy story, and it's just made up from some people a long time ago.

It's all just blind faith. Not at all. It is never a case of, well, if believing this stuff about Jesus works for you, gives you a better life, makes you feel good about yourself, or makes you feel happy, then that's great.

So it doesn't really matter whether it is true. No, John gives us indisputable evidence. He is talking about what actually happened involving real people in specific places at certain times, because he wants us to judge for ourselves and respond to Jesus as we should.

[11:33] And so even in an age with 24-hour surveillance, where you are being watched all the time, even from all those devices that you hold in your hand or have on your desk, you are being watched.

And even in an age where you can just about record every single thing that happens on your smartphone, we still need eyewitnesses.

We still need human testimony to verify whether something is true or not. Because in court, what do we do? Well, we get witnesses to testify under oath about what they saw or what they heard or what they got caught up in, whether it's a crime or an incident or in a trial, whatever.

Because if we didn't have witnesses who gave testimony to the truth, the whole legal system would collapse and society would be absolute chaos.

Judges, advocates, lawyers would be out of a job. You might think that's a good thing. But the point is we're able to establish exactly what happened.

[12:43] We can discover the truth through the eyewitness testimony of other people, reliable witnesses. Because they were there when the deed was done.

They were there when the words were spoken. And so they can confirm that what is said is true. And that's why John here confirms for us that everything he has reported about Jesus, all of the signs were done in the presence of other people.

It's the evidence that we need to believe. And that's why John's gospel has actually been called the book of signs. Because there's so many signs through it.

In fact, there are seven signs or seven miracles. And like any sign, they point to something. In John's case, they're like signposts.

Signposts that point us to the true identity of Jesus so that we'll believe in him. And with each of these seven signs Jesus performs, Jesus then explains the significance of each sign.

[13:53] And so here are the seven signs. You probably know them. First one, Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding. The second one, Jesus healing a dying child. The end of chapter four.

The third one, Jesus healing a man who couldn't walk. In chapter five. Fourth one, Jesus miraculously feeding a massive crowd of people. John chapter six.

The fifth sign, Jesus giving sight to a man who'd been born blind. John chapter nine. The sixth sign, Jesus raising a dead man who's called Lazarus, giving him life.

That's chapter 11. And the seventh sign is Jesus' own resurrection from the dead. Seven signs. And there also happen to be seven statements.

I am statements that Jesus makes in John. And so seven is a significant number in the Bible, if you didn't know. So all of these signs and all of these statements point us to who Jesus is and to what Jesus came to do.

[15:01] And so that's the signs. And the point of the signs is that we would believe. And that's our second point. What does John say here about believing? Verse 31.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. He wants us to believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of

God.

How? He says, but these are written that you may believe. What's the these? Well, he's talking about the signs. He's just mentioned the miraculous signs that Jesus performed in his ministry, that his disciples saw, and that John wrote down.

So we should believe based on the signs, because the signs point to Jesus being the Messiah, the Son of God. Now, at the time, the Jews were looking for the Messiah.

The Messiah was a leader who would come. He'd defeat their enemies, and he'd bring peace. And so John is writing to tell the Jews that he's arrived. Jesus is their promised Messiah, the one that they've been waiting for.

[16:19] John's saying Jesus fulfills all of these promises in the Old Testament. Now, John, of course, wasn't just writing to Jews. He is writing to everybody.

He wants everyone to believe, not just that Jesus is the Messiah, God's promised King for the Jews, but that Jesus is the Son of God. And it's a massive claim.

And he makes this massive claim, but he backs it up with the signs. He's saying Jesus is fully divine. Yet Jesus was a man.

He was a bloke who walked on this earth, but he's also God. He is God the Son. God the Son who became flesh, who took on a human nature and made his dwelling among us, as we read in John chapter 1.

And so John's purpose from beginning to end is that we'll believe this. I don't know if you remember his opening statement. He said, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[17:27] He's referring to Jesus as the Word, and he's saying Jesus is God. And so everything he writes about Jesus should convince us so that we believe and we confess that Jesus is God.

And that's exactly what a man called Thomas did, who was also a disciple of Jesus at the end of the book. In fact, just before that final passage that we read, chapter 20, Thomas, you may have heard of him.

He's called Doubting Thomas Normally. And yet when Doubting Thomas was confronted by the risen Lord Jesus in that final climatic sign of his resurrection, he stops being Doubting Thomas and he becomes Believing Thomas.

I think he gets a hard time for being a doubter because at the end, he's actually a believer. Because he says to Jesus, my Lord and my God. He's a brilliant example of somebody who pays attention to the signs and believes.

The sign of the resurrection leads Thomas to believe that Jesus is God. Now you might say, yeah, I get that, Jonathan. Of course Thomas believed.

[18:51] Jesus stood in front of him. Jesus said, you can touch me. And Thomas saw Jesus before his very eyes. Of course he believed. But how are we supposed to believe today?

Jesus is not going to come and stand right before my eyes to convince me that I should believe. But do you see what John's saying here? You don't need the signs in order to believe.

You don't need to see the signs in order to believe. You need the signs, but you don't need to see them in order to believe. That's why Thomas said, why Jesus said to Thomas straight after, he said, because you have seen me, you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

So what's the purpose of a sign? A sign is to point you to something. Like there are signs all around. There's actually a sign in Kaukadens that points you to Annie's land because Annie's land is the center of the universe.

It's the place that you need to be. Signs. But the significance is not in the sign itself, as good as the sign might look. The sign is simply a means of getting you to Annie's land Sunday afternoons, 4 p.m.

[20:12] here. And Annie's land will still be here whether you pay attention to the signs or not. So Jesus is the destination of John's gospel, just like all these signs that mention Annie's land are to get you to this destination.

And John has written down plenty signs to help us to see so that we will believe. That's his primary purpose. He's urging us to believe.

And not just to merely believe the truth about Jesus, that, okay, Jesus was a real person. He did live in history. He did say some amazing things.

He did do some amazing signs, not just to believe about Jesus, but to believe in Jesus, to put your faith and your trust in Him, to give your life over to Him, like Ben shared in his testimony, to say, okay, Jesus, I'm not in control of my life.

I'm going to sit in the passenger seat. I'm not going to take the steering wheel. You are going to lead me and I am going to follow. And that's why John makes it specifically clear what he wants us to believe.

[ 21 : 32 ] Believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and trust Him. Follow Him. Give yourself to Him.

And so what John does all the way through his gospel, which we'll discover when we read it, is he reports about all different kinds of people who believe as well as people who don't believe, with people who encounter Jesus, have conversations with Him, and then come to trust in Him and believe in Him, but other people who refuse to believe.

Because when it comes to Jesus Christ, whether back then or now, some people are convinced and believe, whereas some just won't believe.

And so John's purpose here is primarily he is writing for people who don't believe to urge them to believe. Now, of course, if you do believe, John's gospel is that he wants you to continue to believe. That's what the footnote mentions there. It can also be read in that sense, to keep following Jesus, to keep growing in faith, to keep enjoying this new life that He's given to you.

[ 22 : 50 ] And so the question is, do you believe in the Jesus presented to us? Or do you feel you still need to be persuaded? Perhaps you're curious.

Perhaps you're curious because, well, there's a ring of truth about what the Bible is saying about who Jesus is. And so you think, okay, something to it.

But perhaps you're convinced because you know somebody, they're in your family or a friend, and their life has been changed by Jesus. So this is what they were like two years ago, but now they're a much better person to be around.

And it's really because Jesus has changed and transformed their life. And so you think, well, there's got to be something to this. Well, whatever stage that you're at, keep exploring.

Don't give up on investigating Jesus. Come to our church on Sundays so we can study John's gospel together. Investigate for yourself and see how what is written here is reliable.

[ 24 : 00 ] Because, you know, if we are open and if we're honest into looking into who Jesus is, we'll discover that there are plenty convincing reasons to believe.

There are more reasons to believe than there are not to believe. Okay, signs believe, and the third point is life. John's telling us about Jesus because he wants us to have life.

He says that by believing you may have life in his name. Now, life is a central theme of John's gospel. The word life comes up again and again and again.

And so the question is, well, what is the meaning of life? In other words, what kind of life is John talking about? Because we've all got life, like we're all alive here, we're all breathing, or just about, anyway.

But John is speaking about a different kind of life. He says it's life in his name. And so he's talking about the eternal life that Jesus gives to all of those who believe.

[ 25 : 07 ] So let me just pick up a few verses from John's gospel to help us understand this kind of life. You know, the most famous verse in the Bible, John 3, 16, tells us, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Or John 3, 36, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Or John 10, verse 10, I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. Or then John chapter 11, verse 25, I am the resurrection and the life.

The one who believes in me will live even though they die and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. I could go on and on and on and on, but over and over and over and over the point in John's gospel is that you must believe in Jesus for eternal life.

And that eternal life is both a present reality, it's for now, but it's also a future hope, it's for what happens when we die. So it's life in abundance now, life in all its fullness, but it's also life everlasting, life that goes on forever.

[ 26 : 38 ] And it's life that's only found in Jesus. Well, how does it become ours? It becomes ours through a new birth. For new life, you need new birth, a new birth by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit whereby we enter into the kingdom of God.

Which means if we are cut off from the source of life, we have no life. If we don't believe in Jesus, then we are separated from the source.

Which means we're still dead in our sin, we're separated from God, we're under His wrath, we're facing eternal damnation. And yet we receive life through believing in Jesus' death in our place for our sin.

And that's why there's nothing more important in life than our response to Jesus Christ. Christ. So many people just seem to dismiss Christianity thinking that it is nothing more than boring, dull, dead religion.

But according to John's gospel and to Jesus, true Christianity promises life. And so when it comes to making life choices, and we all want to make good life choices, like there are all kinds of life choices we can make.

[ 28 : 04 ] I decided I'd look online to see what the best life choices were. So I googled and found some important life choices, and so I'll share them with you.

You're very welcome. So the big life choices basically are about prioritizing physical exercise.

People do that, don't they? Prioritizing physical exercise.

Investing in relationships. It's a good life choice to invest in good relationships. Managing finances wisely. It's good to do that. Pursuing education.

It's good to be learning stuff. All of these are good life choices. But as good and as important as all of this stuff is, there is an even more important life choice that we've got to make.

Because it says it's about eternal life. And you don't want to miss out on that life. Well, you might miss out on some other life choices. You might make some bad life choices.

[ 29 : 07 ] But John is saying to us, the worst life choice you could ever make is not to believe in Jesus Christ. Because believing in Jesus is the fundamental life choice that eclipses all other life choices.

And it's, well, the question, will you believe in Jesus and have eternal life in His name? Or will you reject Jesus and lose out forever?

So just as we wrap this up, we're back to where we started with the question, who is Jesus? It's a question that John really wants us to focus on as we work through his gospel.

Because it's the question that all humanity has to respond to. Who is Jesus? And so just make sure that you're clear. John tells us Jesus is the Son of God, that Jesus is the key to life itself.

And so do you believe in Jesus? Listen to how one author, G.K. Chesterton, put it. He said, If I found a key on the road and discovered it fit and opened a particular lock at my house, I would assume most likely that the key was made by the lock maker.

[ 30 : 23 ] And if I find a set of teachings that has proven itself of such universal validity that it has fascinated and satisfied millions of people in every century, including the best minds in history and the simplest hearts, that it has made itself at home in virtually every culture, inspired masterpieces of beauty in every field of art, continues to grow rapidly and spread and assert itself in lands where a century ago the name of Jesus Christ was not even heard.

If such teaching so obviously fits the locks of so many human souls in so many times and in so many places, are they likely to be the work of a deceiver or a fool?

In fact, it is more likely that they were designed by the heart maker. And so please don't miss the signs, signs that help us believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that by believing you may have life in His name.

Let's pray. that by believing who who! who