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## That We Might Believe (Gospel of John)

*The challenges of the 2016 regular session are upon us. You must deal with many formidable issues in the days to come. You face long hours of hard work in an environment that may often be difficult, stressful, and divisive. The Bible encourages us when we face troublesome times to “fix our eyes on Jesus” and consider all He has done for us (Hebrews 12:2-3). We hope our Bible studies during the regular session will be a brief time you can focus on Christ and find encouragement in considering all He has done for you.*

There is no better place in the Bible to consider Christ than in the Gospel of John. This is often the place where young believers are encouraged to begin reading and studying God’s Word. One early church father described this gospel as “a book in which a child can wade and an elephant can swim”. In John Jesus gives eight amazing “I am” statements describing Who He is and what He has done for us. In studying these “I Ams” we can learn much about Him. Before we begin a study through the Gospel of John, it will be helpful to get an overview of John’s purpose and emphasis and what our response should be to this wonderful book.

### The Purpose of John’s Gospel

Near the end of his gospel, John makes a clear statement regarding the purpose of his writing:

<sup>30</sup>And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup>but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

#### John 20:30-31

John writes of his purpose to record Jesus’ life and ministry so that his readers might “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” This word “believe” is central as it is used 98 times in this gospel. John writes of Jesus’ fantastic miracles and of His remarkable teaching in order that we may come to a true faith in Him, and, in doing so, find eternal life in Him!

### The Emphasis of John’s Gospel

As God has given us His inspired Word, He has provided us with four different accounts of the life and ministry of Christ known as the gospels. The first three

gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are often called the “synoptic gospels” due to their similar approach to recording Jesus’ life and ministry. We should note that each gospel is written for a different audience and has a different emphasis:

**Matthew** was written primarily to the Jews and presented Christ as King.

**Mark** was written primarily to the Romans and presented Christ as Servant.

**Luke** was written primarily to the Greeks and presented Christ as the Son of Man.

**John’s gospel** stands out in clear contrast. While the first three Gospels deal primarily with the events of Christ’s life, John deals with the spiritual meaning of these events. He goes deeper and presents truths that are not emphasized in the other Gospels. For example, all four Gospels record the feeding of the 5,000, but only John gives the great sermon on the Bread of Life (John 6) that explains the meaning of the miracle.<sup>1</sup> In presenting Christ as the divine Son of God, John provides the evidence of the miracles Christ performed and of His own teaching and claims about Himself.

### The Miracles

In keeping with his emphasis of proving Jesus’ deity, John builds the first main section of his gospel around seven of Jesus’ miraculous signs. We should notice that John uses the term “signs” as opposed to “miracles” emphasizing the meaning behind these supernatural acts. This word implies that the action itself is secondary to the power or meaning behind it. The message of these signs was to prove indeed **“That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”!**

## Jesus' Miracles in the Gospel of John

Turning water into wine	2:1-11
Healing the nobleman's son	4:46-54
Healing the paralyzed man	5:1-9
Feeding the 5000	6:1-14
Stilling the storm	6:16-21
Healing the blind man	9:1-7
Raising of Lazarus	11:38-45

## The "I Am" Statements

In seeking to help his readers understand and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior of the world, John records many details of Jesus' teaching not provided in the other gospels. He includes eight "I am" statements Jesus made in proclaiming His identity and His work. These statements plainly set forth some of the most significant claims of Christ's deity.

## Jesus' "I Am" Statements in the Gospel of John

"I am the bread of life"	6:35
"I am the light of the world"	8:12, 9:5
"I am"	8:58
"I am the door"	10:7
"I am the good shepherd"	10:11
"I am the resurrection and the life"	11:25
"I am the way, the truth, and the life"	14:6
"I am the true vine"	15:1

These claims provide a tremendous picture of who Jesus is and His work in our lives. Jesus' teaching recorded for us in John's gospel make it clear that He came to live, suffer, die, and rise again so that we might have our sins forgiven and receive the life that only He provides. During the upcoming session we will take a close look at these statements and what we might learn from them in detail.

## Our Response to John's Gospel

The response of many to Jesus' claims points out the response we must make to Jesus today. A theme that runs throughout this gospel is that of belief and unbelief. We are struck by the obvious unbelief of Jesus' opponents and of the eventual belief of His followers.

To illustrate the purpose of His gospel, in 20:19-29 John records the familiar account of one we have come to know as "Doubting Thomas". After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples while Thomas was absent (John 20:19-20). These disciples shared this

great news with Thomas but his response was one of doubt. **"Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe"**. (20:25) Jesus graciously ministers to Thomas. Eight days later Jesus again appears before His followers, this time with Thomas present. He challenges Thomas to **"Reach your finger here, and look at my hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into my side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."** Thomas' response is what could be the only one considered appropriate: **"My Lord and my God!"**

Jesus recognized that Thomas believed because he had seen Him in person. He then proclaimed blessing upon those who would believe in Him without the benefit of that personal experience. John then declares the purpose of his recording the life and ministry of Christ, that we **"May believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."** (20:30-31)

Certainly we do not have the blessing Jesus' original followers had of being with Jesus in person. We do have His wonderful promise that **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"**.

- *Have you taken John's message to heart and truly believed that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"? It is only through this faith in Him that you find the forgiveness of your sin and the life that He has provided.*
- *As we look forward to the challenging days of the session ahead, let us endeavor now to take time to "fix our eyes on Jesus". This will encourage us, strengthen us, and help us keep before us the priorities that matter most.*

## BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays,

8:00 AM Governor's Conference Room (Sec. of State's Ofc)

12:00 Noon Treasurer's Conference Room (EB54,

Basement of East Wing)