

The Fountain of Life John 20:30-31

I. INTRODUCTION • Reading – John 10:7-10

A. *The Soul's Itch*

1. Ever had an itch in the center of your back where your hand won't reach?
 - a. Fun watching people trying to scratch that itch.
 - b. You can buy back-scratchers, all shapes, sizes.
 - c. Look for just the right object; a corner, a door, whatever.
 - d. But there really is only one way to scratch that itch – need someone else to use their fingernails! Ahhhh.
2. Because God created us for something *better*, for something different from what this world has to offer, there is within each of us “a soul itch.”
 - a. People try to scratch that itch with all kinds of things;
 - Philosophy
 - Religion
 - Pleasure
 - Power
 - Whatever
 - b. But nothing *really* satisfies; nothing *ends* the itching of the soul. [My back itch]
 - c. Only one thing can – The Hand of God, Who reaches into us & does something that brings true & lasting satisfaction.
3. We're going to see how God scratches the soul's itch today.

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 30-31*

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ 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.

1. John weaves his story of Jesus around certain themes.
2. M, M, & L's stories follow a *timeline* of Jesus' life from the beginning of His ministry to the end.
3. John wrote his gospel last & sought to fill in some of the things the other three had left out.
4. Even here in v. 30 John admits while he focused his story on things the others left out, he came nowhere near close to reporting *all* Jesus did.
5. Because Jesus is the Eternal Son of God, that story would exhaust the world's supply of paper & ink.
6. So John concentrated his gospel on a few special themes.

One of the most prominent was LIFE.

B. *John's Background*

1. John was in his mid-teens when he began following Jesus,
 - 1a. He & his elder brother James worked with their Father Zebedee in the family fishing business.
2. But word reached Capernaum where they lived, about a new prophet who was making quite a stir some miles to the south near the Jordan River.
3. His name was also 'John,' & he was doing an unheard of thing—calling *Jews* to be baptized.
4. This new prophet said that the *Messiah* was about to appear at long last & people

- needed to get ready for him.
5. John decided to go check this radical new preacher out & once there, he stayed on as one of his disciples.
 6. One day, John the Baptizer pointed to Jesus & said, “There He is; the One I was sent to go before & announce.”
 7. From that moment, young John began following Jesus.
 8. And from the first, he saw something different in Jesus.
 - a. Jesus lived – ‘differently’ is the best way to describe it.
 - b. There was both a *quantity & quality* of life in Him that was unlike anything John had experienced.
 9. As he wrote his gospel years later, he came to understand what that life is & where it’s to be found. And he wants to share it with all who will listen.

V. 1:3-4

³All things were made through Him [Jesus], and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

1. For those who were here Wednesday night, excuse me while we return to this.
2. In v. 3, John says Jesus is the Creator; the One who spoke & the Universe stood forth.
3. But in v. 4, he says that Jesus didn’t just create *things*: He’s also the Author of *life*.
 - a. He fashioned a body for man from the dust of the ground,
 - b. Then breathed into His nostrils the breath of life & man became a living soul.
4. This *first life* Adam received was the kind of life God *originally planned for man*.
5. As long as man had it, he lived in light.
 - a. Some ancient Jewish commentaries on Genesis say that in their original creation, Adam & Eve were arrayed in *garments of light*.
 - b. Remember how Moses’ face radiated with light when he came down from Mt. Sinai after spending 40 days in the presence of God’s glory?
 - c. Because Adam & Eve spent so much time with God in Eden their entire bodies took on His glory & reflected it into the creation.
 - d. But when they turned from God to sin, their garment of light was extinguished in the awareness of guilt & shame.
 - e. That *first life* was lost in the slow, agonizing slide toward death.
6. In Jesus the *original life* God intended for man has been renewed, restored, rekindled.
 - a. It’s a life marked by *light*, by truth & goodness;
 - b. A light the darkness can never quench.
7. But not only did Jesus *have* this first life, He came to *restore* it.
 - a. What Adam forfeited in the Fall –
 - b. Jesus came to breath into men & women once more.
 - c. Remember after His resurrection when He appeared to the disciples for the first time? He “breathed” on them!
 - 1) Just as God breathed into Adam & *first life* began
 - 2) Jesus breathed on them, & they receives *new life*.
8. So: How do *we* lay claim to what Jesus came to restore? How *can* we appropriate what He possessed & offers?
9. The answer is right here –

³⁰ And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ 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.

C. Believe In the Real Jesus

1. We appropriate Life by *believing*.
2. But now, be careful! Don't confuse '*wishing*' with what John means by '*belief*.'
 - a. *Wishing* is investing a lot of longing & imagining into one's *own* desires.
 - b. Biblical *belief* is trust **IN** something, a *reliance* on the thing believed in.
3. Many people today confuse wishing with faith.
 - a. They think that faith is nothing more than a mental activity in which a person accepts something as a fact without any evidence.
 - b. In such a view of faith, there's no correspondence between what one thinks & what actually is.
 - c. I can believe that I'm the best surfer on the Pro circuit, but put me in the water with a board & wave, and the truth will quickly come to light.
 - d. You can believe that you can become invisible just by focusing your mental powers on bending light around you, but when you try to sneak cookie dough from the bowl, you're still going to get a sharp rap on the knuckles with the wooden spoon!
 - e. **Faith does not create reality.** It's the other way round:
Reality informs & empowers faith.
 - f. Faith is simply acting in accord with the reality & realm of the Spirit.
4. Faith must have a *real object* in order for it to be true faith.
 - a. We don't *just believe*; we believe **IN** something.
 - b. John doesn't say –

These things are written that you may believe and have life in His name.

c. He says,

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing [that] you may have life in His name.

5. John puts *specific content* & focus on what we're to believe.;
 - a. We're to believe Jesus is the Messiah & the Son of God.
 - b. Or, as John's original readers would have understood—Jesus was *God & man*.
 - c. Why these things? Why is it important for us to believe *this*?
6. Here's where understanding a little of the history of that time is important.
7. When John wrote his gospel, *poisonous streams* of thought had already begun polluting the *Christian River of Truth*.
 - a. The pure doctrine of the Apostles had been mixed with goofy ideas & the errors of those who wanted to hijack the Church.
 - b. Because the Incarnation is a *mystery* that transcends human understanding, it's a door through which error *often* comes.

8. The *Ebionites* were a Jewish-Christian group who rejected *Jesus' deity*. ^[1]
 - a. The idea God could or would become man was absurd to them.
 - b. So they said Jesus was *just a man* who lived a life of careful obedience to the Law, & *became* the Messiah.
9. The *Docetists* stood on the other side of the fence from the Ebionites. ^[2]
 - a. They rejected *Jesus' humanity*.
 - b. Influenced by Greek philosophy, they considered physical matter evil while the spiritual realm was all good.
 - c. To them, the idea that God would take on a human body was repugnant.
 - d. So they said that Jesus, as God, merely *appeared* to have a body.
 - e. Docetism comes from the Greek word meaning "to appear / to seem."
 - f. The Docetists said Jesus' body was a phantom, that He *caused* those around Him to think He had a body; but it was an illusion.

10. John understood that Jesus came to restore to mankind what had been lost in the Fall.
 - a. And he knew Jesus could not have done that unless he was *both God & Man*.

- b. If Jesus had been *merely a man*, then he would have been like every other man; a slave to sin with no power or position to defeat the devil & death.
 - c. If He had been *only God*, then He would not have qualified to reclaim for mankind what the **First man** lost in the Fall.
 - d. Only Jesus, who is both God & Man can do for other men & women what He did.
11. When John says we must believe Jesus is Messiah & Son of God, he means we must believe in the *real* Jesus: the One who is Man & God.
- a. Not the Jesus of the Ebionites or the Docetists.
 - b. Now, I haven't had any of their missionaries come to my door lately, have you?
 - c. While the Ebionites & Docetists have fizzled out, their error lives on.
 - d. It's alive & well & living in Liberal Christianity which says Jesus was merely a good man, but not God.
 - e. It lives in the Watchtower which says Jesus was an angel who appeared on Earth.
 - f. Many are the groups today who deny either the deity or humanity of Jesus.
 - g. So what John says here is as important for us as it was for those he first wrote to.
12. But John's whole thrust here is that we gain life by believing **IN** Jesus.
- a. He's **NOT** saying simply having a correct view of Who Jesus is, merits salvation.
 - b. It's believing **IN** Him; *trusting* Him, *relying on* Him that makes the difference.
 - c. It's moving out of confidence in ourselves & into complete reliance ON Him that John is calling for.
13. We just need to make sure the Jesus we believe in is the Real Jesus of Scripture,
- a. The Jesus of History,
 - b. The God-Man who walked the dusty streets of Capernaum 2000 years ago,
 - c. Hung on a Roman Cross outside the city walls of Jerusalem,
 - d. Then rose from the dead 3 days later.
14. Is *that* the Jesus you believe in? Is He the One you're trusting in for Heaven - the One you've staked your eternity on?
15. Or do you believe in *another* Jesus; one of your own imagination? One you've fashioned from your own desires?
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16. Some years ago I worked for a short time installing car stereos.
- a. Before I started my boss said I needed to get some tools & told me to get them from Snap On.
 - b. That was way too expensive so I went to Wal-Mart & dug through the 99 cent bin.
 - c. I pulled together what I thought was a nice collections of tools for under \$30.
 - d. The next day at work, my boss just laughed & shook his head.
 - e. Sure enough, they were a waste. They broke, and made doing the job much more difficult.
 - f. I found it hard to make a living because I was trying to use the wrong tools.
17. There is only One Jesus who saves & gives life; the Messiah & Son of God.
18. Is *your* Jesus **THAT** Jesus, or are you trying to make life work with a 99 cent Jesus?

D. Believing

1. John says in v. 31 -
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.
2. I have to get a bit technical here – because John does.
 - a. See the first use of the word “believe” –
These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God
 - 1) The verb is in the aorist, active, subjunctive.

- 2) John says he wrote his gospel so that people would come to a ***moment in time*** when they would realize Jesus is the only One who can scratch their soul itch, and that realizing it – they would step out of their old lives into new life in Christ.
- b. But then he goes on to say -
and that believing you may have life in His name
 1) ***Now*** the word “believe” is a present, active, participle.
 2) Meaning an on-going relationship with Jesus that results in an ***ever increasing*** experience of life.
3. Being a Christian is not about signing up one day & getting a pass to heaven; then just getting along as best you can, making sure you don’t lose your ticket while You wait for the departure of the Glory Train.
4. Being a Christian is about a wonderful, ***daily relationship*** with Jesus that leads us to ***more & more*** life.
5. In John 10 Jesus made it clear when He spoke of his relationship with His people. He said He came to bring ***abundant life***.
 a. Abundant life is life that ***keeps growing***.
 b. It’s coming alive at ever deeper levels of who & what God created us to be.
6. When we were little kids, we couldn’t wait till we grew up.
 a. We wanted to be big enough to ride a bike, to go on the rides at Disneyland
 b. Then we wanted to be old enough to date, or drive a car.
 c. Then we couldn’t wait till we turned 21 and were officially adults!
 d. After that we pretty much wish things would slow down.
 e. At 30, we want to ***stop*** the clock. At 50 we try to reverse time with lotions, creams, & diets.
7. As believers, we can ***always grow & never get old***.
 a. No matter how far we’ve come in faith,
 b. No matter how deep our knowledge & experience of God, there’s always more; much, ***much*** more!
 c. As we continue to put our trust in Jesus, as we rely more completely on Him, we enter into ***ever increasing life***.
 d. Col. 2:3 says that in Christ are found ***all the treasures*** of wisdom & knowledge.
8. As we go through our daily lives, believing in Jesus, we move farther & farther ***away*** from the Fallenness of Adam & ***into*** the Life of Jesus.

III. CONCLUSION

A. Hanging Out

1. Believing in Jesus here in v. 31 is simply John’s way of describing having an on-going, vital relationship ***with*** the Lord.
Believing IN Jesus means hanging out with Him.
2. There’s a principle of life we’d do well to remember: We become ***like*** those we hang out with.
3. Parents know how true this is because they see it in their children.
 a. Little Johnny or Suzy comes home one day after playing with some neighbors with a new word that suddenly becomes way overused.
 b. A bit older, Johnny & Suzy come home from school wanting to wear different clothes & listen to different music.
4. Adults are no different. Bikers / Surfers
 5. We become like those we hang out with.
 6. Remember *Pinocchio*? It’s an incredible analogy of the Story of Humanity.
 a. Pinocchio was a marionette who got separated from his creator-father.

- b. While looking for a way home, he was seduced & distracted by the carnival,
 - c. He forgot all about who he was & slowly but surely turned into a donkey.
 - d. The more of the carnival's fun he sought after, the more like a dumb beast he became.
7. Life – The thing we need is IN Jesus. Nothing else satisfies.
 - a. All else is a distraction that would steal our hearts --
 - b. And turn us into mere shadows, dumb beasts.
 8. When we hang out with Jesus by putting our constant trust in Him, then we become more like HIM!
 9. The life of Christ, flows into us.
 10. When I listen to someone preach or teach, I like to hear some practical way to apply the lesson.
 - a. So right about now I'd be saying, "**How** do I 'hang-out' with Jesus?"
 - b. "He's invisible. He's in heaven & I'm here in Oxnard. How can I spend time with Him?"
 11. Here's how –
 - Read, Study, & Meditate on this
 - Pray
 - Hang out with other believers – Because where ever 2 or 3 gather in His name, He's present in a special way.

[1] Shelley, B. L. (1995). *Church history in plain language* (Updated 2nd ed.) (Page 50). Dallas, Tex.: Word Pub.

[2] Shelley, B. L. (1995). *Church history in plain language* (Updated 2nd ed.) (Page 50). Dallas, Tex.: Word Pub.