

MISUSE OF JOHN 20:30, 31

PURPOSE FOR THE EIGHT SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30, 31).

All four gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — present the same message to the same recipients. All four present a record of the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the Jewish people, with each presenting the matter from a different perspective. Each gospel presents different facets of a complete word picture, with the four gospels together forming the complete picture.

The Gospel of John though can only be considered *unique* among the other three gospels, *particularly in one central respect*. It is the only one of the four gospels which provides a *specifically stated purpose for particular events which the Spirit of God moved John to record a decade or two after these events occurred*.

The Gospel of John is built around eight signs depicting events which occurred during Christ's earthly ministry to the Jewish people. These signs had been *Divinely designed to effect belief among the Jewish people*. And, though many Jews believed, the nation at large remained in *unbelief, climaxing this unbelief by rejecting the proffered kingdom, crucifying their Messiah, and pledging their allegiance to a pagan Gentile king*.

Then, for about three subsequent decades — during the period covered by the Book of Acts, during the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the Jewish people (which lasted from 33 A.D. to about 62 A.D.) — the Spirit of God singled out *eight signs* (from among all the signs which Jesus had performed) and moved John to record them in his gospel.

And the purpose for the Spirit moving John to record these eight particular signs is given near the conclusion of his gospel, in John 20:30, 31. And this purpose *CLEARLY STATES* that these eight signs, forming a framework around which John's gospel is built, were recorded for *EXACTLY the same purpose that they had originally been performed*:

These signs had originally been performed *to effect belief among the Jewish people during the offer of the kingdom of the heavens*, during Christ's earthly ministry, as recorded in the gospel accounts.

They were then recorded in John's gospel *to effect belief among the Jewish people during the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens*, during the ministry of the apostles (et al.), as recorded in the Book of Acts.

This is clearly stated in John 20:30, 31. And, in the light of that which precedes these verses in John, and the four gospels viewed together — presenting the same message, continued in Acts and the epistles — *NO ONE should miss it.*

BUT, almost everyone does!

This is the reason why, in the Book of Acts — in line with Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10 — the apostles and others *ALWAYS*, without exception, went "to the Jew first" in every locality where the message was proclaimed. *It was ONLY after* the message had been proclaimed to the Jews in a particular locality (invariably followed by rejection) that those proclaiming the message were free to go to the Gentiles in that same locality with the same message concerning the kingdom, though "an offer" of the kingdom, not "a re-offer" (which, of necessity, because of the message, *could ONLY have been "an offer" of the kingdom to saved Gentiles*).

This is also the reason why one can know that the Gospel of John — recorded *to effect belief among the Jewish people*

relative to Christ and the proffered kingdom — was written at a time *before* the close of the re-offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel, sometime before about 62 A.D. (much earlier than many claim). The Jewish people simply *could not* have been singled out in the specific manner seen in John 20:30, 31 — concerning “signs” in relation to *the Messianic King and His Kingdom* — had the gospel been recorded following the time of the re-offer of the kingdom.

As previously seen, these two verses in John chapter twenty refer back to eight signs, among numerous other signs, performed *for a particular, revealed purpose during the original offer of the kingdom*.

And, as also previously seen, *they could only have been singled out and recorded for EXACTLY the SAME purpose during the re-offer of the kingdom*.

(For additional information concerning “signs” manifested during and following Christ’s earthly ministry, seen during the period covered by the four gospels and the Book of Acts, refer to the author’s article, “Signs, Wonders, Miracles.”)

“That Ye Might Believe That Jesus Is the Christ, the Son of God”

The key words in the first part of verse thirty-one are “believe,” “Jesus,” “Christ,” and “Son.” And the manner in which all four words are used *MUST be understood in the light of the introductory reference to “signs” in the previous verse*, which reflects back on all the signs which Jesus performed (“And many other signs...” [v. 30a]), whether recorded or not recorded in the other three gospels.

Then, remaining within the context, the manner in which all four words are used *can ONLY have to do with the Son’s previous ministry to the Jewish people in relation to His kingship and the proffered kingdom*.

1) "That Ye Might Believe"

Belief among the Jewish people during both the original offer of the kingdom (recorded in the gospel accounts) and the re-offer of the kingdom (recorded in the Book of Acts) had to do with *EXACTLY the same thing*. It had to do with *the One born King, Jesus the Christ, God's Son*; and it had to do with *the message being proclaimed, the proffered kingdom of the heavens* (Matt. 2:1, 2; 3:1, 2; 4:17).

Belief during the original offer of the kingdom had *NOTHING* to do with eternal salvation, for Christ came to *a people who were already saved*. They, as their ancestors, going all the way back to Moses (throughout thirty-five generations, covering over fourteen centuries), had sacrificed paschal lambs year after year (though breaks in the offering of sacrifices would have occurred at times during Gentile dominance [during the time of the Judges] or during Gentile captivity [the subsequent Assyrian and Babylonian captivities]). And, as during Moses' day (as also before or after that time) there was *death and shed blood, that which God has required for man's salvation since Adam sinned in Eden*.

And, when Christ came to Israel four millennia following man's creation and subsequent fall, God could only have looked upon the matter in exactly the same manner as He had previously looked upon it during Adam's day, or later during Moses' day. The statement from Ex. 12:13, "... when I see the blood, I will pass over you...", *MUST remain true throughout ALL time*.

(In the light of Heb. 10:4 — "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" — how could God see efficacy in the shed blood of the Paschal lamb, or the entire sacrificial system under the Mosaic Economy?

BUT He DID! After all, He is the One establishing all of this.

For material on the matter, refer to the author's article, "Salvation in the O.T., N.T.")

The regenerate state of the Jewish people at Christ's first coming allowed that seen in the gospel accounts to occur — an offer of the kingdom of the heavens to the Jewish people. Otherwise, there COULD NOT have been an offer. The kingdom COULD NOT THEN and it CANNOT TODAY be offered to unregenerate individuals. A person MUST first possess spiritual life before spiritual values of this nature can enter into the picture.

And, as well, this is *THE ONLY REASON* that there could have been a re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, which, of necessity, had to be limited to about thirty years.

The same saved generation of Jews living before Calvary remained on the scene following Calvary. BUT, when this generation began to pass off the scene via death during the next three decades (replaced by Jews refusing to avail themselves of the blood of the Paschal Lamb slain in 33 A.D., which fulfilled the O.T. type introduced in Exodus chapter twelve, rendering any future slaying of paschal lambs on the Passover by the Jewish people non-efficacious), the re-offer of the kingdom, of necessity, could NO longer continue.

A saved generation of Jews, to whom an offer of the kingdom could be extended, *NO longer existed beyond about 62 A.D. when the re-offer of the kingdom, of necessity, came to a close.*

Thus, contextually in John 20:31, *belief involves the Jewish Messiah in relation to the kingdom, NOT eternal life.* And this is evident from *NOT ONLY* that which precedes (signs) *BUT* that which the verse goes on to state ("that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God").

2) "That Jesus Is the Christ"

The name "Jesus" means *salvation* (Matt. 1:21). The Greek word translated "Jesus," *Iesous*, is the equivalent of the Hebrew words *Yeshuah* (meaning "salvation") or *Jehoshua* ("Joshua," a cognate form of *Yeshuah*, meaning exactly the same — "salvation").

The word *Yeshuah* is used about eighty times in the Old Testament, it is always used in the sense of “deliverance,” and it is usually translated “salvation” (e.g., Gen. 49:18; II Chron. 20:17; Isa. 12:2).

Then the name “Joshua,” appearing numerous times in the Old Testament, appears in the New Testament twice, in Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8. “Joshua” in the Greek text, as previously noted, is *Iesous*, distinguished from the name “Jesus” only through the context. And a failure to take the context into consideration apparently caused the KJV translators to erroneously translate the word as “Jesus” in both Acts 7:45 and Heb. 4:8.

“Deliverance” or “salvation” in Scripture though (both Old and New Testaments), as the use of the name *Iesous* in the New Testament (meaning “salvation”), must be viewed contextually to determine what type *deliverance* or *salvation* is in view.

In the preceding respect, most of the references to “salvation” in the New Testament *actually relate either directly or indirectly to the Messianic Era, NOT to eternal life*. And the thought of *salvation* (“*life*”) through the use of the name “Jesus” in John 20:31, both textually and contextually, *is used in EXACTLY this same sense*.

(The word “Christ” in John 20:31— “that Jesus is the Christ” — is dealt with later in this article.)

3) “The Son of God”

“Sonship” in Scripture implies *rulership*, for “sonship” is centrally for *REGAL purposes* in the governmental structure of God’s kingdom.

“Sons of God” (angels) presently rule throughout God’s kingdom, whether on this earth, other provinces throughout the galaxy, or provinces throughout all the galaxies

forming the universal kingdom of God. All angels, whether fallen (as Satan and his angels) or unfallen (all the other angels) are *sons of God*, else angels (fallen or unfallen) could not rule.

Angels are *sons* because of *creation*. Unlike that which occurs in the human realm, there is no procreation in the angelic world. Each angel is a special, individual creation, providing the status of *sonship* (which has to do with “creation,” not *salvation*).

Adam, because of *creation*, was a *son of God* both before and following the fall (Luke 3:38), which was completely in line with the reason for his creation, given in the opening chapter of Genesis:

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion... [Heb., *radah*, ‘rule’; i.e., ‘...and let them rule...’]” (Gen. 1:26a; cf. vv. 27, 28).

Then, when the Redeemer appeared, He appeared as *God's Son* (via “birth,” not *creation*), the *second Man*, the *last Adam* (Matt. 2:15; 3:17; I Cor. 15:45-47). He, like the first Adam, was tested. But, rather than being overcome by Satan, He overcame Satan, showing that He was fully qualified to take the sceptre (Matt. 4:1-11).

Thus, the purpose for man's creation and redemption (following his fall) will ultimately be realized through the second Man, the last Adam.

“And That Believing Ye Might Have Life through His Name”

The key words in the second part of verse thirty-one are “believing” and “life.” And, as in the first part of the verse, both words *must* be understood in the light of the introductory reference to “signs” in the previous verse, *which reflects*

back not only on the previous eight signs in John's gospel but upon all the signs which Jesus had performed, whether recorded or not recorded in the other three gospels.

Then also, as in the first part of the verse, remaining within context, both words *can ONLY have to do with the Son's previous ministry to the Jewish people in relation to His kingship and the proffered kingdom.*

The key words throughout Scripture are "believe" and "faith"; and both, in reality, are the same word. One is a verb (Gk., *pisteuo*; "believe"), and the other is a noun (Gk., *pistis*; "faith").

And faith (or belief) is connected with the whole of man's salvation, whether that of the spirit, the soul, or the body (cf. John 3:16; Rom. 1:17; 8:13-23; Eph. 2:8, 9; Heb. 10:35-39; I Peter 1:3-9).

The reference to *believing* in the latter part of John 20:31 has to do with "life" which the Jewish people could have realized during either the offer or the re-offer of the kingdom. Thus, *believing*, with a view to "life" in this verse, has to do with *the saved and that which lay ahead for those among the saved who exercised faith.*

This verse has *NOTHING* to do with the unsaved, in that past day, or today.

And because *signs (v. 30) and the offer or re-offer of the kingdom* are in view, using this verse relative to the gospel of grace and the unsaved today completely removes the verse from its contextual setting, doing away with the subject and teaching at hand (much like trying to use II Chron. 7:14 relative to the Church today).

As well, attempting to use this verse in the preceding manner *can only corrupt the simple gospel of grace, for signs and a message to the Jewish people relative to the kingdom have NOTHING to do with the gospel of grace.*

Then one final problem exists through misusing John 20:31 in the preceding manner. John's gospel is often said to be the one gospel among the four written to tell an unsaved person how to be saved. Such though places *A COMPLETELY WRONG PERSPECTIVE on the overall message seen throughout this gospel, essentially removing John's gospel from its correct contextual setting among the other three.*

(For material on the simplicity of the gospel of grace [past aspect of the salvation message] or material on the overall gospel message [past, present, and future aspects of the salvation message], one *should begin at Moses, not John or anywhere else in the New Testament.* And, as well, that would be true when dealing with any Biblical doctrine.

Everything has been set forth in its pristine, unchangeable form in Moses [Genesis-Deuteronomy]. Then, all else which follows Moses [Joshua-Revelation] is commentary.

Or, viewing different parts of the preceding, the whole of the matter is initially set forth in the opening thirty-four verses of Moses, with commentary following. Then, moving beyond this, filling in details at stages... The whole of the matter is again set forth in the opening eleven chapters of Moses, with commentary following; the whole of the matter is again set forth in the opening first book of Moses, with commentary following; the whole of the matter is again set forth in the five books of Moses, with commentary following; the whole of the matter is again set forth in the whole of the Old Testament, with commentary following [the New Testament].

In this respect, *there is NOTHING in the New Testament that is not seen after some fashion in the Old Testament. And that thought can be carried back through each of the sections that have been mentioned in the preceding paragraph — NOTHING in the latter that is not set forth in the former.* This is simply one of the ways that God has structured His Word, and *this Word*

MUST be studied and dealt with accordingly, always comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Thus, John's gospel is not really the proper place to begin when dealing with salvation by grace or any other facet of the gospel message. Beginning with John, a person is starting in the middle of the Book.

[There would be a sense in which John's gospel could be a correct beginning place, as Genesis. But that's *ONLY if this gospel is understood in a correct respect, which can be seen and understood ONLY through drawing from Genesis.* John's gospel, paralleling Genesis, *should begin the New Testament, not Matthew.* John is the Genesis of the New Testament, as Genesis is the John of the Old Testament.

Also, placing John's gospel first, with a statement regarding THE PURPOSE for "signs," would set the stage for the appearance of "signs" in the three gospels which would then follow, along with Acts.

For information on John's gospel opening the New Testament instead of Matthew's gospel, refer to the author's article, "Genesis and John"].

The opening five verses of Genesis [for salvation by grace] or the opening thirty-four verses [for the complete gospel message] is where this message first begins to be revealed and developed in Scripture.

Should a person dealing with the salvation message — either in part or the whole — begin elsewhere?

After all, *God began in Genesis and structured matters after a particular fashion for a reason*, which could only say, *in no uncertain terms*, that an individual needs the background in Genesis to properly deal with material following Genesis [e.g., with John].

As well, this will provide the evident reason why so many in Christian circles today deal improperly with John.

And, as should be evident from the preceding several paragraphs, or the preceding part of this article as a whole, John's gospel, because of its overall message, *CANNOT* be the place to begin. This gospel deals *FAR more with present and future aspects of salvation than with the past aspect* [salvation by grace], necessitating an understanding, from previous revelation, particularly from Genesis, concerning the overall gospel message.

Then there is the matter of John's gospel being *very Jewish in nature*, dealing with "signs" and the Jews of another time relative to a proffered kingdom [dealt with in the preceding part of this article].

Seeing John's gospel in its complete, overall setting among the other three gospels and occupying its proper place in Scripture as a whole is something which goes almost complete unrecognized by Christians today. And, as previously alluded to, this can only account, in no small part, for the present wide misuse of this gospel, which often results in a corruption of the simple message of the gospel of grace on the one hand [e.g., seeing "signs" connected with this message] and a doing away with the correct message set forth in John's gospel on the other hand.)

The End, the Means

Question: Is it ever right to do wrong to do or be right? Or, another way of asking the same question, Does the end ever justify the means?

The preceding is what all individuals misusing John 20:30, 31 should ask themselves.

Is it all right to misuse these two verses (lift them from their context, make the verses say or teach something other than what they actually do say and teach [which is what is being done]) to arrive at what would be considered a *positive "end"*?

And if actions of this nature, to reach a *positive “end,”* are all right, then maybe it is all right to do wrong to do right. Maybe the end does justify the means. At least many, by their actions, appear to think so.

But, if it is not right to do this, then the entire approach to this matter regarding John 20:30, 31 *needs to be reexamined.*

A proclamation of salvation by grace, to follow Biblical guidelines, *MUST be presented as the beginning point (a passing from death unto life), for a PURPOSE, which will ultimately be realized in the future Messianic Kingdom, with all things involved therein (inheritance, rulership, etc).*

When salvation by grace is dealt with outside its Biblical context, apart from present and future aspects of salvation, for a purpose, the message simply cannot be dealt with in its pristine clarity. Scripture *NEVER* presents salvation by grace as standing *alone* in this respect, apart from a reason/purpose for being saved (which, from a Scriptural standpoint, is *NEVER* seen as having an ultimate outcome of going to heaven instead of hell, etc.). Doing something of this nature is left for man to foul up. And “foul up” in this realm seems to be what he often does best today.

If an individual wants to begin aright, which could only be *beginning where God began, laying a proper foundation,* he *MUST* begin in the opening two chapters of Genesis, beginning the Old Testament; or *the same thing* can be seen by beginning in the opening two chapters of John, but *ONLY* when seeing John *beginning the New Testament, as the Genesis of the New Testament, occupying its proper place among the four gospels.*

Now, with the preceding as *foundational,* note the thought of “belief” in John 20:31.

Those in view in this verse (“ye,” a plural pronoun) — “that ye might believe” — can only refer back to *unbelieving*

Israel, the signs, and the proffered kingdom (first the offer, then the re-offer). And the "life" being offered has to do with life in the kingdom, NOT with eternal life.

The two verses together (vv. 30, 31) are dealing with a people already beyond that foreshadowed by events on day one in Genesis chapter one. They are dealing with a people in that foreshadowed by events on days two through six (vv. 6-28), with a view to *the seventh day, foreshadowing the Messianic Kingdom* (2:1-3).

And if that seen in Genesis is referenced in the Gospel of John, the same thing is seen in the opening two chapters, ending at *EXACTLY* the same place, *in the Messianic Kingdom, to be realized during the same seventh day* (1:1-2:11).

Genesis has to do with God's pattern showing the restoration of a ruined creation, foreshadowing the restoration of ruined man. John has to do centrally with the restoration of ruined man, as foreshadowed in Genesis (cf. John 1:29, 35, 36).

Man's creation in Genesis is seen having to do with *regality*, which is seen in connection with *the seventh day*.

And this restoration in John is seen *NOT ONLY* in connection with regality on *the seventh day BUT* having to do centrally with *Israel*, along with the fact that *salvation/restoration, as seen in John or anywhere else in Scripture, "is of the Jews,"* as seen in the same gospel (John 4:22).

As previously seen, the salvation message throughout John's gospel is *inseparably connected with the eight signs, having to do with Israel*. But, though this is the case, that's not to say that the salvation message would be any different for unsaved man today, for it wouldn't, though "signs" *have NOTHING to do with the gospel of grace*.

"Jesus" is the *Saviour, regardless* of whether it was deliverance for Israel in the past relative to one thing (life in the

kingdom for individuals already possessing eternal life, with the signs pointing to this life in the kingdom) *OR* for unsaved man today (eternal salvation, completely apart from signs, with the kingdom ultimately in view).

Believing in Jesus Who can save is the issue for BOTH, though for different reasons, but with *the same ultimate end result* (life in the kingdom).

Thus, many salvation verses in John's gospel can be used either way, for *the SAME thing* said to the Jews regarding salvation *can ONLY* be the same as that said to unsaved man today (though the salvation/deliverance from "what" is different in each case, *it's STILL believe in the Saviour*).

Note, for example, in this same respect, verses such as Acts 4:12 or I John 5:11-13. These verses, contextually, have nothing to do with the unsaved. The verse in Acts has to do with belief regarding Israel during the re-offer of the kingdom (4:10-14); and the verses in I John have to do with Christians, exercising faith, being brought forth from above rather than from below (5:1-4, 18).

But these verses carry the same message that would be used when dealing with the unsaved, for the same Saviour is being referenced, though certain things regarding salvation (Israel 2,000 years ago, Christians today, unsaved man today) would not be the same at all when interpreting these verses solely within their contextual setting. And this same thing can be seen numerous other places in Scripture.

So, in light of the preceding, what's wrong with numerous groups and individuals treating John 20:30, 31 after the fashion seen in this article (as a reference to signs performed to show the unsaved, whether Jew or Gentile, how to be saved)?

Note what John 20:31 actually states, reflecting back on *Israel and the signs* (which can only have to do with *Israel in relation to the proffered kingdom*) — "that ye might believe that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." The word "Christ" (Gk.) or "Messiah" (Heb.), meaning "anointed one," is contextually associated with *Israel, their Messianic hope, and has reference to the One Who will rule and reign.*

Prophets, priests, and kings were "anointed" in Israel. Christ was born King (Matt. 2:2) and presented Himself to Israel after this fashion.

And, as previously seen, this has to do with *salvation/deliverance for Israel in relation to the kingdom.* Then, in connection with this, "sonship" ("God's Son") implies *rulership.*

Wording for the unsaved today would be more along the lines, "that ye might believe that Jesus (meaning 'salvation') is the One Who can and will save," *with eternal salvation in view, NOT with the King and His kingdom in immediate view, as seen in John 20:31.*

Note Acts 16:31 in this respect, where *a Gentile, not Israel, is in view.* The word, "Christ" [KJV] is not found in most of the Greek manuscripts.

But John 20:30, 31 has been removed from its context, with little attention paid to the exact wording of the two verses as well. The "ye" in v. 31, inseparably connected with the Jewish people and the reference to signs in v. 30, is associated with the unsaved today, with the signs having been performed to depict a salvation message for them (with those advocating this referring to the Gospel of John as the one book in Scripture that has been written to the unsaved, telling them how to be saved). And this has been done by continuing with wording that should not even be in view when dealing with the unsaved today (this wording could actually confuse them) — "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

If an individual wants to use different verses from John's gospel when dealing with the unsaved, there is nothing wrong with that. But when an individual comes up with a misleading schematic to get to these verses, that is a completely different story.

Doing this reflects negatively on numerous things about John's gospel as a whole. Such may result in seeing individuals saved, but with a message of this nature about John's gospel, *these same individuals may become so confused about why they have been saved — thinking only of heaven-hell issues, etc. — that they may never get straightened out.*

Misusing John 20:30, 31 in the manner seen may produce a lot of positive results in the short term, with many thinking that such results are wonderful. *BUT, because of HOW this is being done — ignoring the exact wording of these two verses and the corresponding central message of John's gospel (which does away with this message), doing it other than God's way (the only way that it could possibly be done through the means used) — in the long term, there, as well, can only be a lot of shipwreck strewn along the path that these same individuals have traveled.*