

INTRODUCTION

Someone has said that Demographics are destiny. I'm part of the Baby Boomer generation. We were always the largest segment of Americans. However, in 2019, we have now been replaced by the Millennial generation as the largest segment of our population. Millennials are Americans who are 25-39. The next decade will be a transitional time for our nation and for churches. Millennials will grow into middle age; Gen Xers will grow into their fifties and sixties. And Boomers will be retiring and dying. Fact: Currently, Baby Boomers are retiring at a rate of 10,000 a day, yet Baby Boomers still control 2/3 of the nation's disposable income.

So in honor of all the baby boomers out there, I have a music commercial for you to enjoy some remakes of the songs we grew up loving. The titles have been changed to reflect our age. The playlist includes such classics as: Herman's Hermits singing, "Mrs. Brown, you've got a lovely walker." Or that classic by the Bee Gees, "How do you mend a broken hip?" You'll love the classic by Leo Sayer, "You make me feel like napping." Or who can forget that classic ballad by Roberta Flack, age 82, "The First Time ever I forgot your Face." Or Paul Simon singing, "Fifty ways to lose your liver." And the King of Soul, Marvin Gaye crooning, "I heard it through the Grape Nuts." Or the Scandinavian group Abba singing, "Denture Queen – old and mean taking dramamine." And finally, who can forget Ringo Starr, who is now 79, singing, "I get by with little help from Depends."

It's good to be back in the Gospel of John. Since it's been several weeks since we were in John, let's consider the context of these verse. In John 10:20 we learn that Jesus is in the Temple in December during the feast of Dedication. The Jewish leaders surrounded Him. They said, "Enough of all these metaphors and parables. Tell us plainly. Are you the Messiah?" But then Jesus went way beyond claiming to be the Messiah—He claimed to be God! He said, "I and the Father are one." And they called that blasphemy and wanted to stone Him on the spot.

John 10:29-42. "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone him. Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these works are you stoning me?"

"We aren't stoning you for a good work," the Jews answered, "but for blasphemy, because you—being a man—make yourself God."

Jesus answered them, "Isn't it written in your law, I said, you are gods? [from Psalm 82:6] If he called those whom the word of God came to 'gods'—and the Scripture cannot be broken— do you say, 'You are blaspheming' to the one the Father set apart and sent into the world, because I said: I am the Son of God? If I am not doing my Father's works, don't believe me. But if I am doing them and you don't believe me, believe the works. This way you will know and understand that the Father is in me and I in the Father." Then they were trying again to seize him, but he eluded their grasp.

So he departed again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and he remained there. Many came to him and said, "John never did a sign, but everything John said about this man was true." And many believed in him there.

This passage begins with a tense situation in Jerusalem and ends with a pleasant snapshot of Jesus down at the Jordan River where He had been baptized. And many people believed in him there.

These Jewish leaders were ready to stone Him for blasphemy. Make no mistake about it. They accused Jesus of saying He was equal with God. But Jesus distracted them momentarily by quoting from the Old Testament. In Psalm 82 God calls some of the Jewish judges, *elohim*, which can be translated as gods with a small g. Let me illustrate it this way. Imagine that I had a small nerf ball in this hand. I could ask you, "Is this a soft ball?" And you would say, "Yes." But then let's say I pulled out a real softball, the kind we use in a softball game. And I said, "This nerf ball is a soft ball. But this is a real Softball." Jesus was saying, "Those judges were gods, small g because they were giving authority by the Father. But I'm the only one that the Father set apart and sent to earth, so I'm the capital G God."

In this message, we are going to talk about the transforming truth about Jesus. We'll examine three statements about the truth about Jesus.

1. YOU ARE BORN WITH A TENDENCY TO REJECT THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS (vs. 29-33).

Those Jewish leaders rejected the truth that Jesus claimed that day. And we all have that same tendency to say, "no" to this truth because we are all born in a sinful condition. There was a great pastor in North Africa in the Fifth Century. His name was Augustine and he made this observation about us: "We are born with a propensity to sin and the necessity to die." Sin and death. Those are the two most pressing problems of humanity. In every culture and language people are asking, "Why do I sin?" And second, "What's going to happen to me after I die?" The Bible has the best answer to both questions. We sin because we inherited our spiritual DNA from Adam and Eve—the first sinners. And second, Jesus is the only man who has ever completely conquered death.

In Ephesians 2, the Apostle Paul explained our sinful condition in these terms: "We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also." (Ephesians 2:3)

We are by nature children of wrath. That means that our default response to God is to reject His love. We resist getting close to this God. The best way I can make a parallel is to talk about the behavior of teenagers toward their parents. How many of you have ever raised teenagers, or are raising teenagers right now? Something happens during puberty that changes the nature of our relationships. I can remember when my two daughters were little kids they would come

running up to me when I got home. "Daddy, daddy! It's so good to see you!" And they would jump up into my arms.

But when they became teenagers, they weren't bad but there was a period of time when they wanted to hide away in their rooms—all teenagers do that. There is a period of time when teenagers think their parents are as dumb as a rock. In our sinful condition, we are like spiritual teenagers. We don't want to run into the arms of God. We feel safer hiding away in the bedroom of our self-centeredness.

So in order to come to faith in Christ, we have to resist this tendency to reject the truth about Jesus. And God is wooing us back into a love relationship with Him. He loves you so much that He sent his only Son so that you wouldn't have to perish in your sin; instead you can have eternal life. And that leads us to the second thing about the truth about Jesus.

2. YOU ARE GIVEN REASONS TO BELIEVE IN THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS (vs. 34-38)

God doesn't expect us to just blindly believe. He has given us the witness of His Word to testify to the truth of about Jesus. And God has given us the witness of the Holy Spirit to confirm this truth about Jesus. There are many reasons to believe the truth about Jesus, but for today, let me just mention three.

Reason #1: The WORDS of Jesus.

Jesus made some amazing claims in John 10. He said, "I am the door." He is the only door to salvation; the only door to Heaven. Then He said, "I am the Good Shepherd." Then Jesus made the most audacious claim of all. He said, "I am God." He said, "I and the Father are one."

There is one God and He exists eternally in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe Jesus is God. John 1:1 begins with this affirmation. "In the beginning was the Word (Jesus) and the Word was with God and the Word was God." In John 9 the blind man who was healed believed in Jesus and the Bible says that he worshipped Jesus. Worship is reserved for God alone. In John 20 the resurrected Jesus appeared to Thomas and the other disciples and said, "Put your finger in these nail scars, and thrust your hand in this wound in my side. Don't be faithless, but believe." Thomas said, "My Lord and my God."

There are liberal theologians who insist Jesus never claimed to be God. Our Mormon and Jehovah Witness friends deny the deity of Christ. But these Jewish leaders understood exactly what Jesus was saying. They had their rocks ready to execute Him for blasphemy. Jesus said, "For which of my works are you stoning me?" They said, "For blasphemy—for because you being a man have made yourself God." Actually, they got it backwards. Jesus was God and then made Himself a man but they understood what He was claiming.

I agree with them their understanding, we just disagree on our reaction to that extraordinary claim. Because he claimed to be God, they wanted to kill Him. But because He claimed to be God, I want to worship and serve Him.

REASON #2: The WORKS of Jesus.

His works backed up His words. He claimed to be God and then He did things that only God could do. In the next chapter Jesus will raise Lazarus from the dead: God raises the dead. In John 3 Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher sent from God because nobody can do the works you do unless God is with him." Score one for you, Nick.

In verse thirty-seven, Jesus gives His enemies one last chance to believe in Him. Even though they had rocks raised to stone Him, He says, "Look at my works. If I'm not doing the Father's works, then don't believe." Then in verse thirty-eight He says, "And if you can't believe in me, believe in the works I do. This way you will know and understand that My Father is in me and I am in the Father."

He was saying, "Look at the works. You all know the paralytic from the Pool of Bethesda. He was lame for 38 years and now, he's walking around well. You all met the man who was born blind, now He has 20/20 vision."

I'm amazed at the grace and patience of Jesus. After all this arguing and opposition most of us would have said, "I'm done with you boys. There's no hope for you." These were His enemies standing there with hands raised with rocks, and yet He is still appealing to them to believe. "You don't believe my words? At least latch onto my miracles." Then you will come to know and understand that I'm God."

It would be their last invitation. When He leaves Jerusalem, He won't be back until Palm Sunday and then the cross and an empty tomb. And still they didn't believe.

If you don't believe the truth about Jesus, this might be your last invitation. I don't know. Jesus knew because He was God. I don't know and you don't know if this is your last chance to believe and trust Jesus. So, my strong advice to you if you don't believe the truth about Jesus is to trust in the Lord today with all of your heart; don't lean on your understanding. Come running to Jesus today. Believe and live.

REASON #3: The POWER of Jesus.

These men were ready to stone Him to death. This wasn't the first time. In fact, this is the fifth attempt in John's Gospel where they tried to arrest Him or stone Him. Jesus escaped each time. Some believe this was some kind of supernatural escape. In verse 39 we read that they tried to capture Him but Jesus eluded their grasp. What does that mean? It could mean he was just faster or stronger than His captors. He was certainly outnumbered. Or He could have used some of His miraculous power.

There's a scene from the Christmas movie, "It's a Wonderful Life," where the angel Clarence comes to help George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart. The cop, Bert, captures Clarence and is trying to put handcuffs on him, and Clarence just disappears. Bert looks up and says to Ernie, "Where did he go? Where'd he go? I had him right here." Ernie says, "I need a drink."

If a Hollywood angel can disappear from a cop, Jesus could have easily have eluded a murderous mob. But however it happened, we know WHY He eluded them. Jesus knew that he would die at Passover and not at the Feast of Dedications. He knew He would die by Roman crucifixion, not by stoning. He had the power to control all this. Earlier in this chapter He said, "I have power to lay down my life for the Sheep. And I have the power to take it back up again."

Anyone can lay down their life, but only God has the power to take it up again. And that's what happened after the cross. Jesus wasn't just in the Jaws of death, He was all the way in the stomach of death, and yet He came out of the grave—He took His life up again never to die again.

We must remember that most of the miracles Jesus performed weren't even recorded in the New Testament. The reason we know this is because of how John ends his narrative. He wrote in John 20:30, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." (John 20:30-31)

3. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO RESPOND TO THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS (vs. 39-42)

Jesus gave one last invitation to the Jewish leaders and they rejected Him. So, I'm so glad the Apostle John added this little snapshot at the end where we read that many people believed in Him. Jesus left Jerusalem traveled down to the Jordan River, then He crossed over to the other side into the region of Bethabara. Jesus returned to the place of His baptism and where John the Baptizer had been preaching. By this time, John the Baptizer had been beheaded by Herod Antipas months earlier.

There were people there who remembered John the Baptizer. They said, "John didn't perform miracles, but everything he said about this man is true." And on the basis of what John said, and they saw in Jesus, they believed.

So do you recall what John the Baptizer said about Jesus? Jesus was the great "I am" and John was the great "I am not." He said, "I am not the Messiah. I am not the Prophet. One is coming after me whose sandals I'm not worthy to loosen. I baptize you into water, but He will baptize you into the Holy Spirit and fire. I'm just a voice in the wilderness saying, 'Look, look, look! There HE is. There He is! Look, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'"

I think Jesus went here for a little R&R. After the opposition of the enemies and the upcoming torture, arrest, and crucifixion, Jesus went back to the place where He was baptized. That's good advice. Sometimes when you are facing problems and find yourself dealing with stress. Maybe you should go back to where you were baptized. You might not be able to go back literally but you can go back in your mind to that place and time. How many of you can recall where and when you were baptized? I'll never forget. I was nine years old and it was the spring of 1961 in the little baptistery of First Baptist Church of Florala, Alabama. I was wearing a white robe and I can remember the pastor lowering me into the water. My parents tell me that I

can up out of the water with a big grin on my face. It's nice to go back there and think about good beginnings. That's what Jesus did here.

Everyone who is confronted with the truth about Jesus has to give a response. Was He the Son of God, God in the flesh, or was He just a mere man, a moral teacher? C.S. Lewis wrote: "If you had gone to Mohammed and asked him, 'Are you Allah?' He would have torn his clothes and then cut your head off. In my opinion, the only person who can say that sort of thing is either God or a complete lunatic suffering from that form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of man. We may note in passing that He was never regarded as a mere moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met him. He produced mainly three effects—Hatred—Terror—Adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval."

So, what is your response to the truth about Jesus? Like those Jewish leaders in Jerusalem you can reject Him. Or like those Jews out near the Jordan River you can believe. The only thing you can't do is ignore Him.

One day, every person who has ever been born will confess that Jesus is Lord. But those who die without ever confessing Jesus is Lord will make this confession in a sense of utter regret and shame that they didn't turn to Christ when they had a chance. There's no second chance to be saved after you die. But today, you can choose to make this confession, not in future judgment, but in present joy.

The Bible says, "For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11)

CONCLUSION

So what's the take-away? The truth about Jesus isn't just something to believe. It isn't a set of facts to INFORM you, it is life-giving truth that TRANSFORMS you. Belief that doesn't affect your behavior isn't true belief. If you believe Jesus is God it will affect the way you approach your marriage, your singleness, or being a parent or grandparent. It will transform your job, your hobbies, and how you handle God's money. And believing in Jesus will affect your relationship with everyone you meet. We are here today as a church because of our shared belief that Jesus is God. You are my brother or sister because of what we believe.

The holidays can be a lonely time for some people especially if they have recently lost a spouse or loved one. But this family called Green Acres is a big way that God puts the lonely into families.

This week the Tyler Paper ran an editorial from the Dallas Morning News. It was about the death of Ronald Wayne White over in DeSoto, Texas. He was a retired Naval officer. The incredibly sad thing about his death is that the Dallas Medical examiner ruled that he had been

dead for three years. His body was discovered when the apartment managers conducted a check because of a lack of water use. His apartment rent was paid automatically each month out of his Navy pension. His mother in Shreveport had reported him missing three years earlier but because he was an adult, it wasn't considered a case of a missing person.

The Dallas Morning News editorial stated: "It's disheartening that society has reached such a threshold of disconnection that he could have no friend, no co-worker, no acquaintance to even check to see if he was alive or dead. This case reminds us that there are thousands of people among us who are in severe states of loneliness and isolation. White's case drives home the importance of making real connections. Let's vow to actually pick up the phone to talk to or actually go visit someone we know instead of spending so much time on social media."

We don't know much about the life of Mr. White, but there is something we can definitely conclude: He wasn't an active member of a local church. There were six churches within a few blocks from where he died. Because we believe in Jesus, we check on each other—or at least we should. So I challenge you to take some time to lift up your eyes from your device screen and start looking into the faces of our neighbors, all of our neighbors. And because of the transforming truth we believe about Jesus, we will care for each other as we show them the love of Christ. That's the kind of truth that transforms us.

OUTLINE

1. YOU ARE BORN WITH A TENDENCY TO REJECT THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS (vs. 29-33).

"We are born with a propensity to sin and the necessity to die." — St. Augustine

"We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also." *Ephesians 2:3*

2. YOU ARE GIVEN REASONS TO BELIEVE IN THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS (vs. 34-38)

"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." *John 20:30-31*

Reason #1: The words of Jesus.

Reason #2: The works of Jesus.

Reason #3: The power of Jesus.

3. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO RESPOND TO THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS (vs. 39-42)

"For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." *Philippians 2:9-11*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas*