

## THE TALE OF TWO BOOKS

[Kathy's "picture notes"] Here's why I'm showing these: It's a memory exercise, you see...

John the writer of 1 John, was an incredibly concise writer. He lays out points in a dramatic fashion and then built on those points. What that means is; if you pull out a statement in chapter 3 or 4 without grasping and remembering chapters 1 and 2, you'll misunderstand what's being said. And if you misunderstand you'll miss out on the reason for the letter. Do you remember the reason given at the very beginning of chapter 1?

*"We write this to make our joy complete." (V. 2)*

Here's a prime example from chapter 3:

(NIV) <sup>9</sup> No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. <sup>10</sup> This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

We all realize that we do sin, even the best of us, so reality seems to be at odds with the verse. It was proposed that the statement is not literal, but is figurative or an ideal. Sometimes that is true of Scripture, but an honest look at the verse shows it is very literal. So, is the verse wrong, or is our interpretation lacking?

I guarantee you, if we don't have the early truths in mind, we will not understand. John realizes we are prone to mess up from time to time, even as we follow Christ. That's why we have an ongoing Advocate in Jesus Christ. And yet, where God dwells, it is 100% God. There is no ignorance of sin or good, there is no unfaithfulness because God is faithful and cannot deny Himself. There is imperfection because God is perfect.

It is important, to "make our joy complete", that John is answering this very question, how perfection lives within imperfection. That takes us to the baby in the womb in Kathy's picture. I'd like to offer a second analogy before we move on, because this concept, when it is properly grasped, is a life-changer! So here we go:

### ***First object of the illustration is me:***

Consider me as ***any and every believer***. I am inside-out; you are looking at the inner life and the outer life of the professing Christian. (*Ain't it grand!*)

***The next items are these two books:*** The books represent the nature I have growing within me. As I allow them to grow, I draw my way of thinking and acting from them. As they mesh with me, they form my basic nature and identity. Now, remember I am an imperfect human, so I don't follow them perfectly, but one or the other, they will definitely set my path in life, and eternity. So let's consider my first book/ nature, it is...

### ***People Magazine Nature***

The essence of People Magazine is a focus on people. You have celebrities and the latest gossip on them. You have stories of people who have braved misfortune, that might inspire you a bit. You have people that are revered by popular opinion. It champions whatever is politically correct at the moment and bashes the incorrect. In essence, it is the current human standard; it is very much the way the world thinks. It's not particularly bad, it's just humanity in all our "fallen glory."

What you don't find, is any truth of God; not on the radar. If God is addressed at all, it will not be from any point of understanding. -Another tidbit from John, *"The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."* (*John 1:5*)

We are born with the "People Magazine" nature. That is all we have. Since it is all we have, it grows to impact every part of what we are, think, and do. Everyone has this book/nature, but not the next one...

## **The Bible Nature**

Along comes Christ, we have the 3 works of the Cross we've previously talked about. There is a time of **decision**, we let in this Book/Nature, or we do not.

Now here is a vital point to grasp:

**The nature of "People Magazine" is 100% people magazine**, read the pages, it is what it is.

**The nature of "The Bible" is 100% "Logos."** It is not in its nature to lie, to sin, to be ignorant of good or evil. Where God is, He is 100 % God.

**There are now two natures within me.** As long as I am in this life, I will never get rid of "People Magazine" totally. But I have something I didn't have before; a second better nature. Which will I surrender myself to? Which will I nurture to grow?

Paul points out I will **never reach 100%** impact and understanding with the new nature. He says:

**For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known. (1 Cor. 13:12)**

John realizes this because he says I don't **have** to sin, but if I do, we have an **ongoing Advocate** in Jesus Christ.

I can't be **PERFECT**, but I can be **TRANSFORMED**, I can grow like God and move light-years in that direction. The essence of who I am has changed. And the part of me that connects with God (Bible/Nature) in me will be connecting with 100% God. God is absolute, **where He is, is never less than 100%**.

If I, being imperfect, connect with 100% God, and if His nature is growing within me, I **have** to change. It HAS to **show**. If it doesn't, then it is not there. **We DO what we ARE**. We give ourselves to one "book", or the other.

**So how do we grow?** We don't **try harder**, we **surrender**. We surrender page by page; page 1 of **People Magazine** for page 1 of **God**, page 2, page 3, and so on. The Christian walk is about surrendering as many pages as we can, as we walk this life. **The joy John speaks about is all involved in surrendering pages.**

## **BACK TO JOHN CHAPTER 4: THE BLESSING; THE DANGER**

With this understood, we're ready to face more truth in the next chapter.

Let's say that our "Book/Spirit" **IS** nurtured and it grows healthy and vibrant; John warns, there is a flipside:

**Where there is genuine spiritual vitality; imbalance and the spiritual counterfeit soon follow.**

*(And they are both killers!)*

It was true in John's time, and it is still true in our time. That is how the cosmic spiritual war works.

The way John sets up the question comes down to this:

**Do you believe in "Jesus", in "Christ", or in "Jesus Christ"?**

Let's go **back into his world** for a few minutes. We've already learned about the Greek Gnostics, how they were attracted to "**secret knowledge**" and "**mystery religions**"; it was all about having a powerful experience.

The Gnostics weren't any different than many today, they were attracted to genuine Christianity, but they had very **selective hearing**. *...Isn't it amazing, the capacity we have to hear a message and only retrain exactly what we want to hear!?*

The Gnostic could believe in an all-powerful God, just as the Christian did. They could believe that a divine spirit might even settle on the right person... *for a given period of time*; but they were two different entities working as one. Here's how it worked for them:

They believed that **Jesus** was the man. At His baptism, the Spirit, the **Christ**, settled on Him. This "endowed person" brought the Gospel. Then at the Cross, the two entities divided again; the man to death, the Spirit back to eternity. There was a historical physical "Jesus", and there exists, the divine "Christ", they once merged, but they were never the same entity. **Two different entities, not one.**

Consider the name for a moment: **Jesus Christ**. The first word is the *name* of a man, "**Jesus**." Like "Joe" it was the common name, it was an "every man's" name. "Jesus" was *every man*; he can identify and empathize with us all.

The second word, "**Christ**", is not a name, but a *title*. It is a Romanized version of "Christos" from the Greek which was a Greek version of the Hebrew "Messiah", which is; the anointed **one**, the divine **ONE**.

Even in our day, **have you noticed how different flavors of Christianity lean toward one word or the other?**

You've got the "**my Jesus**" people. *Let me tell you about "my Jesus."* They are very heavy into the **relational experience**. They are entrenched in the idea that *Jesus experienced life as we do*. They **identify with the man**. Deep Christianity for them is the **personal, relational Jesus**. ...**The humanity of Jesus is a vital truth, but what if that's all we see?**

**On the other hand, there are those who revere "the Christ."** This person is *no ordinary man*, He is the Son of God. He is **far beyond and above you**. He is the King of King and Lord of Lords. And their connection to Him tends to be very formal and somewhat detached. There is an acute awareness that **He is God and you are not**. **-By nature, this faith cannot be intimate, but oh, the reverence!** ...*But, what if that is all we see?*

Even though we are not Gnostics, we still have a strong tendency to treat the Son of God as two different entities. Like the Gnostics, we divide the name "Jesus" from the title, "Christ."

Here is how John responded to the Gnostics:

<sup>2</sup> This is **how you can recognize the Spirit of God**: Every spirit that **acknowledges that Jesus Christ** [ **Not Jesus or Christ; not Jesus and Christ; Jesus Christ**] **has come in the flesh is from God**, <sup>3</sup> but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

Let me throw out a fancy theological term, you can use it to impress your friends and neighbors: "hypostatic union." Even though you may not know the term, I'd bet you know the concept. **The person of Jesus Christ is fully man and fully God**. Not surprising that **John 8:58, 10:30, and 1:14** are used as supporting verses. You'll find that every Bible-based statement of faith makes a big deal of supporting this concept. ...The reason being, is that from the beginning we've had a problem dividing "Jesus" and "Christ."

**Well, is it really such a big deal? What if** we lean one way or the other. Aren't we splitting hairs here?

It seems John didn't think so. A big lesson I think we need to see here is; **a little tweak on a foundational truth can lead to horrific mistakes in one's spiritual life. It can rob the joy, it can kill the transformation.**

## THE CONSEQUENCES

Let me show you something. The scholar, **William Barclay listed the consequences of separating “Jesus” from “Christ” as one person.** Here is what it does to the core of the Christian faith:

- It destroys the ability for Jesus to be our **example**. God never really lived as a man; he just rode around in one for a while. So, no man ever lived a truly Godly life.
- It denies that Jesus, the man who can **identify** with us, can ever be our high priest; the Spirit had the authority, but not that lowly carpenter.
- In any real sense, Jesus cannot be our **Savior**, because the man “Jesus” did not possess the divine merit to be the perfect sacrifice. The man suffered and died, but the divine did not.
- We lose any hope that there is salvation or healing for the **physical body**, because God’s entrance in this world was only as spirit, **looking through someone else’s human eyes**. There was no **physical** healing. When Isaiah prophesied that “buy His stripes we are healed”, that can’t be true because, **God** never received our stripes. Just a human shell.

The rebellious Hebrew leaders put Isaiah into a log, and sawed him in two and the Gnostics tried to do the same to *person* of Jesus Christ. The result is the same; *truth is lost; God is missed*.

The Gnostic view is not a popular force in our day, but ***in essence, we still do the same thing; separate “Jesus” from “Christ”*** by leaning to an imbalanced faith. We have those ***all fired up with the personal experience of Jesus***, reducing Him to little more than an experience. -And we have those ***revering a holy Christ***, but make Him so distant, He has little impact.

And then we have **counterfeits** of both! Every religious emotion isn’t from God. And every intellectual writing isn’t spiritual truth.

***So how do we know?*** According to John, **we DO what we ARE**. If there is no evidence we are impacting our world with love as God defines love, we are not there. If you survey what is going on, and what has gone on, you will find that ***it is not only the counterfeit, the imbalanced has no Kingdom impact either***.

I am hoping and trusting that as I look at us here, there are no “counterfeits”, but keep in mind, John does warn us; such people **do** come out from among us.

But the danger of **imbalance** always remains. Determined by the evidence of what we do, SO...

DO YOU BELIEVE IN “JESUS” *and/or* “CHRIST”, or do you honestly hold to “JESUS CHRIST”? ***-It’s a small change in wording, but John shows us; it’s a major change in spiritual destiny!***