

JOHN ... and his introduction to greatness

JOHN ... and his introduction to greatness

(JOHN 1)

The prologue to John's Gospel has always claimed the profoundest attention of Christian students. John was a seer, a mystic. He recognized what others failed to see (cf. 31 :7); and his statement, " And there are also many other things which Jesus did, and which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written " (21 : 25), suggests that he still remembered and treasured details of the Lord's ministry which seemed less important to the other disciples. John's conception of the greatness of Christ surpassed that of all others, and his first chapter supplied a depth of thought unequalled in any other Gospel.

The Word ... reproducing-vv. 1 and 14

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. . . ." No other writer gave this name to Jesus. John recognized that the function of a word is to express the mind of a speaker. Without words, the mind of man would remain inscrutable. Similarly it would have been impossible for man to know God, if God had not expressed Himself. "God . . . hath spoken unto us through his Son " (Heb. 1: 1, 2).

The Light . . . revealing -v. 9

It was said of John Baptist, "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." And the apostle proceeds, " That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," The suggestion is, that man had lost his way in the dark. The coming of Christ meant that a Light was now shining; it was possible for wanderers to find the way back to God. This was the true light: without its guiding beams man would remain lost.

The Christ . . . registering-v. 20

" And John confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ." The coming One would register the fulfillment of all the Messianic predictions. To Him the prophets had pointed, and around Him would revolve all the matters pertaining to the kingdom of God. The Christ would be God's man; the chosen one; the Messiah. John bowed and declared, " I must decrease, he must increase I am not the Christ."

The Lamb-redeeming-v. 29

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This was another favorite among the names given to Jesus by John. Here we see the magnificent scope of the apostle's vision. Unlike the lambs of the Hebrew penitents-lambs which could only take away the sins of the individual sinners-God's Lamb would make reconciliation for all people. In Him God would redeem the world.

The Son of God . . . representing-v. 34

" And I saw, and bear record that this is the Son of God." Let us never forget that the name " Son " was never given to indicate inferiority to the Father. A son is often greater than his father. This title merely indicates that between son and parent exists an affinity of nature. They belong to the

JOHN ... and his introduction to greatness
same essence; they are one (I : 1; 17: 5).

The Master . . . receiving-v. 38

"And the two disciples said unto him . . . Master, where dwellest thou? He said unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him. . . ." It was destined that the Lamb of God should captivate the affections of human beings; sinners would respond to His charm and follow Him. The key-note of the Lord's ministry was, " Come unto me . . . and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out."

The King . . . reigning-v. 49

" Nathaniel answered and saith unto him, " Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Here is progression of thought. The name Messiah suggested that Jesus was the Sent One, sent to establish a kingdom. This new title, King, suggests that for Nathaniel at least, the coronation had already taken place. The disciple had crowned his Lord.

The Son of Man . . . remaining-v. 51

This is the fitting climax to John's masterly introduction. Having made the momentous decision to become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, the Lord Jesus is to remain linked with His people for ever. Linked with God and joined to man, He will remain the bridge between human need and divine sufficiency. As the Son of God, He shares in the counsels of the Highest; as the Son of Man, He is acquainted with all our grief and problems. He is the Mediator; the Daysman. He is indispensable both to heaven and earth. Well did Isaiah declare, and his name shall be called Wonderful" (Isa. 9:6).

The Incomparable Christ

There must be more unofficial christening services in the valleys of Wales than anywhere else on earth. I have no idea how this all began; I only know that now it is the most natural thing for any person suddenly to be given a nickname which will stick closer than glue! More often than not this will refer to an occupation, an infirmity, or to some event with which the person has been connected. Names such as Evans the Milk, Ianto Smallcoal, Billy Baldhead are commonplace. Probably they provide a line of demarcation between that particular person and others whose Christian names are identical. I knew a fine Christian who worked as a pumpsman in the local colliery; he was known as Tommy the Pump. I knew another fine Christian whose finger would not bend; he was known throughout the district as Jimmy Straightfinger. Alas, the name Jenkins is more often than not twisted to Shinkins, and a shoemaker with that name would be Shinkins the Shoe. I knew a man who once wore a top hat to a funeral, until the day of his death he was called Billy Boxhat. Wales is a great country, and for those who know how to appreciate humor, it can be a paradise.

The giving of such expressive names has been known in higher and perhaps more official circles. There have been times in history when some outstanding person revealed characteristics which demanded recognition. King Richard of England was known throughout the realm as Richard the Lion-Heart. A typical Englishman has often been called John Bull, and many other examples might be cited. One of the finest characters in modern times has been the grand old man of the House of Commons, Sir Winston Churchill. He has been given six or seven such names, for this great states-

JOHN ... and his introduction to greatness man succeeded in spreading his personality over an Empire. There are millions of people who believe that Great Britain, and indeed the world, will always be indebted to the indomitable war-time Prime Minister.

Yet supreme in the world stands Jesus. His influence was so vast, His gifts so varied, that prophets and writers of all ages borrowed many titles to express what they wished to say about Him. A little while ago, I collected my reference books and deliberately set out to discover how many Biblical titles had been given to the Saviour. I was astounded to discover that within the pages of Holy Scripture between eighty and ninety names had been given to the Son of God.

The door; the vine; the good shepherd; the bread of life; the Messiah; the King of Israel; the carpenter; the author of faith; these are only some of the dozens to be found; and when to the Bible names are added the innumerable titles given by the world's best writers and thinkers, the total becomes great indeed. Yet each name reveals that particular aspect of the life of Jesus which appealed especially to the individual. At the most, twelve titles would be sufficient to express everything about the greatest statesman, poet, scientist, or benefactor the human race has ever produced. The one exception is Jesus of Nazareth, for as long as time shall last, He will remain the Altogether Lovely One. The first chapter of John's Gospel reveals John's conception of his Lord. Within the compass of fifty-one verses, the apostle mentions eight names in addition to the one by which He was known in Nazareth. John was a seer, but it is doubtful whether he ever saw more than a very small part of the exceeding greatness of his Master.

The Watchman-Examiner, one of the most influential religious papers in American Church life, has expressed this point perfectly. " His birth was contrary to the laws of life. His death was contrary to the laws of death. He had no cornfields nor fisheries, but He could spread a table for five thousand and have bread and fish to spare. He walked on no beautiful carpets of velvet rugs, but He walked on the waters of the sea of Galilee, and they supported Him. Three years He preached His Gospel. He wrote no book; built no church house; had no monetary backing. But after nineteen hundred years, He is the one central character of human history, the Pivot around which the events of the ages revolve, and the one and only Regenerator of the human race.

"Was it merely the son of Joseph and Mary who crossed the world's horizon nineteen hundred years ago? Was it merely human blood that was spilled at Calvary's hill for the redemption of sinners? What thinking man can keep from exclaiming, 'My Lord and my God? '".

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.