

THE SERMONS, LECTURES AND SONGS OF SIDNEY EDWARD COX

Editorial Note: This is one lesson of a 14-lesson weekly series of Bible studies that Sidney Cox delivered to the congregation of the Eastlake Alliance Church in Birmingham, Alabama in late 1972 and early 1973.



This is a 2011 picture of what was the EastLake Alliance Church in 1972. It is located at the intersection of 3rd Avenue North and 85th Street in Birmingham and is the current home of the 46th Street Baptist Church.

In 1972, at age 84, Sidney Cox had moved from Detroit, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama to be near my parents, John and Jean Cox. Still remarkably healthy and independent, he lived in a small efficiency apartment on Birmingham's south side. His beloved wife, Violet had earlier passed away in 1967 while they were residing in Detroit.

From the time of their commissioning in Toronto, Canada in 1910/1912 to 1944, Sidney and Violet Cox had a well-chronicled career as Salvation Army officers – a journey that took them across the breadth of Canada and ultimately to Atlanta, Georgia in 1928 to be part of the founding of The Salvation Army's Southern Territory.

However, during the latter part of his life, Sidney Cox had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”). CMA operates as a vast network of churches, similar to a “denomination.” During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Sidney had served as Professor of New Testament at two Bible institutes – The Miami Bible Institute and The Toccoa Falls Bible Institute (Toccoa, Georgia). These two institutes were principally supported by CMA and graduates often entered pastorates at CMA churches.

During this era of his life, Sidney Cox remained in great demand as a preacher, evangelist and Bible teacher both in Salvation Army and CMA venues. The Eastlake Alliance Church was a CMA church and they took advantage of his residency in Birmingham by engaging him to teach this series. The pastor of the church was Glen Tingley, Jr.

John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. December 29, 2008.

**Gospel of John
Part 1
Difference: Written At A Different Time
December 10, 1972**

Sunday School at the Eastlake Alliance Church in Birmingham, Alabama, lesson number 121072.

This is Glen Tingley, Jr. welcoming you to this Sunday school class. Our teacher, Dr. Sidney Cox, is beginning a study in the Gospel of John.

Please write on a chalkboard or your notepaper the following information: On the first line, put the words, "The Gospel of John." On the second line, in capital letters, put the word, "Different." On the third line, put the word, "Time." On the fourth line, put the word, "People." And on the fifth line put the word, "Purpose."

Now, let us listen to the study with Dr. Cox.

I think the most thrilled person in the room is me. I can hardly believe that the Lord has given us together this opportunity and privilege. I'm hoping that you won't feel any sense of strangeness about me. You get used to me right quick will you? And then forget about it, and I'll do the same thing with you. As I look at you, I feel that I've known you all my life, and that's the way it ought to be in the family of God, isn't it? There's a peculiar something about the children of God that makes us know each other when we don't know each other. Do you understand what I mean? And that's one of the gifts of God is that we know the fellow members of the family of God, even though we may not know them in the ordinary sense of the word at all. And so it's nice to be with you, and I'm thanking the Lord for you.

Now, we've got certain things in mind for this class, and the most important thing, of course, is the subjects that we're going to be teaching. We shall concentrate our thought on the Gospel of John.

Now, if you'll look at the board you will see a word that gives us the key to what I want to be saying to you. I don't want to talk to you and be the teacher of a class that is considering the Gospel of John in the usual manner. What we usually do when we study the Gospel of John, is to start at verse one, chapter one, and we move to chapter something else and verse something else. It is not my thought at all to approach the Gospel of John in that way, but to do something that is entirely different. Notice the

word there in big letters on the board. We're approaching it in a different way and the reason for that, the reason for it is that the Gospel of John is different to the other three gospels. Now that's a basic fact, and we shall approach that and start right at that point and move on for weeks at a time finding out, discovering if you like, the distinctions, the differences of the Gospel of John. And, I can tell you now, and I think you will agree with this as time goes by, it's a fascinating study. It's something that will grip your heart, and that's the way the Lord wants it to be; because unless the Word of God grips us, as well as we gripping the Word of God, then something's lacking. What we're after in this class is not merely that we may become acquainted with a string of facts about the Gospel of John, but to expose our hearts and minds to the Gospel of John so that the hands of that book can reach out and get hold of you.

Now, that's the purpose that's in our minds. We want to throw our hearts open to the impact of the Gospel of John, and first of all we approach it in an effort to answer a question that is quite frequently raised, and that's this: Why should there be four gospels anyhow? Why the fourth gospel? Why a Gospel of John anyhow? Hadn't the Holy Spirit said through Matthew and Mark and Luke all that was necessary? Was there any necessity for a Gospel of John, and if so, what does the Gospel of John say to us that the other three gospels do not say?

Now, you will find that there is a lot in the Gospel of John that is quite different than Matthew and Mark and Luke. It is not, in any sense, a repetition of Matthew and Mark and Luke. And when you find those distinctions and see perhaps even dimly, the purpose that the Holy Spirit had in producing a fourth gospel, you will find that you are following a pathway that is not only interesting, but it will throw light on the other gospels as well. The Gospel of John is not in any sense a repetition of Matthew and Mark and Luke. It is a distinct, different gospel. It is written at a different time, to a different people, and for a different purpose. Now those are three important words.

Now, let me suggest this to you. If you find words like that, that are important, don't rely on your memory for them. If you want to please me in this class, bring a little bit of notepaper and write down words like the three that we have just suggested; because we have started off with something, haven't we? We have started off with this proposition: The Gospel of John is different to the other three gospels in three different ways. It is different in the time at which and in which it was written; different in the people to whom it was written; and the purpose for which it is written.

Now, before we turn to this first of the three words, I want to suggest this: that we take five verses of the Gospel of John and use them as our theme scripture. Now, we quite frequently talk about a theme song. But I'd like to have a theme scripture for this class, and then from time to time, I would like us to consider some important statement that is connected with Bible study of this kind.

Now, the verses that I have in mind are the first five verses of the first chapter of the Gospel of John. And do you know that the moment that you say them and say them aloud, there is something about the Word of God that you do not find anywhere else. You sort of release a perfume into the room when you do it. Now, we may not detect it, but it's there just the same. You release the Word of God hidden

away in your heart, release it out into the atmosphere of this room, and you will find it's easier for you to listen and it's easier for me to talk when we do that. Let's do it right now. Alright?

First chapter of John, first five verses. And, if you have to turn to your Word, your Bible, all right. Do it in any way that you please. Alright, together:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.”

Now, my dear, you have just said together five of the most beautiful words that were ever written. Now that's one thing that we need to allow ourselves to comprehend about the Gospel of John, not only its importance, not only the facts that he gives us, but the beauty of it. You know God wants us to see not only the truth that's in this book, but the beauty of it here.

Now, one of the things that is lacking and has been all the way through the Christian era, is that we have given attention to the facts of scripture and perhaps the obligations, the way we behave. But, we haven't given too much thought to the beauty of it. One of our prayers ought to be all the time, “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.” And one of the hopes that's in the heart of this old man talking to you is that out of this class there shall go folks who are better looking than when they came into it. Now, you know how I say that. I mean spiritually better looking, so that there's a certain something about us, the beauty of the Lord our God. Folks in this congregation and outside ought to be able to distinguish the folks who belong to this class. There's a certain something about them.

Now, the other thing that I want to do, and we shall do it from time to time is to remind ourselves of certain basic truths that leap at us out of the Gospel of John. And that is, for instance, one - listen to this, and then I want you to say it together. What we are is more important than what we do. Okay? What we are is more important than what we do. Now, next week in addition to saying our verses of scripture, our theme scripture, we'll remind ourselves of another basic fact like that. What we are is more important than what we do. And in these days, we need to remind ourselves of that. We need to remind ourselves of that. We certainly do. That was the basic problem in the life of the rich, young ruler for instance. “All these things have I kept from my youth up.” We've done it, we've done it, we've done it, we've done it...but, have we become something? Now that's the purpose - not merely that we may know something, but that we may become something. What we are is more important than what we do.

Written in a different time. The Gospel of John is part of the final words of the scripture. Now, there were five books written at a long time after the other books of the New Testament had appeared, and they were written by John; and the five books are, of course: the Gospel of John, the Book of the Revelation, and the three little letters that bear John's name. By the way, I centered my thought again in a wonderful little book on the First Epistle of John, and it's the book that was written by Dr. Lehman

Strauss called *The Epistles of John*.¹ And yesterday morning I was thinking about you folks, and I sat down there and I read through the First Epistle of John, as a sort of a preparation for this one; because that's why it was written, in order to prepare our hearts and explain certain things that need to be explained that are in the Gospel of John. And it was a wonderful moment, and I was thinking about you and thanking God for you, and thanking God that we've got a chance to talk about a book like this.

It was written at a different time. John was an old man when he wrote these words that we call the Gospel of John. Now we do not know whether the Book of Revelation or the Gospel of John or the three little letters were the last words, but what we do know they form the circle of books that conclude the Word of God. Now John was an old man, probably 93 years old, when he wrote the Gospel of John, and the Revelation, and the three little letters - an old man.

Now, the other books of the scripture had appeared long before, practically all of the words of the other books of the scripture had already been written. And then there was a period, a strange period of waiting - a period of time in which something was happening; and then the final words of the scripture were written, and John was the penman whom the Holy Spirit used to put the final words at the end of the Book of God. Now that thought in itself is of tremendous importance. Supposing you, faced with this fact - supposing you knew that you had only the privilege of writing one more letter. It would be your last. Whatever you must say, you must say it in that letter, because when that letter is ended, you are ended. What would you say in a letter like that? Now you wouldn't skip over the surface and talk about secondary things, would you? If you knew that you were not going to have another privilege, you'd give careful thought to it.

Now, I say it reverently, the Holy Spirit has given careful thought to the final words of the scripture. For 1600 years, the Holy Spirit had been bringing together by various means and through various people, and under different circumstances what we call the Word of God. 1600 years had been going since the first books were written, and now the time has come for the final period of the Word of God to be written. When this ends, God isn't going to say anything else to us.

Now, I've touched on something there that wouldn't meet with the approval of a lot of shallow thinking folks in these days who have got the idea that God is continuing to talk and continuing to give us revelation, and there are various means. You know that every false cult is based on an additional revelation that was given to somebody in addition to the Word of God? Every false cult is based on that

¹ Dr. Lehman Strauss was a well known Bible teacher and writer in the U. S. He was the teacher on the nationally weekly broadcast, "Bible Study Time." He made various visits to the U.K. Strauss taught Old Testament history for eight years at the Philadelphia Bible Institute, and served as pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church, Bristol, Pennsylvania, from 1939 to 1957. He was pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church (Michigan) until the end of 1963 when he resigned to devote full time to an itinerant Bible conference work. He was residing in Florida and writing his 19th book at age 86 at the time of his death in 1997.

- that God sent something to Mrs. Eddy that he didn't say in here.² See what I mean? Now you can do your own thinking about it, and you will find that every last one of them. One of the things that Satan is particularly interested in and anxious to do is to add something to The Word of God. Did you hear it? He wants to add something to the Word of God.

Now my dear, this Word of God says that when John and the Holy Spirit back of him, wrote those words, that at that time, God said all that God intended to say, and He hasn't said anything to us since. Now, let's stop a minute, because we can get scripture for that, can't we. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us finally in his son." Now, where did I quote from there? Will somebody tell me right quick? Hebrews 1:1. The beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews there is that statement - "God has spoken in His son." Now, let's ask ourselves again, because we're not children in this class, and we can do some careful thinking as we go along. Why doesn't God say anymore than He has said in this book? Why? Why is it not necessary for God to say something to the strange people that live in the entrance almost to the 20th century in addition to that which He said to the folks in the first? Why? Well now there's an answer for that. Let me ask you this question - What more could God say to us about how a sinner can be saved than that which is already in here? Does he have any additional word to us about that?

Now, there are two things that God is primarily in, and it isn't the visit of folks to the moon. He's more interested in two things. One: the bringing into the family of God from the outside the sinner who is in darkness, and He brings him into the family of God. Now, that's the thing God is primarily interested in - bringing somebody from darkness to light. By the way, we said something about that, didn't we? Or repeated something about it there in that scripture that we read together. "And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." Now that's the first thing that God is interested in, and the second thing is, having brought us into the family of God, that we become adequate children of God. Now, one of the distresses in a natural family is when the children fail to be adequate children in that family circle. You know what I mean by the word "adequate." That's a distress. It's a distress to God. When a child is brought into a family by the blood of Christ, the gift of His son proves to be an inadequate son, a child. Now, the reason why the Holy Spirit came to us when we were born into the family of God is to accomplish God's purpose of making us adequate children of God. Now that's what the Holy Spirit wants to do with everyone, and they are the two things that God is most interested in.

Now, let me ask you - what more could God say than He has said in this book as to how a sinner can be saved and how a child of God may become an adequate child of God. What more could he say? Could he add anything to this? There isn't one word that God could add to the two basic things that God is interested in - bringing a sinner out of the darkness and making him into an adequate child of God.

Now, my dear, listen to this. The Gospel of John says more about those two basic subjects than any other book in the scripture. Now, it's easy to make a statement like that, but for the next weeks we're

² Reference is to Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy (1821 – 1910) who was the founder of the Christian Science religion.

going to prove it. And we're going to have the utmost delight in looking at what God says finally, because He hasn't said anything else as to how a sinner can be saved and how a child of God may become such a child of God that it brings unspeakable delight to the heart of God.

Now, that's the subject of the Gospel of John, and it was written at a different time. 60 years after our Lord had gone back to the right hand of the Father, John wrote these words. The Holy Spirit controlled the heart and mind of John, and produced this beautiful thing that we call the Gospel of John. It is in my thinking the most beautiful book that was ever written. Now, there might be hesitation and understandably so in the minds of some about that. But when we say together the the Gospel of John is one of the most beautiful and one of the most important books, then we're all together on that, because there isn't any question about that at all. It is one of the most beautiful and one of the most important and it is important because it contains the final words of the scripture.

You know, I get the strangest notion sometimes as I'm pondering the Word of God - for instance, 1600 years, and then a man somewhere - the Island of Patmos, maybe. The Church at Ephesus. We don't know where it was written. He does the final word, writes the final word, puts the final period at the end of it. And when his stylus, his pen drops, the book is completed. God has said His final words.

You know the strange thing that occurred to me was, "I wonder what happened in heaven at that moment." Do you ever think about it? There were the angels who had been watching for 1600 years, something that has been produced that would be in the center of God's eternity - the Word of God. And they had been watching this thing going on. And now somewhere or other, the amazed eyes of the angelic hosts watch a man as he puts the final period at the end.

I don't know whether angels breathe or not, but if they do, I'm quite sure they held their breath at that moment, don't you? I'm quite sure they must have held their breath. When you sometimes read in the Word of God more than once, "There was silence in heaven," I think there was silence in heaven many a time. I think there must have been a hushed silence in heaven when somebody on a cross said, "It is finished." I think those angels must have held their breath. Here is a word being gathered together and then finally finished. And do you know my dear, those angels in heaven were far more interested in it than we are, and that isn't anything to our credit, because it was written for us, not to them. They must have held their breath. There must have been a hushed silence in heaven.

It was written at a different time. Have you ever thought of the miracle of that? Here's an old man, 93 years old, he had heard the words that he records far more accurately and beautifully than any other New Testament writer - the words that fell from the lips of our Lord. Take for instance, the words that were spoken in the upper room - the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th chapters of John. Those words - you won't find anything like it anywhere else. You can turn where you please, and you won't find the record of somebody saying to His mystified, almost heartbroken disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled." You won't find it, but you will find it here. See what I mean?

Now my dear, here is this final thing being written - the final words of the scripture. It was written at a different time. Have you ever stopped to wonder how it could be that John could remember in absolute accuracy the words that were spoken for instance in that upper room? And record them 60 years after they were spoken. Now, there isn't anybody here but us, and we're just chatting together this morning. Let me ask you a question. Supposing somebody said to you, "I want you to tell me word for word what your old teacher said in a certain class at a certain time 25 years ago....or 5 years ago....or 1 year ago....or 1 minute ago for that matter." (laughter) What would you say? You'd lift your head and say, "Well, it can't be done." And you are right, it couldn't be done either. It wasn't done by John, it was done by the Holy Spirit doing what He promised would be done in that upper room. You remember what he said? When John recorded the words of our Lord, and He said, "I'm going away, but when I go I will send somebody to you who shall not only be with you, He shall be in you and abide with you forever. I've been with you for 3 and 1/2 years. He will be in you and abide with you forever. And when He comes, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." And do you know my dear, that the Gospel of John is the final proof of that promise that was made in the upper room. "He will bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."

Do you mind if I give you the secret of scripture memorizing? It's just that. You put the Word of God into your remembrance, and then trust the Holy Spirit to bring it out. Now that may sound like a common place phrase, but it isn't. That's the truth, a phrase, that has power in it. I dare you to put it to the test. You put that to the test. Now, it doesn't say, it didn't say in that upper room that the Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance that which we have been too lazy or indifferent or sinful to put into our remembrance. You put it in, and He will bring it out. Oh, I tell you my dear, it works. It works. And one of the most wonderful things that can come out of a class like this is that we could go out of a room like this with the realization in our hearts that the Holy Spirit will do for us what He promised to do in that upper room. You take that and distribute it amongst the membership of this church, and there could be more power from this room at this very moment than we have any idea. You put it there.

Now, let us avoid thinking that the reason why the Gospel of John is so beautiful and so important is that John himself was a very important person. You know we've got exaggerated ideas about John. We have taken an isolated phrase like, "He's the disciple whom Jesus loved" and we won't forget that it was John who said that. The other disciples didn't say it. He was saying that about himself. And, by the way, it's good to just keep in mind that....if we're going to do any bragging about ourselves, we better be quite sure that other people agree with it. Anyhow, it wasn't because he was so wonderful. It wasn't because he was so learned. He didn't have any more background educationally than Peter did, not at all. And John was one of those who had worked with his father and his family in the fishing business all the way along. I sometimes wondered whether the smell of fish ever did get off those disciples. They'd been mixed up with it all their lives, you see. Nothing wonderful about John. Not at all. Not at all.

As a matter of fact, when you turn to the gospel record, you will find that John only speaks out alone three times. Now Peter did it over and over again. You hear him opening his mouth and putting his foot in it over and over again. But John only did it three times, and every time he opened his mouth he put his foot into it, too. Now, let me give you the three times in which you hear his voice apart from the rest of the crowd.

The Lord Jesus and His disciples leaving Galilee and going to Jerusalem, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. They stopped at a little Samaritan village, and the people of that village didn't receive Christ and the disciples with the same enthusiasm and hospitality that John evidently thought that they should. And he got very angry about this - so angry that he dared to suggest that the Lord, "Let's call down fire from heaven and burn them up." Okay? The other time when he speaks out, there was somebody who was casting out devils in Jesus' name, and he said, "Let's stop him, let's stop him, he don't belong to us. He don't belong to the Christian and Missionary Alliance. What in the world has he got to talk about faith healing?" You see what I mean.

And the other time when John spoke out was almost at the entrance of the upper room. And he said to the Lord, "If you haven't decided who's going to sit on your right hand and on your left when you get into your kingdom, may I suggest that James and I would look right nice in that position." Let's not glamorize John. If we're going to glamorize anybody, let's glamorize Jesus, because my dear, that's what the Holy Spirit is doing. He's glamorizing Jesus. Now, that's not a good word, but you know what I mean by that? Anything the Holy Spirit does, it throws the light on the lovely face of our Lord.

Our Father, we have dared to turn our hearts this morning to the Word of God in this rather unusual way. And, we pray that as we go out from this room, something of its beauty, something of its power, something of its loveliness, may be reflected in our faces. Thou didst give the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ. We pray, our Father, that something of the glory of the Word may be seen in these faces of ours as we go out and mingle with the other members of our congregation. May somehow or other something of the beauty and power of the lesson that we have been considering together, may it flow out of our hearts and touch the heart of somebody else. In Jesus' name. Amen.