

**THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF
SIDNEY EDWARD COX**

CD 87 contains two Messages
Themes from the Gospel of John

(Did not transcribe the first message found on Tracks 1-8 because CD 88-1 is a superior recording of that message)

Editorial Note: In 1972, Sidney Cox moved from Detroit, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama to be near my parents, John and Jean Cox. He was 85 years of age at the time, and although in remarkable health, was beginning to slow down. Although he greatly curtailed his traveling; nevertheless, he remained in great demand as a preacher and teacher.

During the latter part of his life, he had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, who more or less adopted Sidney Cox for their own. He was invited to speak in many CMA churches. In Birmingham, he attended and became a member of the East Lake Alliance Church.

It was at the East Lake Alliance Church that he was asked to present this series of Bible lessons on the Gospel of John. These two lessons appear to have been given on consecutive nights and also appear to have been a part of a larger series; however, I have been unable to locate the other lessons in the series.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney and Violet Cox. February 2009.

**Tracks 9-16. Themes from the Gospel of John
“The Distinctions of the Gospel of John – Men, Method, Message, Material”
Delivered at the East Lake Alliance Church. Birmingham, Alabama.**

It is so nice to be with you again tonight. We hope that you will enjoy the study as we bring it to you from night to night. We shall not spend time reviewing what we did the night before because each of our messages will be more or less complete in themselves, so that you will know that we shall endeavor to cover a certain portion of our study and that will be it. And then the next night we shall go on the next step further.

Tonight I want to talk to you on the subject, or around the idea, of the distinctions of the Gospel of John. If I had a blackboard here I would write on it one word – Different. And that will be our subject tonight, to show the differences, the distinctions between the Gospel of John and the other three gospels. And we shall do some of them tonight and possibly some more of these differences tomorrow night. You will see as we go along just what we are endeavoring to do. Before we do anything, let's have a word of prayer together.

(Prayer:)

Our Father, we would commit this precious hour to thee. For this lovely room and thy servants and children who are gathered here, for the open book that lies before us, for the privilege of hearing it's

E:\Sidney Cox Library Project\Subject Folders\Gospel of John\1972-73. Eastlake Alliance. B'ham Ala. Joe Beck, pastor\Gospel of John. Lesson 2. CD 87. The Distinctions of the Gospel of John. Men-Method-Message-Material..doc

music, walking in it's light, for the joy of knowing that the Holy Spirit is near by, where ever the Word is opened. We pray that he may touch our hearts and our minds that we may not only learn a few facts, but we may enjoy once more the beauty and loveliness of thy Word. And so make it precious to us we pray. In Jesus name, Amen.

A good many questions have been asked and answered, for that matter, as to why we have four gospels. We have four of them and each one of them give us a distinct picture of our Lord. In Matthew, you find him as Christ the King. In Mark, you find him as Christ the Servant. In Luke, he is the Son of Man. In John, he is the Son of God. But the Gospel of John is entirely different to the other three gospels. It is not in any sense a repetition of Matthew and Mark and Luke. Now that's the opening statement and from this point on, we shall try to demonstrate the truth of that.

The Gospel of John is an entirely different thing. It was written at a different time to a different people and for a different purpose, to the other gospels. It is not in any sense a repetition of any one of them or all three of them. It is a distinct and separate thing in itself. Now, I want to suggest to you that you can see the distinctions or the differences of the Gospel of John under four different headings. These will be quite easy to remember because the words are short and each one of them begins with the same letter.

First of all, you see it in the Men or the people that you meet. The men that you meet in the gospel. Second, you will see it in the Method that our Lord uses as is set forth in the Gospel of John. Third, you will see it in the different Message that you discover in the Gospel of John. And fourth, you will see it in the Material of which the gospel is made up. Now, let me repeat those four words again. Men. Method. Message. Material. The Gospel of John is different and distinct in all four of these phases.

Now, let's go back again and you can take your Gospel of John if you want to and we'll just travel on through as if we were walking through some lovely garden and we were enjoying the view or the flowers here and there. Let's do just that. Let's go through it just because we love to, just because we're enjoying it. And we'll go through it and watch it again. Different men that you meet in the Gospel of John, folks that you do not meet anywhere else.

In chapter one of the Gospel of John, you find our Lord talking with a man who is described thus: "An Israelite in whom is no guile."¹ Now tell me, who was that man? What was his name? Will somebody tell me? What was his name, right quick? You find him in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, and that's the way he's described. "An Israelite in whom is no guile." What's his name? What is it? (Audience answers) No, you've almost got it. Nathaniel, that's right. Nathaniel is the man. Now, don't look for Nathaniel outside of the Gospel of John. He is one of the distinctive characters that you find. And remember, that when the Holy Spirit reintroduces us to a number of new characters, he's doing it for a very special purpose. He's not doing it at all just in any haphazard manner. He's doing it because he has a special purpose in mind.

Now, when you go to the third chapter of the Gospel of John, this one will be much easier. When you go to the third chapter of the Gospel of John, you find our Lord talking with a man who came to him by

¹ John 1:47

night. Now who was that man? Nicodemus is the man that we are talking about now. The man who came to Jesus by night, and the man who heard, first of all, from our Lord's own lips the precious truth regarding the new birth. It was to Nicodemus that our Lord said, "Ye must be born again."² Now, look, don't look for Nicodemus outside of the Gospel of John. You won't find him there. Now, if you have any thought or have been wondering why these new characters, why should they appear anyhow? What's the purpose of it? You consider for just a moment how poor we would be if we did not have this interview of our Lord with Nicodemus, one of the distinctive characters of the Gospel of John.

When you go into the fourth chapter of John, you find our Lord talking with a woman, there at the well in the middle of the day.³ And you find our Lord talking with her. What's her name, please? Well, we don't know what her name is, but we speak of her as the Woman of Samaria. We speak of her because of the location where we find her. Her name is not given to us. One of the remarkable things about the scripture is how many of the important people are not named at all. Now this woman is a seemingly unimportant character, but she is a very important person indeed. And when you begin to wonder why should the Woman of Samaria appear in the Gospel of John and not elsewhere, you stop for a moment and ask yourself the same question again. How poor we would be if we did not have the preciousness and illumination of this interview of our Lord with this woman who is spoken of as the Woman of Samaria. This woman who came in the middle of the day – why? That's another matter all together. But remember, you will not find her outside of the Gospel of John.

Let's go to the fifth chapter of John. You find there a man in the beginning of the fifth chapter. You find a man who had been ill for thirty and eight years. He is there by a very beautiful pool, the pool of the porches, the pool of Bethesda. Evidently somebody had built these shady porches around there where the sick folks that gathered could find some little shelter from the heat of the sun. And here they were. Something unusual happened at a certain times at that pool. It is spoken of in the scripture as the "troubling of the waters."⁴ Now don't ask me what that means because I don't know. All I know is what the Word of God says about it, and that is, that at a certain time an angel "troubled the water" and if somebody got in first when that thing happened, when that phenomena appeared, when that happened if somebody stepped into the water there was some healing virtue that came to them because of it. And a man had been there for thirty and eight years. And he had not been able to get in at the proper moment when some help could have come to him. Now look, we speak of him as the Impotent Man by the Pool of Bethesda. Now don't look for him outside of the Gospel of John. You won't find him there. He is one of the distinctive characters of this blessed book.

Now, when you go to the ninth chapter you find another very important person. You find our Lord is dealing with a man and he has eye trouble. Now, I want you to notice, please, which man that is, because our Lord dealt with quite a number who had eye trouble, but he only dealt with one like this. Now we know him because of the distinction of his difficulty. There was something different about the difficulty. Now what was it? What was the distinction there? He was the man, what? Born blind, that's right. The man born blind. Now remember that when our Lord healed the man born blind he was not merely restoring sight. In that particular moment, our Lord was not the great physician. He was the

2 John 3:7

3 John 4:7

4 John 5:4

creator, because he was bringing into being, bring to pass, something that had never been there before. He was not curing blindness. This man had never been able to see. There had been no photograph there upon the retina of his eyes, never. This was a man born blind, and when the miracle of new life and new sight came to this man, you will remember what the people said about it. Or do you? They said, "Never since the world began has it been known that a man born blind ever received his sight."⁵ Now, this is something different. You'll find blind men elsewhere. You won't find anybody like this outside of the Gospel of John. This man born blind is one of the distinctive characters of the Gospel of John.

Go to the eleventh chapter of John and you will find there a character who is very dear to our Lord. He had been sick and then died, and they had buried him for four days in that tomb, he had lain there, until now disintegration was taking place in the body of this precious one. You'll remember our Lord called him forth, and called him by name. His name, please? Lazarus, that's right. Now, don't look for Lazarus outside of the Gospel of John, because you won't find him there. There is no sign of Lazarus outside of this particular gospel.

Now, I want you to go one step further, and remind yourself that when our Lord was in the Garden of Gethsemane, that when the soldiers and the servants of the high priest came to take him prisoner, there was one of the disciples who greatly resented that. And he drew his sword and struck off the servant of the high priest's ear. And you will remember that our Lord had to rebuke him and then to work a miracle of healing as he restored that injured ear, and put it back again. Now, let me ask you, what was the name of the servant of the high priest whose ear was struck off? What was his name? Now, you will find him in other gospels, but you won't find him named. What was his name? Do you remember? What was his name? Do you remember? His name was Malchus.⁶ Malchus.

Now, let's start at the beginning again. You've got Nathaniel. You have Nicodemus. You have the Woman of Samaria. You have the Impotent Man by the Pool of Bethesda. You have the man born blind. You have Lazarus and Malchus, and many another.

Now, let me make a suggestion to you. The next time you read your Gospel of John, and you ought to read it periodically; we expect other people to read it; we ought to read it for ourselves. If we wanted to help somebody who was struggling from darkness to light, we'd probably give them the Gospel of John. It doesn't reflect much credit on us if we don't read the thing we expect other people to read. You read your Gospel of John periodically. But the next time you do it, you read it with this thought in mind. I'm going to be watching for these distinctive characters. Now you know a few of them, but there are many more that I've haven't mentioned at all. You go through and every time you come across a character, ask yourself this question: Is this man or woman found in some other gospel, or is he or she one of the distinctive characters of the Gospel of John? Now, let me tell you something, my dear, you will find a fascination about that. It'll give a new point to your reading. You'll be reading with something definite in mind. It won't take away at all the old blessedness of these precious words as they come to you again. But you'll be looking for something. You be on the watch out for them and see how many distinctive characters you can find in the Gospel of John.

5 John 9:32

6 John 18:10

Now the second point that we mentioned was the difference in our Lord's method. By that we mean, in his teaching method. Now, one of the things that you will not find in the Gospel of John is the record of what we speak of as Christ's great sermons. For instance, if you turn to Matthew 5:6, 7 you'll have a record there of his great sermon. What sermon? The Sermon on the Mount, that's right. The Sermon on the Mount. When you turn to the 13th chapter of Matthew you find his great sermon regarding the things having to do with the kingdom; the parables of the kingdom. When you turn to the end of the gospel of Matthew you find his great discourses regarding the time that is yet to come and the indications that the days are fast hastening and what to look for on there, you will find that. You will find similar things in Mark, and again in Luke, but you won't find them to the same extent at all in the Gospel of John.

But this is what you will find, in the Gospel of John - that instead of the record of our Lord's great sermons to congregations; now he does speak to congregations in the Gospel of John, but the emphasis is on something entirely different; it is on his private conversations rather than his public addresses. And his teaching method is that of the private conversation rather than the public address. Now, let's go again, and stop a minute and see just what we mean by this. Let's stop a minute.

What about his private conversation with Nicodemus? Now that's a great discourse, but it was a discourse given to an audience of one. Brother Beck⁷ doesn't need to listen to this, but we preachers are a funny crowd. We get terribly disturbed if we don't have as many people to talk to as we think we ought to. We are so important, you know, that unless we get somebody to hear what we've got to say, we get terribly disturbed about it. But you know that our Lord seemed to be quite content to preach and to say the greatest things he ever said to an audience of one. Just one. That's all, just one. I sometimes look at myself and I wonder what would I do if I went to a certain place for a meeting and when I got there, there was just one woman; not much of a woman at that, for instance, in the audience. What would I do? What would I do about this special sermon of mine, this thing that is so important, you know? What would I do about it? Would I do as much for her as I would if there was a thousand there?

Well, our Lord did. He sure did. The greatest things he ever said, he said to an audience of one. Let me give you one of them - that conversation with the woman of Samaria. Do you know that the greatest thing that our Lord ever said about God the Father, he said to that woman? And he said this, "God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."⁸ That's the greatest thing that our Lord ever said about God the Father, and he said it to an audience of one, and not much of a one at that. I don't know whether we'd like her as a member of our congregation, would we? Would we? But our Lord took good care that her teaching need was met; private conversations. And do you know that you can go on through the Gospel of John, just one after the other?

Let me give you this figure, if you want to put it down in your notes. There are 15 private conversations in the Gospel of John. We've only mentioned two of them. There are 15 of them in the Gospel of John – private conversations. Now, watch again, when you go through that Gospel of John

7 Reference is to Reverend Joseph H. Beck, pastor of the East Lake Alliance Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

8 John 4:24

again, you be on the look out for this. Whenever you find our Lord in conversation with one person, you stop, because that is a most important moment and he's got something tremendous to say. 15 of them.

Now, once more, will you let me give you some homework so that when you're in your reading and studying of the Gospel of John, you can do this? As you go through this Gospel of John you look for those 15 private conversations and mark them carefully, will you? Because, remember my dear, God has got something to say to you personally out of the midst of each one of them. You will have a thrill you will never forget if you take time out to go through the Gospel of John and stop every time you find our Lord talking to one person, one person. Private conversations. That's our Lord's teaching method as it is set forth in the Gospel of John.

Now, let's look again. Let's look at the difference in the message of the Gospel of John. Because you find there is not only a difference in his teaching method, but there is a difference in what he says as recorded in the Gospel of John - vastly different to anything that is contained in either of the gospels that preceded it. Now let me remind you of this, that the great thing that God sent his Son to accomplish was the gathering together of a family circle for God. A family circle for the Lord.

God wants children. God wants a family circle, and the Gospel of John is written especially to God's own peculiar family circle with our precious Lord in the center of it. It's a family letter. It's a letter that has references in it, that can only be understood by a family. For example, you find more emphasis on the "fatherhood" of God in the Gospel of John than any other book in the scripture. You will find the word "father" mentioned in this book 119 times; in one book, father, father, father, father, father all the way through. You will find it there.

If you only had one book of the scripture to take with you, or one chapter to take with you, and you were going to a home where there was great sorrow, bereavement for instance, what chapter would you take? The 14th chapter of John, nearly everybody would; not everybody, of course. Some folks would take the 23rd Psalm; some of them would take something else, but it would be surprising how many of them would choose, how many of us would choose, the 14th chapter of John. It's the comfort chapter of the Bible. "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father, in my Father's house are many mansions."⁹ Do you know that the word "father" is mentioned in the 14th chapter of John twenty-five times in one chapter? It's amazing what you find there. It's a family book.

This is the book that tells us about how we become a member of a family. How did you become a member of the family? How? How did you become a member of the family to which you belong? You were born into it, that's right, that's right, you didn't drift into it at all. You weren't initiated in it, not at all. You weren't received into it. You weren't baptized into it. You were born into it. That's the only way to become a member of a family, is to be born into it. And when you were born into it, you shared the common life of that family.

The thing that makes a family is father, mother, children, all sharing a common life. That's the way a family is made. The family of God we find here. Now, listen, if you had children of your own, and you

9 John 14:1,2

were going to write a letter to them, don't you think your letter to your own children would be different to the letter that you might write to somebody else's child, however much you might think of them? Why of course, there would be different expressions, there would be different modes of saying what you wanted to say. It would be a different thing all together.

A family letter. Now, the Gospel of John is the Father's family letter, and it has to do with the family of God, and in it you will find this is the distinctive message. That which has to do with our entrance into the family, what makes us the family of God, why did God want a family anyhow, and what should be our mode of behavior seeing that we are now the children of God? "To as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."¹⁰ And immediately following, you find the words "Which were born, not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God."¹¹ Born of God.

When you get into the 3rd chapter of John you find that matchless discourse on the only entrance into the family of God, and to this man who had so much and yet had so little, who seemed to have everything and yet had nothing. To that man, our Lord said, "Unless you are born again, you can't even see the Kingdom of God, let alone enter into it."¹² Now there's the distinctive message of the Gospel of John. It has to do with the family of God. It's the distinct message. You will not find it elsewhere. You won't find the new birth in the other gospels at all. Now you'll find references to it. You'll find things that imply it, but you won't find teaching about it anywhere else. You won't find it at all in the Old Testament. We've come up against something in the Gospel of John that is so new, so beautiful, that we hold our breath at the contemplation of it, that God should in his grace take miserable, no good sinners like us, and transform us by imparting his own nature, until we become the born sons of God. Now, there's the distinction in the message of the Gospel of John.

Just one step further and then we'll finish. Notice the difference in the material of the Gospel of John. This will not take us long to emphasize this. The Gospel of John is, with the exception of a few things, and I'll name some of them to you, it is made up of entirely new material. It's not a repetition of the other things, at all. Now, let me remind you of one or two things that you will find in the Gospel of John, you will find them outside in other gospels too.

You'll find the record of Peter walking on the water. You will find the record of the feeding of the five thousand. You will find the record of the supper at Bethany. But apart from that, practically everything in the Gospel of John is new material.

Now, the obvious conclusion is this: That the Holy Spirit was doing something when he caused John to write the Gospel of John that he had not done before. He was writing a new thing at a different time, for a different purpose, to a different people, a people that hadn't existed before. A people who were now being gathered to become the body of Christ. The bride of the bridegroom. And he was writing a special message, our Father's special message to his own. That's what the Gospel of John is.

10 John 1:12

11 John 1:13

12 John 3:3

No wonder, if we want to bring somebody, or if we pray that the Lord will help us to bring somebody out of darkness into light; no wonder we tuck a Gospel of John in our pocket when we go to talk to somebody and leave it with them. No wonder, that when we're at the end of ourselves, and it doesn't take long to get to the end of yourself when you're talking to a sinner, does it? It doesn't take long. No wonder when we reach the end of ourselves, and our little old arguments are not getting across at all, we put a Gospel of John into the hand of somebody and say, "You read this." And only eternity will reveal the number of folks who have come out of darkness into light, with the sound of this symphony of the Gospel of John in their ears.

You'll know something about that when you get to heaven. That's one of the secrets that God has reserved for us. What a precious time it will be when we gather together somewhere on the golden streets and we find God has reserved this bit of information for us. As if he's leaving it to us, one of the precious, special things that he'll tell us when we get to heaven. What happened when you gave that Gospel of John to somebody and you didn't know what had happened? You never have known, and you won't know until then. But He knows, and that's the reason why the Gospel of John was written.

Now, when we begin tomorrow night, and I'm going to stop right now. Believe it or not, you've been listening to me now for about 35 minutes, which is long enough for anybody. But when we begin again tomorrow night, we'll have some more of these distinctions of the Gospel of John. We'll see some of the differences again that we find between the Gospel of John and the other gospels. If there is anyone here that would like to stop at the moment for a close and talk with us, or if you'd like to stay and have a word of prayer with us; if you've got a burden on your heart, we'd be glad to stay and talk with you. If you're outside of Christ, or if you're carrying a burden that shouldn't be there, it's so easy to do that, isn't it? It's so easy to do that. To step out of the line a little bit and find yourself in company of a grieved Holy Spirit. It's easy to do that. If there's somebody that would like to stop for just a word of prayer, just between ourselves, you stop at the close of the meeting. We're just going to stand together and receive the benediction.

(Prayer:)

Our Father, Oh, thou we pray thee, grant us thy grace, thy peace, thy blessing as we go out of this room. May we be conscious of thy presence, thine overshadowing. And we pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

Goodnight folks, and God bless you.

(audio ends)