



# The Gospel of John

The Synoptic Gospels tell us what Jesus said and did, but John tells us **WHO JESUS IS**

- the most theological of all the gospels (revealing Jesus as Yahweh Himself)
- clear apologetic for divine inspiration - no un-aided mortal man could have written this book
- for myself and many others, the most amazing and wonderful book ever written

## Author and Audience and Date

### Who was John?

- Son of Zebedee, brother of James, one of the "sons of thunder"
  - who sought the place of highest honor in the Kingdom (seated at Jesus' left and right)
  - who wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy Samaritans who didn't receive Jesus
- Only gospel writer who identifies himself, but not by name: the "disciple whom Jesus loved"
- also wrote the 3 letters of John, and the Revelation
- Clearly stated purpose of his gospel, which runs throughout:

these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (20:31)

Why would John identify himself this way?

### Audience and Date

- John had the other 3 gospels in hand, and wrote this gospel quite a few years later
- Date uncertain, but probably c. AD 80
- John notes that the Pilate's accusation is written in "Hebrew, Latin and Greek" - a nod to Matthew, Mark and Luke
- John intentionally writes to conclude, and be the capstone of the "four-fold gospel"

## The Four Living Creatures in Revelation

"the first living creature like a Lion,  
the second living creature like an Ox,  
the third living creature with the face of Man,  
and the fourth living creature like an Eagle in flight" (Rev 4.7)

- written to all Christians, and through them to all the world, to reveal Jesus as the Son of God
- John intended the widest circulation
- "that you may believe...and that believing you may have life in His name"

## Structure

### The Prologue (1.1-18)

- Chiastic Structure
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- **[A]** The Word with God (1:1-2)
    - **[B]** Word as Creator (1:3)
      - **[C]** Life and Light (1:4-5)
        - **[D]** John's witness (1:6-8)
          - **[E]** Light enters the world (1:9-10)
            - **[F]** Rejected by His own \* The Children of God (1:11-13)
          - **[E]**' Word became flesh (1:14)
        - **[D]**' John's witness repeated (1:15)
      - **[C]**' Grace and Truth (1:16)
    - **[B]**' Revelation through Christ (1:17)
  - **[A]**' The Son reveals God (1:18)
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# Outline

- Observe also the poetic triplets, following Hebrew poetry
- This Poetic Prologue introduces all of John's themes
- These are then woven like golden threads in a tapestry throughout the book.
- Structure is simple, but also profound and intricate.
- Focuses on Jesus in Jerusalem, around the 7 Feasts

The simple 2 part structure is defined by the center of the chiasm:

- Part 1 (1.19-10.42) - "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." (1:11)
- Part 2 (13.1-20.31) - "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (1:12)
  - "Upper Room discourses" (chapters 13-17)

Transition from Part 1 to Part 2 is the raising of Lazarus (11.1-12.50)

In 11:45–54 the opposition to Jesus increases dramatically. From this point on, “the Jewish leaders made plans to put Him to death”... Thus, Jesus “no longer walked openly among the Jews...” (11:51-54).

## The Seven Feasts

- The Synoptic gospels cover a lot of action north, in and around Galilee.
  - In contrast, John describes more action south in Judea, in and around Jerusalem, centered around the Feasts of the Jews
1. 1st **Passover** (2:23) - refers back to the Exodus when the Lord's angel passed over the Jews because of the blood of the Lamb.
  2. **Purim** (5:1,17) - connected to Queen Esther (Esther 9:20-32 NASB95) and God's deliverance of the Jews from their enemies. Jesus reveals this powerful truth in verse 17: “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”
  3. 2nd **Passover** (6:4) - again connects Jesus with our Passover Lamb and our redemption from sins. John emphasizes the unleavened bread of Passover and that Jesus is our Living Bread.
  4. **Tabernacles** (7:2) - commemorated the 40 years that Israel wandered in the wilderness as punishment for their sins, reminding Israel that God had kept His promises and

brought them safely into the Promised Land.

5. "**The Great Day**" (7:37) - celebrated the eighth day, after Tabernacles (Lev. 23:36 NASB95) as a special assembly of offering food to the Lord. Many people would be gathered in the Temple courts. Jesus gives the gospel in 3 words: Thirst. Come. Drink.
6. **Dedication** (10:22) aka "Hanukkah" or the "Festival of Lights" - commemorates the Maccabees recapturing of the Temple from Antiochus Epiphanes, and referring to the time when the daily Menorah oil burned for 8 days.
7. 3rd **Passover** (11:55) - shows that Jesus' public ministry lasted 3 years. This is the beginning of the last seven days of Jesus life, called "Passion Week." Our Passover Lamb is now headed to the cross.

## Themes and Threads

### Fulfillment in Jesus

- John doesn't cite the Old Testament like Matthew does "this happened in order to fulfill..."
- Instead he shows the fulfillments in a more intrinsic and essential way

Some examples:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (1:1-3)

וַיֵּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹרֶךְ וַיְהִי-אֹרֶךְ

And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we saw His glory (1:14)

and more...!

### 7 Signs

- John doesn't use the word δύναις (miracle) as the Synoptic gospels do
- Instead he uses the word σημεῖον (sign)
- *Signs* point to something. They SIGN-nify something else.

- Imagine driving to Lake Tahoe, and stopping to marvel at the "100 miles to go" sign before you get there...

1. The 1st sign: Changing the water to wine at the wedding in Cana (chapter 2)
2. The 2nd sign: Healing the nobleman's son (John 4.46-54 NASB95)
3. Healing a paralyzed man (chapter 5)
4. Feeding the 5000 (chapter 6)
5. Healing man blind from birth (chapter 9)
6. Raising Lazarus from the dead (chapter 11)
7. His own resurrection (chapter 20)

It was commonly believed among the Jews that the spirit hovered over a dead person for 3 days, and there was some hope that he might revive.

## The Word of the Father

The Eternal Intimacy of the Father and the Son

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (1:18)

the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. (5:19)

If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.” (14:7)

“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (17:5)

## The 7 "I AM" statements

Hearkens directly back to Exodus 3 where God reveals His covenant name YHWH to Moses

“I have surely **seen** the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have **heard** their cry because of their taskmasters, for I **know** of their sufferings. “So **I have come down** to deliver them (Exodus 3:7-8 NASB95)

- His faithful covenant love is bound up in His very name

- These 7 statements are metaphorical, revealing the true nature of Jesus.
  - Each statement is followed by a *blessing and benefit* for those who are in Christ.
1. **I AM the bread of life**; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst...If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever (6.35,48,51)
  2. **I AM the light of the world**. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (8.12, 9.5)
  3. **I AM the door of the sheep**. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. (10.7,9)
  4. **I AM the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I know my own and my own know me... (10:11,14)
  5. **I AM the resurrection and the life**. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. (11:25-26)
  6. **I AM the way, and the truth, and the life**. No one comes to the Father except through me. (14.6)
  7. **I AM the true vine; you are the branches**. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (15.1,5)
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## 7 other "I AM" statements incorporated into the story

In addition to the 7 metaphorical "I AM" statements by which Jesus reveals who He is, there are 7 other "I AM" statements specifically directed to the situation at hand.

1. The woman \*said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." Jesus \*said to her, "**I** who speak to you **am He**." (4:25-26)
  2. they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. But He \*said to them, "**It is I**; do not be afraid." (6:19-20)
  3. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that **I am He**, you will die in your sins. (8:24)
  4. So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I am He** (8:28)
  5. Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I AM**." Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him (8:58-59)
- 6 I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that **I**

**am He.** (13:19)

7. So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and \*said to them, “Whom do you seek?” They answered Him, “Jesus the Nazarene.” He said to them, “**I am He.**” (18:4-5)

## Motivations

John reveals the thoughts and intentions behind the actions

For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, **because** He was doing these things on the Sabbath. (5:16)

I say these things **so that** you may be saved. (5:34 )

Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not **because** you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. (6:26)

**Therefore** I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that **I AM**, you will die in your sins. (8:24)

and more...!

## Already and Not Yet

He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (3:36)

But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; (4:23)

an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. (5:25)

Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” (11:24-26)

and more...!

# Prophet, Priest and King

## Prophet

For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; (3:34)

the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (6:63)

The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. (14:10)

Not only does Jesus speak the words of God as The Prophet, but John 1 declares that HE IS the Word of God

## Priest

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (17:20-21)

Not only does Jesus make intercession for us as our Great High Priest in John 17, but John the Baptizer declares in chapter 1 that Jesus HIMSELF is The Sacrifice: "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World

## King

Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." (1:49)

Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT." (12:14-15)

Not only is Jesus revealed to be the King of the Jews on earth, but is shown to be the Eternal King, of the Kingdom of God

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world." (18:36)

## Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you

forever; that is the Spirit of truth, (14:16-17)

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (14:26)

When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, (15:26)

## Love

- "The second is like it - you shall love your neighbor as yourself"
- Jesus raises the bar to the humanly impossible, apart from enabling of the Holy Spirit

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even **as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. (13:34)

## Encounters

- Nathanael (chapter 1)
- Nicodemus (chapter 3)
- Samaritan Woman (chapter 4)
- The Man Born Blind (chapter 9)
- Martha, the sister of Lazarus (chapter 11)
- Restoration of Peter (chapter 21)

and more...!

## Exegesis (ἐξήγησις)

Exegesis: "setting forth something in detail, explanation, interpretation"

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has **explained** Him. (1:18)

## The Word was a God?

This is grammatically untenable in Greek. Find out why [here](#)

## ἀγαπάω (Agape) and φιλέω (Phileo)

- What is the difference between these two words for "Love" in John?
- In the last chapter 21 when Jesus asks Peter 3 times "Do you love me?"

This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men **loved** the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. (3:19) Agapao

For the Father **loves** the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; (5:20) Phileo

for they **loved** the approval of men rather than the approval of God. (12:43) Agapao

for the Father Himself **loves** you, because you have **loved** Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father. (16:27) Phileo

- John, referring to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" uses both words interchangeably. They are synonyms.

## Every Branch in Me

**I AM the true vine**, and My Father is the vinedresser. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He *takes away*; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. (15:1-2)

- does He "take it away" or does He "lift it up"
- ΑΙΡΩ - "to take up / to take away" - used both ways 50/50 in John
- Every branch **in Me**
- ΦΕΡΩ - "bearing"

The Present participle "bearing" denotes the current condition of the branch, not its final determined state. The first branches are not **currently** bearing fruit, and the Vinedresser acts accordingly. The second branches are **currently** bearing fruit, and the Vinedresser likewise acts accordingly. What would a good vinedresser do in these respective instances?

If "take it away" is right, this would be the **ONLY** "I AM" statement followed by a threat or curse, rather than a benefit or a blessing!

This does not accord with the heart of Jesus as revealed in Scripture.

for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. (Ephesians 5:29-30)

A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish (Isaiah 42:3)

Read a full explanation [here](#)

## Assignment

### Preparing

- **Read** chapter 6 of *Introducing the New Testament* (John)
- **Read** John chapters 1.1-18, 3.1-4.26, 6, 10, 13-17
- **Watch** The Bible Project [John Part 1](#) and [John Part 2](#)

**Respond** to the following:

### Knowing

1. Did John write any other New Testament books? Which ones?
2. Cite 2 or 3 verses in John which clearly show that Jesus is the Eternal God.

### Reflecting

Choose two or three of the following:

1. Write a one sentence summary of the Gospel of John.
2. What are some of the ways the Gospel of John differs from the Synoptics?
3. Why does John use the word "sign" to refer to the Lord's miracles?
4. If you were to name one personal takeaway from the Gospel of John, what would it be?

### Communicating

Different people have at different times have attempted to "harmonize" the 4 gospels, i.e. to aggregate them all together with a common chronology into 1 book. You are talking with some folks who are thinking along these lines and one of them asks you why there are four

different gospels, and not just one. What would you say?