

John's Gospel

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Author

John's gospel was written by *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. (John 21:20,24). Who this disciple was is not stated but it is widely accepted that it was the Apostle John. Along with Peter and James, John had an especially close relationship with Jesus (which is why he was called *the disciple whom Jesus loved*).

John's gospel is quite different to Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospels. John writes in a very personal way about Jesus' life because he was present during the events described. He comes through as an eye-witness and participator in what is happening, even though he was remembering events that took place many years earlier.

John and his brother James were fishermen. Matthew 4:21 tells that when Jesus called them they *immediately left the boat and their father Zebedee and followed Him*. James and John may have had quite fiery tempers because Jesus called them *Boanerges*, which means *sons of thunder*. Mark 3:17. James and John's mother, Salome, was also a disciple of Jesus and was present at Jesus' crucifixion. Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40.

After Jesus' resurrection John became one of the leaders of the Church, and a much-loved missionary. He was described as "John the evangelist", "John, the beloved disciple", and "the Apostle John", then later, "Saint John".

John was obviously a deep thinker and someone with much spiritual insight. This is shown throughout his gospel, and in his other writings, 1, 2 and 3 John, and the Book of Revelation. Late in his life John was exiled to the Island of Patmos (where he wrote the book of Revelation), and he died in his 90s in Ephesus around 100 AD.

John was a common name in Bible times. It means *God is gracious*.

Date

John's gospel was probably written in Ephesus around 90AD, when John was in his 80s. This was nearly 60 years after the 3½ years John spent with Jesus. John didn't have access to a tape recorder and few people can remember details of conversations and events that took place 60 years earlier. Yet John testifies that what he has written is true, and that Jesus did many other things beyond what is written in his book, including more miracles. *If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for all the books that would be written.* John 20:30; 21:24,25.

Relationship with other Gospels

Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospels were completed by around 64AD. Mark was written first, then Matthew, and then Luke. They are known as the Synoptic Gospels (from the Greek *syn-* together and *opsis* appearance) because they have so much in common. e.g. order of events, stories and parables.

John's gospel was written much later than the three synoptic gospels. It was not based on them and has a quite different style and order of events to them. e.g. John doesn't mention important events like Jesus' birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, institution of the Lord's supper, agony in Gethsemane or ascension. (Only 8% of John's gospel is common to the synoptic gospels). John focuses on the spiritual meaning of what happened in Jesus' life, rather than on details of what was taking place. Nearly half of his gospel is words spoken by Jesus (or more likely, John's recollection and interpretation of them). John also addresses issues that had arisen in the first 60 years of the church and includes a much more systematic theology of salvation than the other gospels, reflecting the growth in theological understanding that had taken place since the other gospels were written.

John presents Jesus as "the Son of God". By comparison, Matthew presents Jesus as "the King of the Jews"; Mark presents Jesus as "the suffering servant" and Luke presents Him as "the son of man".

Purpose

John tells us in John 20:31 that he wrote his gospel so that *you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name*. The book is thus primarily evangelistic. John wants his readers to believe that Jesus is God's Son, and that He is the long-awaited Jewish Messiah (or Christ). This belief is to be more than just head knowledge, though. John expects His readers to actively put their trust in Jesus and faithfully follow Him. He shows that accepting of Jesus as Saviour and Lord is the only way by which we can be saved and experience eternal life.

Background

The first 14 verses of John's Gospel set the scene for the whole book. They were written as a strong declaration that Jesus was the Son of God, and to counter some of the heretical teachings held in the Hellenistic Greek culture of the day. Barclay describes these verses as *'one of the greatest adventures of religious thought ever achieved by the mind of man'*. We will reflect on them in some detail as they give great insight into why John wrote later parts of his gospel, and into significant issues being faced by the early church. These issues are still relevant for us today!

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world

He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:1-14.

1. Most Christians were from a Gentile/Greek background

The Church had begun in Judaism and most of its first members were Jews. When John's Gospel was written, some 60 years after Jesus death and resurrection, the Church had moved a long way from its Jewish foundations and had spread throughout the Roman/Greek world. Jewish and Gentile Christians were now strongly influenced by the Hellenistic (Greek) culture in which they lived every day.

Matthew, Mark and Luke were written 30 years earlier when the Church still had a strong Jewish perspective. Greeks reading Matthew's Gospel, for example, wouldn't be interested in the genealogies, or quotes from the Old Testament; wouldn't have heard of King David, and wouldn't care about Jewish laws and customs. By 90 AD. the good news of the gospel needed to be re-stated so its essential truths would be relevant for Christians (and potential Christians) in a Hellenistic culture, and would be meaningful in that culture. That's one of the main reasons why John wrote his gospel, and why it is so different to the other three gospels.

We are in a similar situation today. We need to present the Gospel in a way that is relevant for people for whom God is totally irrelevant; who have little or no knowledge of Jesus, and who are strongly influenced (whether they know it or not!) by secular humanistic philosophies.

In John's day the way that anyone could be saved was to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive Him by faith. Today this is still the only way we can "become children of God".

To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. 1:12,13.

2. There were strongly held philosophies (including philosophies about God)

a. The concept of logos (word, reason, intelligence)

Logos was a very familiar concept in both Jewish and Hellenistic cultures.

- To the Greek “the logos of God” i.e. the Word of God, meant “the reasoning, intelligent, guiding, correcting, controlling mind and wisdom of God”. The logos was behind everything that happened. Why is there night and day? How were we made? Why do things happen as they do? How can we know right from wrong? Easy! The logos of God. The logos was understood to be pervading everything; bringing sense to the world, and keeping everything in its proper order.
- To the Jew the logos (word) wasn't just a symbol that could be spoken or written down. It was something that had an independent existence. Words were powerful and able to do things. Blessings were conferred by words. The names of people, places and things had meanings that were not just concepts. They were real representations of what they were describing. When God spoke a word the universe was created. In fact, whenever God spoke a word something happened. Through His word God gives life and light. From His word comes wisdom and understanding. In Jewish thinking the word of God is all powerful! God is His Word,

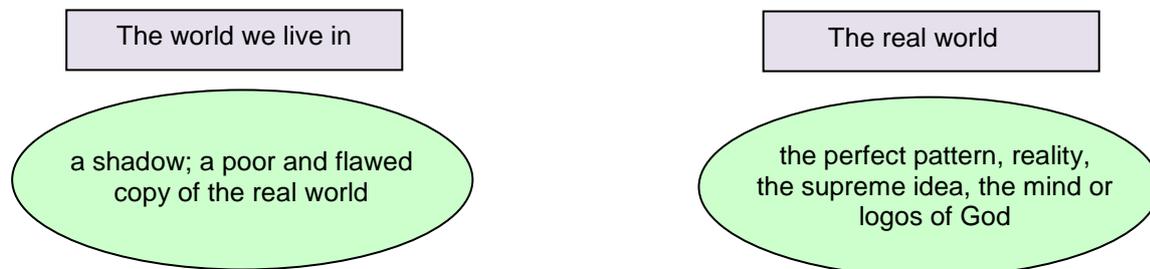
So in both Jewish and Greek culture the logos (word) of God creates everything, sustains everything and makes sense of life.

John says to Jews and Greeks (and to us today) “If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. Jesus shows us God’s mind, reason, intelligence, thoughts and being. Jesus is the word of God. Jesus created everything. Jesus is God and has always been God. In Jesus the mind and wisdom and intelligence of God has been revealed to us. The word of God has become a human being. Jesus is the logos. Jesus is God!”

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

b. Concepts of reality and truth

The Greeks believed there were two worlds:



The big question for Greeks was “How can we move from the shadow to the reality?”

John says: “Jesus is the reality! Look to Him! Know Him! Jesus is the logos (mind/reason/intelligence) of God. All of God’s fullness dwells in Him. Everything Jesus says and does enables us to see into the reality of God.

The Greek word for reality is *alethinos* and for truth is *alethes*. So in a Greek mindset reality and truth are the same thing! That’s why John often calls Jesus the true/real xxxx (God, bread, vine, judge etc). John’s message is that, in a world of shadows, copies and imperfection, reality and truth can only be found in Jesus Christ..

Again we are in a similar situation. We live in a pluralistic world where there is no such thing as “the truth”. Everybody can have their own ‘truths’ as long as they are caring, tolerant, accepting, non-judgmental (and all the other “PC” qualities). Yet deep in their hearts people want reality, worked out in a real world, a reality that makes sense of life. John says to us that Jesus is the source of all reality and truth. He is “the way, the truth and the life”. John 14:6

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. John 1:1,2.

If the message of the gospel is to 'get through' today it needs to be focused on experiential reality. John's points us to Jesus who is the only great reality. He says that if we know Jesus we will know reality in every area of our lives: family, work, finances, creativity, future, inner life, eternity This contrasts with some evangelistic approaches where the focus is more on rational explanations. eg. 'The Bible says...'; trying to prove aspects of the gospel by apologetics; using tracts etc. Effective evangelism is always based on a real encounter with Jesus.

And you will know the truth (reality) and the truth (reality) will make you free. John 8:32

c. Heresies within the Church

Living in a non-Christian (or anti-Christian) culture can easily affect the way Christians think. Within its first 50 or 60 years the Church had developed a number of heresies.

- Some had elevated John the Baptist and built a sect around him. (eg. In Acts 19 people who had been baptised by John needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit). Every reference to John the Baptist in John's Gospel, without criticizing him, seeks to correct this by putting John the Baptist in his right place in God's order and elevating Jesus. eg. Chapter 1:6-9.

Today we have a similar situation when some Pastors get elevated and have enormous power in Christian's lives. Let's not place anybody in the Church in a position of worship. Humility and servant hood should be the characteristics of genuine leaders. Jesus is the Head of the Church, not Pastors!

- The main heresy that John needed to address was **Gnosticism**.

Main beliefs of Gnosticism

- In the beginning just two things existed: God and matter. God is pure spirit.
- Matter is evil; spirit is good.
- God can't have anything to do with matter because it is evil.
- To create the universe God put out emanations (Aeons), further and further from Himself.
- The creator God (Demiurge) came from one of these emanations called Sophia (wisdom) and is like Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament. She is hostile to the true God.
- The world is flawed. Space and time separate us from God. The laws of nature and moral laws enslave us. People (Adam) living in a flawed, material world are ignorant of the divine spark within them, but have the possibility for this to be awakened.
- Awakening of the divine spark within comes through knowledge (gnosis). Gnosis is gained through spiritual revelations given by Messengers of Light (mainly Seth, Jesus, Mani and Sophia). Salvation comes through gnosis, not by faith, obedience or good works.
- Growth in gnosis can only occur while we are alive. Death releases the divine spark but it gets re-incarnated for further cycles and continued evolution.
- Ethics, morality and rules serve the Demiurge. The inner spark brings about personal morality not laws and rules, so matters of conduct are left to individual choice. "Since the effort is to restore the wholeness and unity of the Godhead, active rebellion against the moral law of the Old Testament is enjoined upon every man".
- Growth in gnosis is a cosmic event.
- Christ and Sophia await the spiritual person, to welcome us to Pleroma (fullness: Paradise).
- In time every spiritual being will achieve gnosis, be re-united with our angelic twin – our higher self, and enter Pleroma.

From this some Christians had come to believe Jesus was just one of God's emanations, and that He wasn't divine. In response to this John emphatically begins his gospel by stating *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. 1:1,2.* Jesus is God!

Others (the Docetists) said Jesus had no body: He was like a phantom and only seemed to be a man. In response to this John says 'The word became flesh' 1:14.

It's easy to see that many current worldviews (especially those promoted in "The Da Vinci Code" and similar books) are still Gnostic in origin! We need to understand the way many modern people think and recognise when it doesn't come from a Christian world view. We need to communicate the Gospel to them based on an understanding of the philosophical base on which they have built their lives. Also, we need to recognise that we are being influenced every day to think and act in these ways. Be aware!

John presents Jesus as undeniably human and undeniably divine. And so should we!

3. People were searching

In John's day people were searching for meaning and purpose in life. What is life all about? How can I find purpose? Where is meaning? John's Gospel directly answers these questions by showing that Jesus is "the way".

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. John 1: 4,5

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20: 31

I am the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6.

Today most people are in darkness and don't want to see Jesus as the way to meaning in life. How can we help them see the light? John says unashamedly "look to Jesus". Only in Him does life really make sense.

When people come to Jesus light comes into their lives:

- light that shines into darkness, fear, uncertainty and chaos
- light that exposes the evil that keeps us in bondage
- light that shows us the way life can and should be lived
- light that shows the way ahead to a fulfilled life
- light that overcomes doubts and despair
- light that removes the fear of death
- light that points to eternity.

These are just the things that people are searching for! And they are all (only) found in Jesus.

He was the real light, who, in His coming into the world, gives light to every man. John 1:9.

How does one come into this light? That's the big question! John says come to know Jesus. Accept Him and you find the light of the world!

To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:12,13

That's why God sent His Son. That's why the Word became flesh!

Let's be unashamed about pointing people to Jesus as the only Saviour.

4. People needed an example

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

The fullness of God (i.e. His logos – His mind, reason, intelligence, thoughts and being) became human. We can see Him in Jesus. We can know Him in Jesus! To the Greeks this was an amazing concept. They believed that our human bodies are evil - prisons containing our souls and confining our spirits. Yet

John says *the Word became flesh* (*sarx*, the word used over and over to describe our fleshly fallen nature). God became man. We could see Him! He experienced what we experience. He knows us! He understands us! He cares for us!

And what is God, revealed in Jesus like? *Full of grace* (in the way He lived and lives) *and truth* (in what He said and says). In other words Jesus was fully human and He has left us a wonderful example of how to live. Jesus has shown that human beings can live as God intended!

We too can live as God intended if we follow Jesus' example and live out our lives in relationship with Him.

When we do this we, in turn, become examples to others. But we need to live our Christian lives with grace and truth, as we point people to Jesus. These days everyone is very aware of hypocrisy. So, let's be genuine in our love, care, acceptance and sharing.

So John's Gospel explains what God is like (He is revealed in Jesus Christ), and what God has done for us (He has provided a way of salvation through faith in Christ). John wrote to people in a Hellenistic culture that knew little or nothing about God or the way of salvation He has revealed in Christ.

The messages for us, if we are to be effective in sharing the Gospel, are the same as for John:

- *Recognise that most people in our culture are strongly influenced by secular humanistic philosophies and God is totally irrelevant.*
- *Point people to Jesus. "If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus".*
- *Focus on Jesus as the way to reality: in the family, work, finances, creativity, future, inner life, eternity ...*
- *Lift up Jesus, and be very wary of elevating people (like pastors).*
- *Present Jesus as fully God, yet fully human.*
- *Present Jesus as the One who brings light and truth into our lives.*
- *Present Jesus as the only Saviour.*
- *Be a great example of what Jesus can do in people. Live with grace and truth.*

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Outline of John's Gospel

1:1-18. Jesus is the logos (word) of God.

John emphatically declares to his readers (both Jews and Greeks) that Jesus is the logos of God: "the reasoning, intelligent, guiding, correcting, controlling mind and wisdom of God".

- Jesus is *the Word*
- Jesus was *with God* and *was God*, and was *with God in the beginning*.
- Jesus was the creator of all things, and *without Him nothing was made that has been made*.
- Jesus is the source of light in the world. He is the *true light* that *gives light to everyone*.

John the Baptist came as a witness to testify to the light that Jesus would bring, but was not himself that light.

- Jesus was not recognised or received by all when He came into the world.
- To all who received Jesus, *to those who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God*. They were *born of God* rather than of human parents.
- In Jesus the *Word became flesh*. The mind, wisdom, intelligence and creative power of God became human in Jesus Christ when He *made his dwelling among us*. *We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*.

John the Baptist testified about Jesus but Jesus was much greater than John. From Jesus all people have received blessing out of *the fullness of His grace*. Moses gave the law, but *grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*. *No-one has ever seen God, but now Jesus has made Him known*.

1:19-28. John the Baptist is not the Christ.

John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin, and was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus. See Matthew 3:1-12. John clearly stated that he was *not the Christ*, and that he was not Elijah (although Jesus said he was. Matthew 11:14). He was *the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord'*. (Isaiah 40:3). When John was asked why he baptised people when he was not the Christ he answered that One was to come who was greater than he was, i.e. Jesus.

1:29-34. Jesus is to take away the sin of the world.

The next day John met Jesus and baptised Him. When this happened the Holy Spirit came down from heaven as a dove and remained on Jesus. See Matthew 3:13-17.

At this time John made some powerful declarations about who Jesus is:

- Jesus is *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*.
- Jesus is greater than John. John came so that Jesus *might be revealed to Israel*.
- Jesus is the One who would *baptise with the Holy Spirit* (as compared to John who just baptised in water).
- Jesus *is the Son of God*.

1:35-51. Jesus calls His first disciples.

John now describes how Jesus called some of His disciples.

- **Andrew and Simon Peter** were Galilean fishermen. When Andrew met Jesus he found his brother Simon and told him, *We have found the Messiah (that is the Christ)*. Jesus gave Simon a new name, Peter (meaning 'rock').
- **Philip and Nathanael** were from Bethsaida. When Philip met the Lord he told his brother that he had *found the One Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth*. Nathanael asked if *anything good* could come out of Nazareth. (That was because Galilee was considered a contemptible place, and the town of Nazareth in Galilee was particularly run down. Later on when Christians were considered a sect of Judaism they were called the Nazarenes, as a sign of the contempt they were held in by the religious leaders). Jesus told Nathanael that He saw him while he was under a fig tree, even before Philip called him. Nathanael then recognised that Jesus *was the Son of God, the King of Israel*, and Jesus told him that he would see much *greater things* in future. Including *heaven being opened* and *angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man* (Jesus).



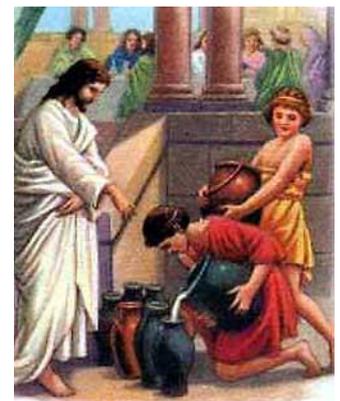
2:1-11:44. Jesus ministry: seven signs and seven discourses.

In chapters 2-12 John describes Jesus' ministry based around a series of seven miracles interspersed with teaching sessions. The miracles and the teachings are more than just events, though. To John they were signs; signs which show different aspects of Jesus' life and character. John uses them to show that Jesus is the Son of God and that He is providing a way by which people can come into a saving relationship with God.

First sign: changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana. 2:1-11

Jesus changed *water that was used by the Jews for ceremonial washing* into wine of the highest quality. Through this Jesus *revealed His glory, and the disciples put their faith in Him*.

This miracle introduced the disciples to Jesus' power and obviously helped to convince them that He was somebody trustworthy, that they could put their faith in. (The full revelation that He was the Son of God came about gradually). It was also a sign of one of the main reasons why Jesus came: to fulfil the law (represented by the ceremonial water) and provide a new way of salvation through the gospel. (Matthew 9:17).



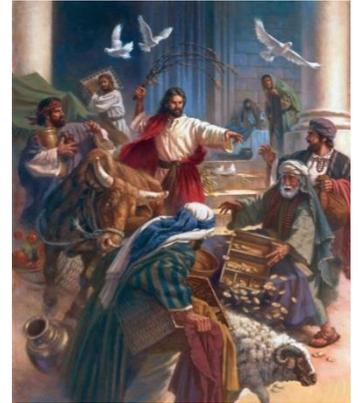
John the Baptist's actions here are described as a *testimony*. 'Testify', 'testimony' and the equivalent word 'witness' are important words in John's gospel. You will find them used repeatedly throughout the book, reflecting the evangelistic purpose of John's gospel.

Are you a good witness for the Lord? Do you share with others your testimony of what Jesus has done in your life? John certainly did!

Jesus clears the Temple. 2:12-25.

Jesus was a Jew and complied with the normal religious practices of Judaism. When He went to Jerusalem for the Passover He cleared the outer court of the Temple (the 'Court of the Gentiles') because the merchants and moneychangers there were turning His *Father's house into a market*.

- The disciples realised that Jesus' zeal could consume Him. (Psalm 69:9).
- The Jews wanted a sign to show that Jesus had the authority to do what He was doing. Jesus replied "*Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days*". The Jews couldn't understand this because it had taken 46 years to build the temple, but Jesus was talking about the temple of His body. He was indicating that He would die, and three days later be raised from the dead.



After Jesus' resurrection the disciples realised that Jesus was talking about His resurrection from death to life and *they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken*. (Psalm 16:10).

Jesus did many *miraculous signs* in Jerusalem and many *believed in His name*, but He was still wary of peoples' intentions because *He knew what was in each person*.

First discourse: Jesus teaches about the new birth. 3:1-21.

Jesus' first major teaching discourse is about how we can enter the kingdom of God. *No-one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again*, and then *no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit*. Jesus told this to Nicodemus, a leading Pharisee, but the message is relevant for everyone, everywhere.

- The "kingdom of God" is Jesus' central message, and is the dominant message of the whole New Testament. The kingdom of God is not a thing or a place. It is a condition of relationship in which God is king of every area of your life. Jesus is your Lord. He is King of your life. He leads you (by His Holy Spirit) so that you do the things that He wants you to do, and He works in your life (again by the Holy Spirit) so you are like Him in every way. Then He integrates you with other believers so that His will is worked out in the world. *Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Matthew 6:10.
- The only way by which we can see or enter the kingdom of God is to have a spiritual new birth. *Spirit gives birth to spirit*. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour the Holy Spirit comes into our lives giving us new life in Christ. We go from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive. Once we have been born again we become children of God and can know Him and have personal and intimate fellowship with Him.
- To be born again we must believe in Jesus Christ. This means we lay down our old life with its sinful desires and ask Jesus to come into our lives as Lord and Saviour and we promise that we will live in relationship with Him forever. When we do this the Holy Spirit comes and dwells within us. We become children of God and receive eternal life – a quality of life where in which we are able to have fellowship with God here on earth, and forever, after we die.
- God sent Jesus to the earth to die on the cross to bring this about. *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him*.
- Our response to God's love is to believe in Christ and give our lives to Him. If we do we have eternal life and His light comes into our lives. Those who reject God's stand condemned already because they have *not believed in the name of God's one and only Son*.
- Ultimately the choice facing every person on earth is to choose to reject Christ and face the consequences (including God's judgment), or accept Christ and experience God's light, truth and eternal life.

If you have never received Christ as your Saviour you can do so by praying this prayer.

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask Your forgiveness for all of my sins, past, present and future. I believe that You died on the cross for the forgiveness of my sins and to give me eternal life. I also believe that You rose from the dead proving that You are the Son of God. I now turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and live as my Lord and Saviour. I promise to live for you always. Thank you Lord Jesus for saving me, and making me part of Your kingdom. In Jesus Name. Amen.

John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus. 3:22-36.

John now describes a dispute between some of John's disciples with a Jew *over the matter of ceremonial washing*. He uses this incident to show that John the Baptist is inferior to Jesus. John the Baptist says he is not the Christ; and that Jesus must *become greater*, while he must *become less*. John is just from earth, (a normal human being) while Jesus *comes from heaven* and *speaks the words of God*. The Father loves His Son and has *given Him His Spirit without limit*. Those who believe in Jesus *have eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them*.

Second discourse: Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman. 4:1-42.

The second discourse is a conversation Jesus had with the woman from Samaria, who was drawing water from a well. *Jews do not associate with Samaritans* so the woman was surprised when Jesus asked to give Him a drink. Jesus was actually offering her *living water*. He said that everyone who drinks ordinary water would thirst again *but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*" (He was referring to the water of the Holy Spirit which He would later give to those who believed in Him. See John 7:38-39).



The woman wanted the living water Jesus offered but thought she would have to keep coming back to the well to get it. Jesus then encouraged her to believe in Him by revealing that she was living with a man who was not her husband, and that she had had five previous husbands. The woman thought that Jesus was a prophet and asked if this meant she had to now worship God in Jerusalem. Jesus replied that *true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth*, and that they are the type of people the Father seeks. *God is spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and truth*. Jesus then revealed to the woman that He was the Jewish Messiah.

True worship

Modern Christians often think of worship in terms of singing a set of songs i.e. having a 'time of worship'. The Greek word for worship has a totally different meaning to this! *Proskuneo* means to 'prostrate, bow down, kiss the ground before, or do obeisance to a superior'. To worship God is to lay down your will before God; to humble yourself before Him and do whatever He wants. This is to be done *in spirit and in truth*. For Jews worship was expressed not in singing of songs, but in study of the Scriptures. They believed that if they knew God's word, they could then truly obey Him.

The Samaritan woman then said to the people in her town that Jesus had told her everything she ever did, and asked *Could this be the Christ?* Many Samaritans believed that Jesus *really was the saviour of the world*.

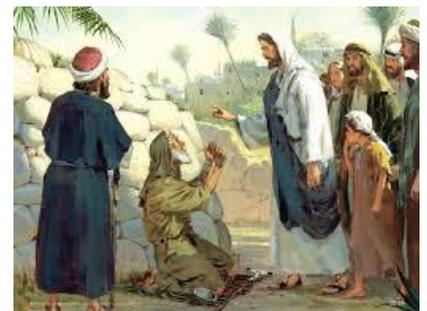
Two of Jesus' disciples were surprised to find Jesus talking with the Samaritan women. He should not have been talking with a Samaritan, let alone with a woman! The disciples encouraged Jesus to eat but He replied that His food *was to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work* (Reflecting the teaching He had just given about 'true worship').

At a deeper level, this incident highlights a very important message that Jesus was making. The gospel was not just for the salvation of Jews. If a Samaritan woman could believe in Jesus and be saved, then salvation was available to all who believed in Christ. Jesus told His disciples to open their eyes and look at the fields. Not just Jewish fields, all fields! *They are ripe for harvest!*

Second sign: healing of a nobleman's son. 4:46-54.

Jesus left for Galilee (because *a prophet has no honour in his own country*) where He was welcomed. In Cana a nobleman asked Jesus to come and heal his son who was close to death. Jesus said to the man *Your son will live* and the boy was immediately healed. The nobleman *and all his household believed* in Jesus.

This sign showed that Jesus had great power and also that He didn't have to be present for mighty things to happen. The boy was far away from Jesus when he was healed. What was important was that the nobleman believed in Jesus and that Jesus had the power to heal. The same is true for us today. Jesus can still do mighty things if we believe in Him!



Third sign: healing of a lame man by the pool of Bethesda. 5:1-18.

Once again we see Jesus going to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. At the Sheep Gate (Bethesda) many sick people gathered around a pool to seek healing when its waters moved. Jesus saw a man who had been paralysed for 38 years and asked him *Do you want to get well?* Surprisingly the man didn't answer "Yes"! Rather, he said he had no-one to help him get into the pool. Jesus said *Get up! Pick up your mat and walk!* and the man was healed.



This took place on the Sabbath which to the legalistic Pharisees was a contravention of the Jewish law. The Jewish leaders asked the man who had healed him and he had no idea who it was. Later, Jesus saw the man at the temple and told him to *stop sinning or something else worse may happen to him.*

This sign revealed Jesus' power over sickness, but also showed that His way of love and compassion was a much higher way than the legalism of the law. See Galatians 5:14. Romans 13:8-10. *The Jewish leaders began to persecute Jesus* but in His defence He said He was doing His Father's work. This further incensed the Pharisees and *they tried all the more to kill Him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.*

Third discourse: Jesus authority as God's Son. 5:19-47.

Jesus now describes the relationship that He has with the Father and stresses that this relationship gives Him the authority to do what He was doing.

- Jesus says that God is His Father, and He is God's Son.
- Jesus has a very close relationship with the Father. *The Son can do nothing by Himself; He can do only what He sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*
- *The Father loves the Son and shows Jesus what He wants Him to do.*
- Jesus will do *even greater things* like raising people from the dead and everyone will be amazed.
- The Father *has entrusted all judgment to the Son.*
- Everyone must honour the Son just as they honour the Father. To dishonour the Son is to dishonour the Father.
- Those who believe in Jesus will pass from death to life. A time is coming when all who have died will have the opportunity to believe in Jesus and live.
- The Father *has life in Himself* and has *granted the Son also to have life in Himself.*
- The Father has given authority for judgment over to Jesus, His Son.
- Everyone will be judged by Jesus, including those who have died. *The good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.*
- Jesus will judge justly because He will not seek to please Himself. Rather He will seek to please the Father who sent Him.
- By Himself Jesus can do nothing. Everything He does is intricately linked the Father.

Jesus is testifying about these things but what He is saying was confirmed by John the Baptist's testimony. Even greater than John's testimony, though, is the testimony of the Father. *For the works that the Father has given me to finish - the very works that I am doing - testify that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.*

Jesus said that the Pharisees had never seen the Father, nor did they have His word in them. *You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.* They didn't have the love of God in their hearts and stood condemned because they said they believe the words of Moses, but refused to believe what Moses said about Jesus. *If you believed Moses, you would believe Me for he wrote about Me.*



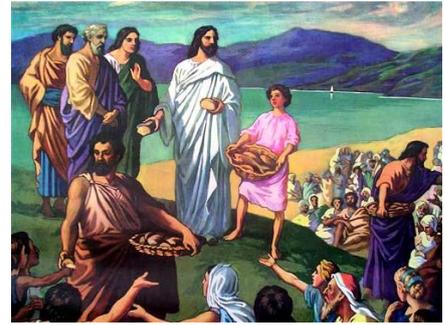
Fourth sign: the feeding of the five thousand. 6:1-15.

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle (apart from the resurrection) found in all four Gospels.

There was a crowd of 5000 men (presumably plus women and children) who followed Jesus *because they saw the miraculous signs He had performed*. The disciples recognised that the people needed food but knew they couldn't provide enough for such a multitude.

Jesus told them to seat the people and multiplied a boy's lunch of *five small barley loaves and two small fish* among them. After everyone had eaten there were twelve baskets of leftovers! The people thought Jesus was *the Prophet who is to come into the world* and wanted to make Jesus *king by force* so He withdrew to a mountain by Himself.

Through this sign Jesus' power was demonstrated to a very large group of people, and they wanted to make Him their king. Jesus knew, however, that their motivation was material, rather than spiritual. Later in this chapter He explained that He was the *bread of life*. He had come to provide something much greater than bread and fish. He had come to bring *everlasting life*.



Fifth sign: walking on water. 6:16-24.

John now describes how the disciples were in trouble during a storm as they crossed the Sea of Galilee. Jesus came to their aid *walking on the water*. The disciples were terrified but Jesus said *"It is I, don't be afraid"* and took them *immediately* to where they were going. This experience must have been very powerful for John as his life was obviously at risk. Through this sign he shows that Jesus is able to control the elements, but more importantly that He can take away our fears when we put our trust in Him.



Fourth discourse: Jesus is the bread of life. 6:25-70.

The people had been following Jesus because He had miraculously provided bread for them, but now He points them to something much more important than daily bread: *the bread of life*. Our focus should not be on *food that spoils*, but on *food that endures to eternal life* which Jesus can give us.

- We are to believe on the *One that God has sent* (i.e. Jesus). He is the *true bread from heaven who gives life to the world*.
- Jesus is the bread of life. Those who come to Him *will never go hungry* and those who believe in Him *will never go thirsty*. This bread (Jesus) is available to all. He will *never drive away* anyone who comes to Him. God's will is that *everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life*, and will be raised up to heaven at the last day. The way to have this eternal life is to believe in Jesus Christ;
- Jesus is the *bread of life*; the *living bread that came down from heaven*. Those who eat of this bread will live for ever. He said: *"Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them."*
- If we feed on Him (Jesus) we will have spiritual life.



Jesus says He is the bread of life, and that we are to feed on Him to gain eternal life. This imagery may be strange in a modern world, but it was not unusual for Rabbis to use images like this in Jesus' time. Jesus was saying that we can gain spiritual life by coming to Him. At the cross Jesus' body was broken for us, and His blood shed for us. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). He laid down His life so we could have life - eternal life. We have to believe Him, to be saved, then continue to draw spiritual life daily from Him through the Holy Spirit that He gives us. That's what we remember every time we take communion.

Many felt that this was a *hard saying* and deserted Jesus. Jesus reiterated that what He was saying was the way to find life: *The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you - they are Spirit and they are life*. Jesus gave the disciples the opportunity to leave Him as well but Peter had obviously got the point of what Jesus was saying. He said *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."*

Fifth discourse: Jesus is the Christ (Messiah). 7:1-8:11.

Jesus' brothers didn't want Him to attend the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem because it was too dangerous. Jesus kept away because His *time had not yet come*, but attended the last part of the feast and began to teach in the temple courts. The Jewish leaders wondered where He got His learning and Jesus explained that His teaching wasn't His own, but *came from the One who sent Him*. The crowd thought Jesus was *demon possessed*. They accused Him of healing a man on the Sabbath which broke the Law, but Jesus showed their hypocrisy because they circumcised on the Sabbath, which also broke the Law of Moses. *Stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment.*

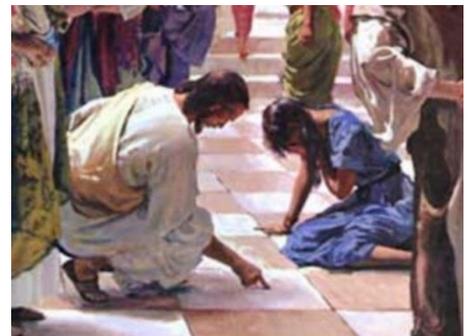
This led to the people asking whether Jesus was the Christ. (In Greek Χριστός Christos, and in Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ Mashiach: the Anointed One). They thought He couldn't be the Christ because they knew where He came from. When Jesus said He came from God they tried to seize Him because saying this was great blasphemy. Some believed, though, saying "*When the Christ comes, will He do more miraculous signs than this Man?*" Jesus said He was only going to be with them for a *short time* before going back to the Father and told the Jewish leaders that where He was going they *cannot come*.

On the last day of the feast Jesus said "*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.*" By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

The major work of the Holy Spirit began after Jesus' death and resurrection when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost (Acts 1:8, 2:1-41.). This work continues today. When the Holy Spirit comes upon us He starts to work in and through us. The moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives brings cleansing, power, love, healing, spiritual refreshment and a deep sense of the presence of God. He always seeks to glorify Jesus within us (John 16:14) We can't be effective as Christians without the Holy Spirit!

When Jesus said this some thought He was the prophet (presumably Elijah); some thought He was the Christ, and some wanted to seize Him. The chief priests wanted to arrest Jesus but Nicodemus asked if He should be condemned *without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?*

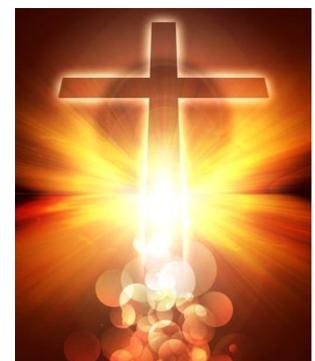
The teachers of the law tried to trap Jesus by bringing a woman caught in adultery to Him. The Law of Moses said she should be stoned but Jesus turned the situation back on the Jewish leaders by saying "*Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her*". No- one could condemn the woman and Jesus told her to "*Go now and leave your life of sin*".



The events in this section all reinforced the fact that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) but the Jewish leaders couldn't (or wouldn't) accept this. They considered Jesus was guilty of blasphemy and became increasingly angry with Him. This developed throughout Jesus' ministry, building up to His trial and crucifixion.

Sixth discourse. Jesus is the light of the world. 8:12-59.

Jesus said *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.* Jesus' authority to say such things was challenged by the Pharisees and He again justified His sayings as being *right*, and *from the Father* who sent Him. If the Pharisees *knew the Father* they would know that what Jesus was saying was true, but because they wouldn't recognise this they would *die in their sins*.



The Pharisees then asked the very important question: *Who are you?* Jesus' answer to this question was revealing! *I am the One I claim to be*, and that *I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me.. The One who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do what pleases Him.*

Jesus was saying that He had come from the Father and was saying and doing what the Father wanted Him to. Knowing and believing Jesus was the way to the Father! Anyone who believed in Him and held to His teaching would *know the truth and the truth will set you free*. No longer would they be a *slave to sin*, because *If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

The Pharisees claimed that they were descendants of Abraham and that God was their Father. Jesus replied by saying that if that was true they would love Him because He *came from God*. Rather they

belonged to their father, *the devil* who is a *liar* with *no truth in him*. The reason they wouldn't believe in Jesus was because they *don't belong to God*. Predictably the Pharisees became even more upset and called Jesus a *Samaritan and demon-possessed*. Who did He think He was to claim He was greater than Abraham! Jesus replied that even Abraham was looking forward toward the day when He would come. *I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born I am*. At this the Pharisees tried to stone Jesus because He had uttered the ultimate blasphemy in their eyes- He was equating Himself with God and using God's name.

"I am" statements in John's gospel.

Whenever Jesus used the words "*I am*" He was saying that He was God. "*I am*" is the same as the word YHWH – Yahweh or Jehovah – the name of God. YHWH means "*the I am, the eternally existent One*".

John 6:51: "***I am*** the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever."

John 8:23: "*You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.*"

John 8:12: Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "***I am*** the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.*"

John 10:9: "***I am*** the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

John 10:11: "***I am*** the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

John 10:36: "*do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"*

John 11:25: Jesus said to her, "***I am*** the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "***I am*** the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

John 15:1: "***I am*** the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."

In this discourse Jesus again strongly affirmed that He is God and that the only way someone can have a relationship with God is through Him. Jesus is still *the light of the world* and the only way that someone can find *the light of life*.

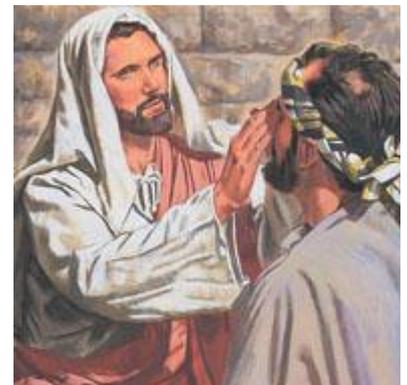
Sixth sign: healing of a blind man. 9:1-41.

Through the sixth sign, John expands on Jesus as *the light of the world* by showing how He brings spiritual light into the lives of those who believe in Him.

When they saw a man blind from birth Jesus' disciples asked Him *Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?* Jesus replied that neither the man or his parents had sinned, but *he was born blind so that the work of God might be displayed in his life*.

Jesus healed the man and his neighbours were amazed. This was on the Sabbath so the Pharisees investigated the healing. The man thought Jesus might have been a prophet, but the Pharisees said He must be a sinner and couldn't be from God because he healed on the Sabbath. The man replied *Whether He is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see! If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing*.

The man returned to Jesus and believed in Him. *Jesus said "For judgment I have come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind"*. The blind man had received his sight and gained spiritual light, while the Pharisees who thought they had spiritual light were actually in darkness!



When bad things happen to good people.

Many Christians ask a similar question to the one that the disciples asked when bad things happen in their lives. e.g. What have I done to deserve this? In this sign Jesus shows that bad things are not necessarily due to sin in our lives. Sometimes they are so that *the work of God might be displayed in our lives*. If you are going through hard times don't allow yourself to be condemned; rather seek to find what God wants to do in and through as a result of the situation. He can change the bad situation into something that brings blessing to you and others. You just might find that *all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purposes*. Romans 8:28.

Seventh discourse: Jesus is the good shepherd. 10:1-42.

John now gives us one of the most beautiful of all the ways that Jesus relates to his people: Jesus is the Good Shepherd. To understand this we need to know how shepherds care for their sheep in Middle Eastern countries. Shepherds are with their sheep 24 hours a day, continually searching for places where there is pasture and water and leading the sheep there. The sheep are totally dependent on their shepherd for food, water and protection. At night the shepherd finds a sheepfold and sleeps in its gate to the sheep are safe. We are Jesus' sheep!



As the Good Shepherd Jesus:

- Knows His sheep *by name*.
- Goes ahead of them, leading and guiding them so all their needs are met.
- Is *the gate* of the sheepfold protecting the sheep from harm. *I am the gate; whoever enters through Me shall be saved.*
- Ensures the sheep have life. *I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.*
- Willingly lays down His life for the sheep (at the Cross, but also in all aspects of daily life).
- Has other sheep that will one day be part of His flock. This probably refers to the Gentiles who along with Jews would be able to become Christians after the Cross. *They too will listen to my voice and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*

This shows that Christians depend entirely on their shepherd, Jesus, but He is more than just an earthly shepherd. Earthly shepherds live to meet the needs of their sheep, but Jesus went far beyond this: He laid down His life for His sheep.

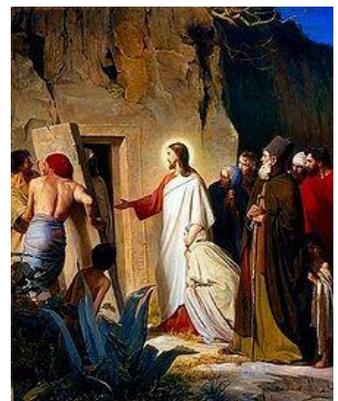
Once again the Jews reacted to Jesus' teaching, saying He was *demon-possessed and raving mad*. At the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) they asked Jesus directly if He was the Christ (Messiah). Jesus said that the miracles He had done showed He was but they wouldn't believe because they were not His sheep. *My sheep listen to my voice: I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of My hand.*

When Jesus said *I and the Father are one* the Jews tried to stone Jesus because of this "blasphemy". Jesus quoted from Psalm 82:6 and showed that it was right for Him to be called God because the Father set Him apart *as His very own and sent Him*. They needed to understand that the Father was in Jesus, and He was in the Father.

At this point in Jesus' ministry *many believed in Him* but the Jewish leaders were getting increasingly angry about Him.

Seventh sign: raising Lazarus from the dead. 11:1-44.

John's final sign is when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany. Jesus had a close relationship with Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. (12:1-11). When Jesus heard Lazarus was sick He explained that this was so *that God may be glorified through it* and didn't hurry to help. When He arrived in Bethany Jesus heard Lazarus had been dead for four days and comforted his sisters by declaring that Lazarus would be resurrected. Jesus said *"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die"*. Martha believed in Jesus saying *"I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world"*. Mary took Jesus to see Lazarus' tomb and *Jesus wept*. Jesus told them to take away the stone and called Lazarus out, saying *"Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?"*



This sign shows Jesus' power over death (which He was later to demonstrate at the Cross) and His readiness to give others the gift of life. Death has no power over Jesus and now, in Him, it has no power over us either. See 1 Corinthians 15:1-57.

Once again some believed in Jesus as a result of seeing Lazarus raised from the dead, and there was also increased opposition from the Jewish leaders. They called a special meeting of the Sanhedrin and plotted to kill Him, but Caiaphas, the high priest, prophesied that it was *better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish*. He was saying that Jesus would *die for the Jewish nation and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one*.

At the time John wrote his gospel this had been fully accomplished. Now *in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*. Galatians 3:28.

11:45 – 21:25. The death and resurrection of Jesus.

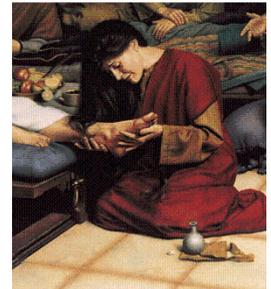
John has now completed his description of Jesus' ministry. In the last section of his gospel he describes the events that culminated in Jesus' resurrection: the plot to kill Jesus; His triumphal entry into Jerusalem; the Last Supper, how Jesus prepared His disciples for the time when He would no longer be with them; Jesus' trial, and then Jesus' death and resurrection.

The plot to kill Jesus. 11:45-57.

With so many people believing in Jesus a meeting of the Sanhedrin was called. The Chief Priests and the Pharisees were concerned that *everyone would believe in Him* and then the Romans would take away their nation. Caiaphas, the High Priest, prophesied that *it was better that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish*. He prophesied that *Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one*. Exactly what Jesus did do! See Hebrews 9:26-28. After this Jesus could not move around freely because the Jewish leaders *had plotted to take His life*.

Jesus anointed at Bethany. 12:1-11.

Six days before the Passover a dinner was held to honour Jesus at Lazarus' house. Mary anointed Jesus with an *expensive perfume* and Judas Iscariot complained that the perfume should have been sold and the *money given to the poor* (although he actually wanted to *help himself* to the money as he was a thief). Jesus replied that it was right that He should be anointed *for the day of His burial*. There would always be poor people but they would not always have Him with them.



The triumphal entry. 12:12-19.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover a *great crowd* met Him *shouting Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!* (Psalm 118:25,26). (Hosanna means *Save, Lord*). Jesus entered the city on a donkey in fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9. The disciples didn't understand that He was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies until after His resurrection.

So many people were following Jesus at this stage that the Pharisees said *Look how the whole world has gone after Him!*



Jesus predicts His death. 12:20-36.

Some Greeks wanted to see Jesus and Jesus allowed it because *the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified*. (Up until this time Jesus had not opened Himself to non-Jewish people. Now He was about to make His salvation available to all people, so the Greek people were welcomed). Jesus explained that He had to die using the illustration of a seed. *Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds*. By His one death He was about to replicate His life by becoming the way of salvation for all. We are to lay down our lives in a similar way. *Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves Me*.

Jesus was troubled by the prospect of what He was about to endure but refused to ask the Father to save Him from it. Above all He wanted to glorify the Father's name, and the Father encouraged Jesus with a voice from heaven saying He had glorified it.

It was now time for the *judgment of this world*. when *The prince of this world* would be driven out as Jesus was *lifted up from the earth* (on the cross), and Jesus would draw *all people to Himself*.

Some in the crowd knew that the Christ, the Son of Man had to be lifted up (Ezekiel 37:25, Daniel 7:14) and asked who the Son of Man was. Jesus replied that they then needed to *trust in the light* while they had it (i.e. trust in Him), so they could become *children of the light*.

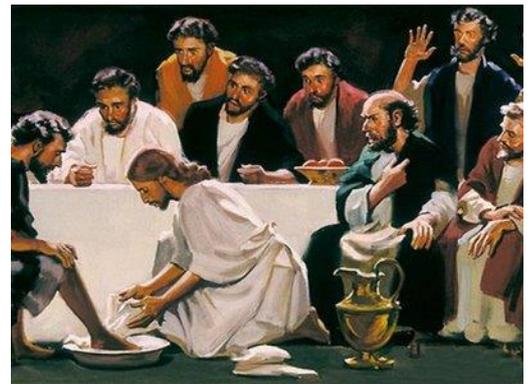
The Jews' unbelief. 12:37-50.

Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs most of the Jews still wouldn't believe (in fulfilment of Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 6:10). Some did believe but were fearful of the Pharisees *for they loved human praise more than praise from God*. Jesus used this to declare His relationship with the Father and that He was the only way of salvation:

- When we believe in Jesus we are also believing in *the One who sent Him* (the Father).
- When we believe in Jesus we come *into the light* and no longer *stay in darkness*.
- When we believe in Jesus we must continue to obey His words. This will protect us from judgment and condemnation.
- When we believe in Jesus it *leads to eternal life*.

The last supper. 13:1-38.

John's account of what went on in the upper room on the night before the Crucifixion is the fullest of all the four Gospels but, strangely, doesn't mention anything about the actual institution of communion. Jesus showed His disciples *the full extent of His love* by washing His disciple's feet. Peter didn't want Jesus to do this (no doubt because he thought Jesus as the master shouldn't be doing a servant's task), but Jesus was showing that He was about to *humble Himself* and be the *servant of all* at the cross. *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you*. Peter, in typical fashion, then asked Jesus *to wash not just my feet but my hands and my head as well*. Jesus was showing us all that *No servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him*.



God has no favourites! We are to lay down our lives and serve others without discrimination, just as Jesus did at the cross.

Jesus then predicted that Judas Iscariot would betray Him (fulfilled in John 18:1-11), and that Peter would deny Him (fulfilled in John 18:27). The time had finally come for Jesus to be glorified: *Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him*. Jesus left His disciples with what has come to be known as the "Royal law" – the way of life that fulfils all of the Jewish law and its commandments. *Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another*.

Jesus prepares His disciples for when He will leave them. 14:1-17:26.

In the next part of his Gospel John describes what Jesus taught His disciples in preparation for the time when He would no longer be with them. Jesus answers a series of questions that were troubling the disciples and tells them that He would send the Holy Spirit to support, help and empower them when He returns to heaven. This section contains some of the most powerful and important teaching in the whole Bible. Paying attention to what Jesus teaches in these chapters will help us to be stronger and more effective Christians today. The main issues Jesus deals with in this section are:

- Jesus is going to prepare a place for us in His *Father's house* (heaven). One day He will *come back* and take us to be with Him, *that you also may be where I am*. We don't need to be anxious about our future if we *Trust in God*, and trust also in Jesus.
- Jesus is the only way that we can have this place in heaven. *I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father, except through Me*.

- Jesus has a special relationship with the Father. He said that *Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.* Jesus didn't speak or act on His own. His words and actions were a reflection of what the Father wanted Him to say and do. (This teaching led, over time, to the concept of the "Trinity". i.e. that God is one God, expressed in three persons – the Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Trinity is fully God, and is part of and equal with, the other members).
- The disciples (and us) are to carry on Jesus' ministry after He goes to heaven. *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*
- For effective ministry we are to do the things that Jesus wants us to do (or even *greater things* than He did!). We need to:
 - love Jesus and obey His teaching.
 - listen to and follow the voice of the Holy Spirit (the *Comforter* or *Counsellor*) who will *teach us all things* and *remind us of everything* Jesus said.
 - have the same intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit that Jesus had with the Father. Jesus *did not speak of His own accord*, but the *Father who sent Him commanded Him what to say and how to say it.*
- Effective ministries only come out of a deep personal relationship with God.
 - God has chosen us so that we will *bear much fruit. fruit that will last.* God is the source of lasting fruit. *He is the vine, we are the branches.*
 - We must *abide in Him* if we are to *bear much fruit.* This means maintaining our relationship with Him through prayer, worship, waiting on Him, feeding from His Word etc.
 - Anything that is not of God is unfruitful and of no lasting value *He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.* We will need pruning from time to time to remove unfruitful aspects from our lives.
 - When we *bear much fruit* it results in God being glorified.
 - Fruitfulness requires us *love one another* as Jesus has loved us and to lay down our lives in obedience to God, and in service of others. *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.* (Which is exactly what Jesus did, and why His ministry was so fruitful!). Love underscores all effective ministry!

Effective ministry is not determined by the methods we use or how hard we work. It occurs when what we do has God as its source; when we hear and obey God's word, and when we are empowered by the Holy Spirit. It starts with God, is communicated to us by God, is empowered by God and results in God's glory.



You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name.

- The world will hate us as we serve God, just as it hated Jesus. We are to be "in the world, but not of it" (Romans 12:2) and expect persecution. *They will treat you this way because of My Name, but they will be without excuse.* Persecution for the sake of Christ is a privilege but some will go astray because of the persecution they receive.
- As we testify about the Lord we will be supported by the Holy Spirit. *When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father - the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father - He will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.*
- The Holy Spirit will
 - *prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in Me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*
 - guide us into *all truth.*
 - glorify Jesus by communicating God's will to us.

These verses show us how we can recognise whether the Holy Spirit is at work at any given time. The Holy Spirit always:

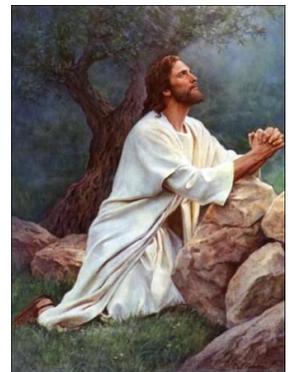
- speaks the truth
- convicts regarding sin, righteousness and judgment to come
- glorifies Jesus.

- Jesus would be going to heaven soon but the disciples would see Him a *little while* afterwards. He was telling them that He would die and be raised from the dead. They would *grieve* but their grief would be *turned to joy*.
- After the resurrection (and the sending of the Holy Spirit) we can *ask* and we *will receive*. The Father will give us what we ask when we ask in Jesus name. i.e. when we ask God for what He has communicated to us by the Holy Spirit as being His will.

At this point the disciples were starting to understand what Jesus was saying about *leaving the world and going back to the Father*, and that He had *come from God*. Jesus encouraged them by saying *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Jesus then prays for the disciples and for Himself in what has come to be known as His "High Priestly Prayer". (17:1-26).

- Jesus prayed for Himself because He recognised that He had completed His work on earth and that the time had come for Him to be glorified and return to the Father. He had made eternal life available for all: *this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*.
- Jesus also prayed for the disciples. He had given them all He could give and they had accepted Him as coming from God. Jesus prayed that they would be protected and that they may *be one* as He was one with the Father. Jesus wanted the disciples to have *the full measure of my joy within them*. They were *in the world* and the world would hate them. Jesus prayed not that God would *take them out of the world* (because their mission was to continue His mission of demonstrating God's love to the world), rather that God would *protect them from the evil one* and sanctify (set them apart) by the truth of God's word. Jesus Himself had been set apart by God to share God's word to the world; now Jesus sent the disciples into the world to do the same.
- Jesus then prayed for all believers. He wanted them to all *be one* as He was one with the Father. Only when believers have *complete unity* will the world see God's glory and know that God sent Jesus to demonstrate the fullness of His love. Presumably Jesus is praying here for the unity of all believers in all time: Jews, Gentiles, male, female, young, old *All who call upon the name of the Lord*. Galatians 3:28. Romans 10:13.



Jesus had *made the Father known to them*, and would continue to make Him known *in order that the love the Father had for Him may be in them* and that He will be in them also.

The last few chapters of John's gospel give an account of Jesus' arrest, trial, death and resurrection. John was present throughout these events so his descriptions are more detailed and personal than those in the other gospels.

Jesus' arrest and trial. 18:1- 19:16.

- As Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane Judas Iscariot brought a group of soldiers to arrest Him. Jesus tried to protect the other disciples who were present but Peter took a sword and cut off the right ear of the High Priest's servant. Jesus told Peter to put his sword away and healed the man's ear (Luke 22:51), saying *Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?* Jesus was willing to obey His Father even though He knew He would suffer and lose His life.
- Peter had the opportunity to acknowledge he was a follower of Jesus, but denied Him three times. When he did this the cock crowed, just as Jesus had predicted. (John 13:38).
- Jesus was taken before Annas, the father in law of Caiaphas, the High Priest who had prophesied that *it would be good if one man died for the people*. Annas questioned Jesus then sent Him to Caiaphas who took Him before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor. Pilate could find no fault in Jesus and wanted the Jews to deal with Him according to their law. They couldn't execute Jesus so stirred up the crowd to influence Pilate. When Pilate asked if He was the King of the Jews Jesus replied that His kingdom *is from another place* (i.e. the Kingdom of God) and that *everyone on the side of truth* would listen to Him and know this is true.



- Pilate could find no basis for a charge against Jesus and wanted to release Him. The crowd cried out for Barabbas to be released and Jesus to be crucified so Pilate had Jesus flogged. The soldiers mocked Jesus *as they twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head*. Pilate still wanted to release Jesus but finally as the crowd cried *Crucify Him*, he *handed Him over to be crucified*. This was on the day of Preparation of the Passover week, about the sixth hour.

Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial. 19:16-42.

Jesus carried His cross out to *Golgotha, the place of the skull*, just outside the walls of Jerusalem and there was crucified along with two criminals. Pilate put a notice above Jesus' head saying He was *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*. The chief priests wanted this to say Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews but Pilate wouldn't change it.



John highlights specific aspects of Jesus' death that add to the information in the other gospels, and that show how Jesus fulfilled different Old Testament prophecies:

- Before the crucifixion the soldiers divided Jesus' clothing in fulfilment of Psalm 22:18.
- Jesus commended His mother Mary to the care of the disciple whom He loved (i.e. John).
- Jesus took a drink of wine vinegar in fulfilment of Psalm 69:21.
- As Jesus died and *gave up His spirit*, He called out "*It is finished*" showing that He had finished the work of redemption that the Father had sent Him to the earth to achieve.
- The soldiers had to make sure the three prisoners were dead because it was nearly the Sabbath. They broke the legs of the two criminals but didn't break Jesus' legs in fulfilment of Psalm 34:20.
- A soldier pierced Jesus' side, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. This was in fulfilment of Isaiah 53:5 and Zechariah 12:10.
- Nicodemus prepared Jesus' body for burial, and He was buried in Joseph of Arimathea's new grave in fulfilment of Isaiah 53:9.

At this, the darkest moment in history Jesus wonderfully fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah's 53: *Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* Isaiah 53:1-12

Jesus' resurrection and appearances to His disciples. John 20:1-21:25.

Early on the first day of the week (Sunday), while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. She saw the tomb was open and ran and got Peter and John. When they entered the tomb they found Jesus grave clothes but Jesus was not there. They saw and believed but still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead. Jesus then appeared to Mary Magdalene and she recognised Him when He called her name: Mary. Jesus told her He was soon to return to the Father and Mary ran and told the disciples that she had seen Jesus. Jesus then appeared to all of the disciples (except Thomas) and showed them His hands and side. They were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

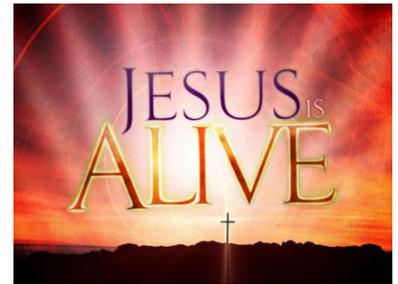
Jesus commissioned the disciples and sent them out to carry on doing what the Father had sent Him to do. He *breathed on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone their sins they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven"*. (The disciples then had to wait a few weeks until the power of the Holy Spirit came on them at Pentecost and they began to fulfil this commission. Acts 1:4,5; 2:1-4).

Next Jesus appeared to Thomas. Initially he doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead but when Jesus invited him to touch where the spear had pierced His side Thomas believed, saying *My Lord and my God*. Jesus used to this to show that belief in Him was the way to blessing, rather than having to get undisputable proof. *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

Jesus also appeared to the disciples as they were fishing. They had not caught any fish and He told them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. They could hardly haul in the catch. Once again they recognised that Jesus was alive and shared breakfast with Him.

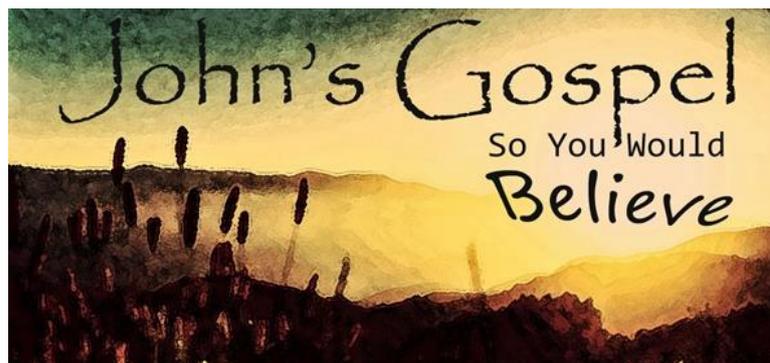
Paul says that Jesus also made other resurrection appearances: *Then He appeared to more than 500 hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me.* 1 Corinthians 15:6-8



Jesus then asked Peter three times whether he loved Him. *Simon, son of John, do you love Me?* Each time Peter replied that he did love Jesus and Jesus encouraged him to feed and care for His lambs and sheep. Peter was hurt when Jesus asked the third time (because he had denied Jesus three times), but Jesus turned this around by encouraging Peter to follow Him in a special way: by being the initial leader of the early Christian believers.

Peter then asked about John, and Jesus effectively said that Peter needed to follow Jesus for himself, and that He would look after John, including how and when John would die. (From this a rumour spread that John wouldn't die, but Jesus didn't say that).

John finishes his gospel with a typically personal statement: *This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*



Discussion questions

John wrote his Gospel (including John 1:14) some 60 years after Jesus' resurrection. Why was it so important for John to write his Gospel in the way that he did? What had changed in the Church and in society over those 60 years that meant John needed to write as he did?

How does John's gospel complement the three synoptic gospels? In what ways is it similar to them? In what ways is it different from them? How can you explain apparent clashes between John's gospel and the three synoptic gospels?

John portrays Jesus as the *Word become flesh*. What is the meaning and importance of this statement?

- for the early Christians?
- for those living in the 1st Century with a Gnostic philosophy?
- for those living in the 21st Century who may or may not know they are influenced by Gnostic philosophies?
- for Christians today?

Describe the relationship between the Father, the Son (i.e. Jesus as a man), and the Holy Spirit, as shown in John's gospel. How did this relationship affect Jesus' ministry while He was on earth? What can we learn from it about how we can be effective in our own ministries?

What were the seven signs and seven discourses that John describes in his gospel? Why did John only include these aspects of Jesus' ministry in his gospel? What can we learn from each of them?

What does John's gospel say about salvation? What is salvation? How can someone be saved? What must we do to be saved? What are the results of salvation? What happens if someone is not saved? What must we tell others about salvation?

How can we be effective in continuing Jesus' ministry as described in John's gospel? What resources do we have available to us? What responsibilities do we have to do this - before God and before those who are in need, or those outside of Christ?

List all the evidences in John's gospel that show Jesus rose from the dead. Why was it so important for John to describe these evidences? Why is it so important that we understand and share these evidences?

What have you learned from your study of John's gospel? How will you apply this in your life in the future?