



INTRODUCTION TO JOHN

BACKGROUND

The author of the Gospel according to John repeatedly refers to himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (see 13:23; 21:20, 24). This disciple is believed to be John, one of three fishermen who formed Jesus’ inner circle. John and his brother, James, the sons of Zebedee and Salome, were called the “sons of thunder” (Mk 3:17) by Jesus because of their fiery temperaments. Having been an ardent follower of John the Baptist, John was among Jesus’ original disciples. As he died Jesus entrusted his own mother to John’s care. John played a prominent role in the early church, as evidenced in the Acts of the Apostles and in the writing of his Epistles and visionary book of Revelation.

MESSAGE

It seems John addresses the Gospel to a wide audience, both Jewish and Gentile. Whereas the first three Gospels focus on events in the life of Jesus, John emphasizes the meaning behind those events. John’s Gospel is not so much biographical as it is a theological argument; John uses every event, miracle, and title to

show that Jesus is God. Before Jesus took on flesh, he was “with God” and “was God” from “the beginning” (1:1). John does not relate Jesus’ parables as much as extended accounts of his encounters: a miracle at a wedding, Nicodemus coming by night, the conversion of the Samaritan woman, and the raising of Lazarus. John shows Jesus giving metaphoric discourses: “I am the bread of life” (6:35); “I am the light of the world” (8:12); “I am the good shepherd” (10:11). Jesus’ discourses to and prayer for his disciples have edified and heartened the church of Christ throughout the ages. Toward the end of the book, John reveals his purpose for writing: “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (20:31).

TIME

The probable range for the writing of this Gospel is A.D. 60–90. It was written after the Synoptic Gospels, but before John’s three Epistles and Revelation. John was one of the last surviving eyewitnesses of Jesus’ earthly ministry. Tradition says that John wrote this Gospel in Ephesus.

OUTLINE

I. The Son of God Arrives

- A. A prologue 1:1–18
- B. Early ministry 1:19–2:25

II. The Son of God Ministers

- A. A Pharisee, a Samaritan woman 3:1–4:42
- B. Healings, teachings, miracles 4:43–10:42
- C. Raising Lazarus 11:1–57

III. The Son of God Dies to Save

- A. The final week 12:1–50
- B. The Last Supper 13:1–17:26
- C. Jesus’ arrest and trial 18:1–19:16
- D. The crucifixion and burial 19:17–42

IV. The Son of God Rises Again

- A. Jesus is alive 20:1–31
- B. Breakfast on the beach 21:1–25

CHAPTER 1

1 Gn 1:1; Jn 17:5; Phil 2:6;
1 Jn 1:1-2; 5:7

3 Gn 1:1, 26;
Jn 1:10; 1 Cor 8:6

4 Jn 5:26;
8:12; 9:5;
11:25; 14:6

6 Mal 3:1; Jn 1:33; 3:28

7 Jn 1:19; Acts 19:4

8 Jn 1:20

9 Is 49:6; Jn 1:4; 12:46;
1 Jn 2:8

10 1 Jn 3:1

11 Jn 3:32

12 Jn 3:18; Gal 3:26; 2 Pt 1:4;
1 Jn 3:1, 23

13 Jn 3:3; Jas 1:18; 1 Pt 1:3;
23; 1 Jn 3:9

14 Jn 1:1; 2:11;
14:6; Gal 4:4;
1 Tm 3:16

15 Mt 3:11

16 Eph 1:23;
Col 1:19

17 Jn 1:14;
7:19; 8:32;
14:6

18 Mt 11:27;
Lk 10:22; Jn 6:46; Col 1:15;
1 Tm 6:16

19 Jn 10:24

21 Mt 11:14;
16:14; Jn 1:25

23 Mt 3:3;
Mk 1:3

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

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

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

1:12 ^aOr, the right, or, privilege

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.

16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

JOHN'S WITNESS TO HIMSELF

19 And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

22 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

23 He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

1:21 ^bOr, a prophet?

ON SCRIPTURE

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. —John 1:1

An intelligent, plain man, untaught in the truths of Christianity, coming upon this text, would likely conclude that John meant to teach that it is the nature of God to speak, to communicate His thoughts to others. And he would be right. A word is a medium by which thoughts are expressed, and the application of the term to the eternal Son leads us to believe that self-expression is inherent in the Godhead, that God is forever seeking to speak Himself out to His creation. The whole Bible supports this idea. God is speaking. Not God spoke, but *God is speaking*. He is, by His nature, continuously articulate. He fills the world with His speaking voice.

One of the great realities with which we have to deal is the voice of God in His world. The briefest and only satisfying cosmogony is this: "He spake, and it was done" (Psalm 33:9). The *why* of natural law is the loving voice of God immanent in His creation. And this word of God which brought all worlds into being cannot be understood to mean the Bible, for it is not a written or printed word at all, but the expression of the will of God is the breath of God filling the world with living potentiality. The voice of God is the most powerful force in nature, indeed the only force in nature, for all energy is here only because the power-filled Word is being spoken.

—The Pursuit of God

24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;

27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.

28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

JOHN'S WITNESS TO JESUS

29 ¶ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.

31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

ANDREW AND PETER FOLLOW JESUS

35 ¶ Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, **What seek ye?** They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

39 He saith unto them, **Come and see.** They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

40 One of the two which heard John

1:29 ^cOr, beareth 1:38 ^dOr, abidest 1:39 ^ethat was two hours before night

CHALLENGES

And then the heavenly mindedness of Jesus, oh think of that! He was with the Father, in the bosom of the Father while He was on earth. He said, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). Notice it says is, not was—He never left the bosom of the Father while He was on earth. The only time He left it was in that awful wrenching agony when God turned away from Him on the cross that He might die for mankind. But never at any other time.

He talked about the other world: "I am from above" (John 8:23); "I came down from heaven" (6:38). He lived in the heart of God and the other world and the world above was the world which He inhabited. And think how earthly His people are and how worldly. They talk of furniture, TV sets, baseball, football, automobiles, picture windows, split-level houses, politics—anything but heaven and God.

Then we want to pray, "Draw me nearer, nearer." You're as near as you can get as far as distance is concerned. But He can't manifest Himself because there is a dissimilarity of nature. You have enough of His nature that you're justified and regenerated, but you haven't enough to perfect the fellowship. The perfection of the fellowship—this is what we need so desperately.

—The Attributes of God I

1:41 ^fOr, the Anointed 1:42 ^gOr, Peter

1:41 ^fOr, the Anointed 1:42 ^gOr, Peter

1:41 ^fOr, the Anointed 1:42 ^gOr, Peter

PHILIP AND NATHANAEL FOLLOW JESUS

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, **Follow me.**

44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

26 Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Acts 1:5

27 Mt 3:11; Mk 1:7; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:15, 30

28 Jn 10:40

29 Is 53:7; Jn 1:36; 1 Pt 1:19; Rv 5:6

30 Jn 1:15, 27

31 Lk 1:17

32 Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22

33 Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16; Jn 3:5; Acts 1:5

34 Mt 4:3; Jn 1:49

36 Jn 1:29

38 Jn 1:49; 3:2, 26; 6:25; 18:4

41 Jn 4:25

42 Mt 16:17-18; Jn 21:15-17; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22

44 Mt 10:3; 11:21; Jn 12:21

45 Mt 2:23; Lk 3:23; 4:22; 24:27; Jn 21:2

46 Jn 7:41-42, 52

47 Ps 32:2;
73:1; Rom
9:4, 6

48 Jn 2:25

49 Zec 9:9; Mt
2:2; 27:42; Jn
1:34

51 Gn 28:12;
Ez 1:1; Mt
3:16; Lk 3:21;
Acts 7:56

CHAPTER 2

1 Jn 1:43; 4:46;
21:2

4 Jn 7:6, 30;
8:20; 13:1

6 Jn 3:25

9 Jn 4:46

11 Jn 1:14; 3:2

12 Mt 4:13;
12:46

13 Lk 2:41; Jn
2:23; 5:1; 6:4;
11:55

14 Mk 11:15;
Lk 19:45-46

16 Lk 2:49

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, **Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!**

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, **Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.**

49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

50 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.**

51 And he saith unto him, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.**

WATER MADE INTO WINE

2 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 Jesus saith unto her, **Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.**

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do *it*.

6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

7 Jesus saith unto them, **Fill the water-**

pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, **Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.** And they bare *it*.

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

12¶ After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

13¶ And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting;

15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

16 And said unto them that sold doves, **Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.**

REFLECTIONS

Believing, then, is directing the heart's attention to Jesus. It is lifting the mind to "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29), and never ceasing that beholding for the rest of our lives. At first this may be difficult, but it becomes easier as we look steadily at His wondrous person, quietly and without strain. Distractions may hinder, but once the heart is committed to Him, after each brief excursion away from Him, the attention will return again and rest upon Him like a wandering bird coming back to its window.

I would emphasize this one committal, this one great volitional act which establishes the heart's intention to gaze forever upon Jesus. God takes this intention for our choice and makes what allowances He must for the thousand distractions which beset us in this evil world. He knows that we have set the direction of our hearts toward Jesus, and we can know it too, and comfort ourselves with the knowledge that a habit of soul is forming which will become, after a while, a sort of spiritual reflex requiring no more conscious effort on our part.

—*The Pursuit of God*

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

18 ¶ Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

19 Jesus answered and said unto them, **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

23 ¶ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

NICODEMUS VISITS JESUS

3 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou

art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born ^aagain, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

6 **That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

7 **Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born ^bagain.**

8 **The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, **Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?**

11 **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.**

12 **If I have told you earthly things, and**

3:3 ^aOr, from above 3:7 ^bOr, from above

17 Ps 69:9

18 Jn 6:30

19 Mt 27:40; Mk 14:58; 15:29

21 Jn 1:14;

1 Cor 6:19;

Col 2:9

22 Lk 24:7-8;

Jn 2:17; 12:16;

14:26

23 Jn 3:2

24 Mt 9:4; Jn 5:42; 6:15, 64

CHAPTER 3

1 Jn 19:39

2 Mt 22:16; Jn 1:38; 3:26; Acts 2:22; 10:38

3 Jn 1:13; 3:5-6;

2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15

5 Ez 36:25-27;

Mk 16:16; Jn 3:3; Acts 2:38;

Eph 5:26

6 Gn 6:12; Jb 14:4

7 Jn 3:3; 5:28

8 Ez 37:9;

1 Cor 2:11;

12:11

9 Jn 6:52, 60

11 Jn 1:18;

7:16; 12:49;

14:24

ON SCRIPTURE

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. —John 3:3

The great God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, said, "This is My name throughout all generations, My memorial forever: I AM THAT I AM. I never was created; I was not made, I AM. I made you for My love. I made you to worship, honor, and glorify Me. I made you to love you and hold you and give Myself to you. But you turned away from Me. And you made yourself god and you put yourself on that throne." That is sin.

That's why the Scripture says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What does "born again" mean? Among other things, it means a renewal, a rebirth, but it also means getting off the throne and putting God on it. It means that the self-existent One is recognized for who He is.

Reverently and humbly, I kneel before His Son, who died and rose and lives and pleads, and I say, "Oh, Lord Jesus, I give up. I'm no longer going to sit on the throne and run my own life. I'm no longer going to trust in my own righteousness, which is only a filthy rag. I'm no longer going to believe in my good works or in my religious activities. I'm going to trust Thee, the God of grace, the God who gave Thy Son to die." And so the new birth takes place and I trust the Lord Jesus Christ, the Man in the glory, my Savior and Lord. And thus I am saved.

—The Attributes of God II

CHALLENGES

When John 3:16–17 speaks of the world, it does not mean that God just loved our geography. It does not mean that God so loved the snow-capped mountains or the sun-kissed meadows or the flowing streams or the great peaks of the north.

God may love all of these. I think He does. You cannot read the book of Job or the Psalms without knowing that God is in love with the world He made.

— *The Radical Cross*

13 Prv 30:4;
Jn 1:18; 6:38;
Acts 2:34;
Rom 10:6

14 Jn 8:28

15 Jn 3:16, 36;
6:40; 20:31

16 Mt 9:13;
Jn 1:18; Rom
5:8; 8:32; 1 Jn
4:9–10

17 Lk 19:10; Jn
5:45; 6:29, 57;
1 Jn 4:14

18 Mk 16:16;
Jn 5:24; Rom
8:1

ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

16 For God so loved the world, that he

gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

JOHN'S TESTIMONY TO JESUS

22 After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa; and

3:20 ^cOr, *discovered*

ON SCRIPTURE

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. — John 3:16

The mercy of God has never been any more than now, and the mercy of God will never be any less than now. Don't imagine that when the day of judgment comes God will turn off His mercy as the sun goes behind a cloud or as you turn off a spigot. Don't think for a minute that the mercy of God will cease to be. The mercy of God will never be any less than it is now, because the infinite cannot cease to be infinite, and the perfect cannot admit an imperfection. And again, nothing that occurs can increase the mercy of God or diminish the mercy of God or alter the quality of the mercy of God.

For instance, the cross of Christ. When Jesus died on the cross the mercy of God did not become any greater. It could not become any greater, for it was already infinite. We get the odd notion that God is showing mercy because Jesus died. No—Jesus died because God is showing mercy. It was the mercy of God that gave us Calvary, not Calvary that gave us mercy. If God had not been merciful there would have been no incarnation, no babe in the manger, no man on a cross, and no open tomb.

God has mercy enough to enfold the whole universe in His heart, and nothing anybody ever did could diminish the mercy of God. A man can walk out from under and away from the mercy of God as Israel did and as Adam and Eve did for a time, as the nations of the world have done, and as Sodom and Gomorrah did. We can make the mercy of God inoperative toward us by our conduct, since we are free moral agents. But that doesn't change or diminish the power of the Word of God nor the mercy of God. And it doesn't alter the quality of it.

The intercession of Christ at the right hand of God does not increase the mercy of God toward His people. If God were not already merciful, there would be no intercession of Christ at the right hand of God. And if God is merciful at all then He is infinitely merciful. It is impossible for the mediatorship of Jesus at the right hand of the Father to make the mercy of God any more than it is now.

—*The Attributes of God I*