

## The Preacher and John's Gospel

John's Gospel is a favourite for many believers, often used as an entry point for non-believers, yet is not so popular for preachers. Unlike the synoptic Gospels, John does not offer countless short narratives and simple parables. Yet this unique Gospel offers so much to preachers. Together we will find our hearts warmed as we encounter some of the unique features of John's great portrait of Christ.

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*John's gospel is his witness to Jesus, the divine Messiah,  
who was sent to make known the glorious love of the Father,  
shine as light in a dark sinful world,  
and give eternal life to those that will believe in Him.*

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### I. Introduction

#### A. Jesus' mission seen in chapter 1: **The one who makes the Father known**

Background: Exodus 33:11; 18-23 and 34:5-8

<b>Exodus 33-34</b>	<b>John 1:14-18</b>
"Show me your glory" (33:18)	We have seen his glory (1:14)
When Moses entered the tent...(33:9)	The Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) among us (1:14)
The LORD used to speak with Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. (33:11)	The only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known (1:18b)
"You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." (33:20)	No one has ever seen God (1:18)
"I will make all my goodness pass before you . . . merciful and gracious" (33:19 & 34:6)	From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace (1:16)
Abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (34:6)	Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (1:17)

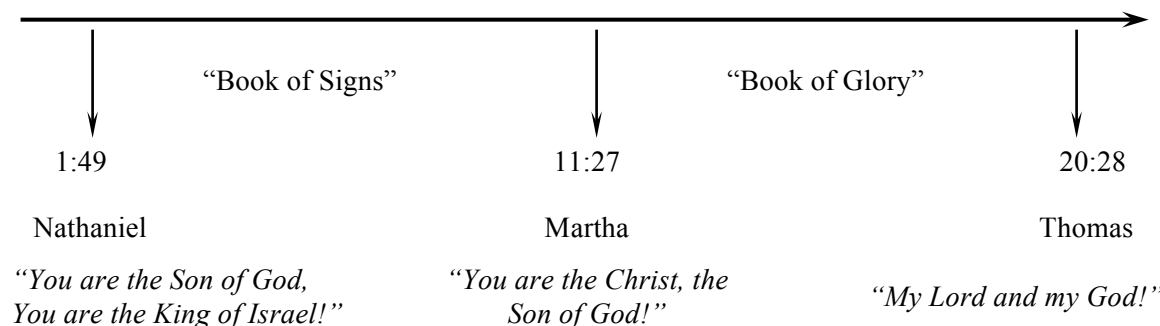
**B. Jesus' mission seen in chapter 1: Who invites us to join him in relationship to the Father:**

1:12 – the right to become children of God. (See also John 17:20-26)

**C. John's purpose statement (20:30-31)**

*<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written 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.*

**D. Simple overview – 3 testimonies**



## **II. Plot & Characters**

**A. Plot**

It is possible to recognize a geographic progression in the gospel.

Chs. 1-4 – Cana to Cana cycle, with Jerusalem Passover visit in 2

Chs. 5-9 – Jerusalem Sabbath in 5, Passover approaching in Galilee in 6, Jerusalem for feast of Tabernacles in 7/8,

Chs. 10-12 – Feast of Dedication in 10, return to Jerusalem in 11, for Passover in 12

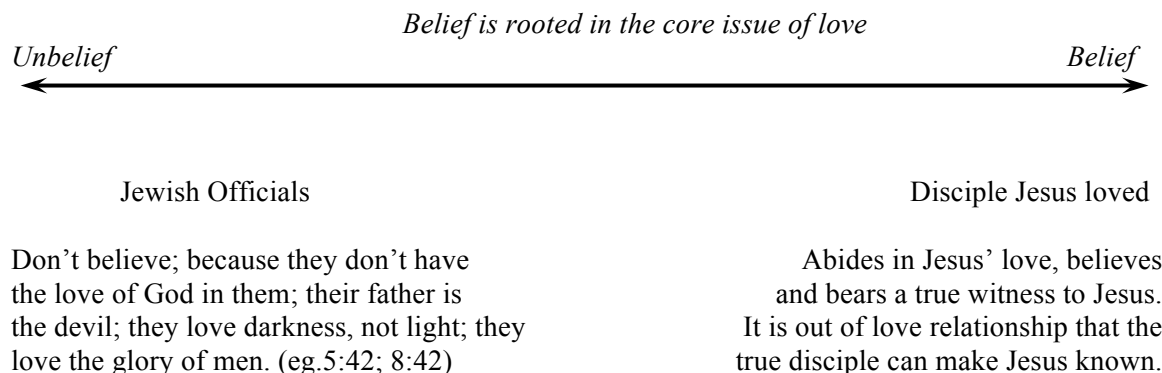
Chs. 13-20 – Upper Room and Passion Narrative

However, the gospel is essentially episodic – after the prologue where the reader is given key information, the gospel advances from one episode to the next. The tension throughout is the conflict between belief and unbelief.

*While the dialogues slow down the action, they intensify conflict and characterization and provide space for thematic development. . . . The affective power of the narrative, however, is the most important feature of its plot. By showing Jesus confronting a wide variety of individuals in everyday situations, the gospel dramatizes the message that the Word has become flesh and dwelt among us. At a wedding and a well, at the temple among the religious and at a pool among the wretched and lame, ordinary persons come step by step to recognize glory enfleshed.*

(Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 97)

## B. Characters



Array of responses	Examples
Rejection	The Jews; brothers of Jesus (never moving beyond unbelief)
Acceptance without open commitment	Joseph of Arimathea; Nicodemus; perhaps Pilate
Acceptance of Jesus as a worker of signs and wonders	"The disciples" in 2:22-25; 6:66; the lame man; parents of blind man
Belief in Jesus' words	Samaritan woman; royal official; blind man (faith has positive and negative consequences\0
Commitment in spite of misunderstandings	Nathanael (holds origin against Jesus); Peter (cannot accept Jesus' death); Thomas (resurrection); Philip (several misunderstandings); Mary & Martha (don't understand resurrection power now); Mary Magdalene (resurrection).
Paradigmatic discipleship (including those who overcome misunderstandings)	Several minor characters, disciples once misunderstandings overcome and especially the ideal disciple – the one Jesus loved.
Defection	Judas; disciples who withdraw (6:66); even Peter (restored)

*See Culpepper, p145-148*

### III. Outline of John

		Sections	Comments
	1	Prologue— Testimonies of Jesus' Identity	John begins with a fantastic 18 verse prologue showing the divine origin and mission of Jesus, followed by the testimonies of John the Baptist, Andrew, Philip and Nathanael (see 1:49)
Book of Signs	2-10	Swirling triple theme: Deity, Belief & Life	<p><b>2 – &lt;DEITY&gt;</b> The first sign manifesting His glory and the cleansing of My Father's house, asked about His authority</p> <p><b>3 – &lt;BELIEF&gt;</b> Discussions with Nicodemus about faith (3:14-18) John Baptist's conclusion? Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life (3:36)</p> <p><b>4 – &lt;LIFE&gt;</b> Woman at the well is offered living water, royal official's son is given life (4:14; 50)</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>5 – &lt;DEITY&gt;</b> After healing at pool Jesus disputes with leaders because He made Himself equal with God, the giver of life (5:18) Jesus was sent by the Father (5:37) and present in the Old Testament (5:38), but they loved other glory!</p> <p><b>6 – &lt;BELIEF&gt;</b> Feeding of the five thousand and a discourse about belief, but many leave through unbelief (6:36, 40, 64)</p> <p><b>7 – &lt;LIFE&gt;</b> At the feast of tabernacles Jesus again offers living water (the Spirit – 7:37-39)</p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>8 – &lt;DEITY&gt;</b> Jesus disputes with the Pharisees, thrice declares His own deity and almost stoned for it (8:24,28, 58)</p> <p><b>9 – &lt;BELIEF&gt;</b> Jesus heals the blind man, then asks, "do you believe?" (9:35-38)</p> <p><b>10 – &lt;LIFE&gt;</b> Jesus the good shepherd came to give life, is rejected by Israel, but gives life to those who do believe in Him (10:10, 11, 15, 17, 28)</p>
	11	Climax in 6 <sup>th</sup> Sign (7 <sup>th</sup> stated in ch.2 but still to come!)	As Jesus comes to Bethany, the 6 <sup>th</sup> sign brings the climax of the three-theme cycle. Before Jesus raises Lazarus, He says to Martha, <b><i>"I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me will live."</i></b> Her response? <b><i>"You are the Christ, the Son of God!"</i></b> (11:25-27). This miracle sets up the opposition that pursues Him to the cross of Calvary.

<b>Book of Glory</b>	12	Jesus Enters Jerusalem; Predicts Glory	With opposition now at a high level of intensity, Jesus enters Jerusalem with regal dignity. He predicts His own death, but not in terms of failure, but rather of glory!
	13-17	Upper Room – Preparing the Disciples	Jesus serves the disciples, teaches the disciples and then prays for the disciples before laying down his life for them. He prepares them to serve, to suffer, to receive another counselor. Again, the divine nature of Christ is noteworthy (13:3; 14:6; 17:24). Chapter 17 is the true “Lord’s Prayer” which gives profound insight into the inner-dynamic of the Trinity and the mission of the Son.
	18-19	The Glory of the Cross	Jesus is betrayed, tried and crucified. Jesus goes to the cross not as a failure, but as the Greater Son of David, the king in regal majesty. Jesus is on trial, but he tries the religious and political authorities. This is not failure, but glory!
	20-21	Resurrection of the Christ & Epilogue	Jesus is raised from the dead, with the resurrection chapter culminating in Thomas’ great confession, perhaps the climax of the book (20:28). Chapter 21 forms an epilogue to the gospel with the reinstatement of Peter for ministry.

### Appendix

#### A. Seven “Signs” in John’s Gospel:

1. Water into wine (2:1-11 → 2:11 )
2. Healing official’s son (4:46-54 → 4:54 )
3. Healing at Pool of Bethesda (5:1-18 → 6:2 )
4. Feeding the 5000 (6:5-14 → 6:14, 26 )
5. Healing blind man (9:1-7 → 9:16 )
6. Raising dead Lazarus (11:1-45 → 12:18 )
7. The resurrection (20:1-29 → 2:18-22 / then conclusion of signs – 20:30-31)

#### B. Seven “I am’s” in John’s Gospel

1. I am the Bread of Life (6:35)
2. I am the Light of the world (8:12)
3. I am the Gate for the sheep (10:7, 9)
4. I am the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. I am the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. I am the Way and the Truth and the Life (14:6)
7. I am the true Vine (15:1, 5)

### C. Seven “I am” Absolutes in John’s Gospel

1. Open declaration of identity as Messiah to woman at the well, “I AM, the one who speaks to you!” (4:24)
2. Self-declaration to disciples in the boat, “I AM, do not be afraid” (6:20)
3. “Unless you believe that I AM, you will die in your sins” (8:24)
4. “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM” (8:28)
5. “Before Abraham was, I AM” (8:58)
6. “I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I AM.” (13:19)
7. Triple statement of identity causing worship-like response. (18:5,6,8)

Note: John’s seven “I am’s” describe Jesus for the believers, while these absolute “I am’s” state more directly who he is in himself, his divine identity. It is fascinating to note that although our minds may go to Exodus 3:14 for the “I am who I am” reference, John may have been thinking of the “I am he” references in the OT.

In the Greek LXX we have Deut.32:39; Isa.41:4; 43:10, 25; 45:18; 46:4; 51:12. In the Hebrew MT we have Deut.32:39; Isa.41:4; 43:10; 43:13; 46:4; 48:12; 52:6 plus an emphatic double form twice in 43:25 and 51:12 . . . so it is either 7 or 9 repetitions, just as John’s account can be counted as seven or nine depending on the double repetition in chapter 18! “Thus the complete (sevenfold) assertion of YHWH’s unique and exclusive divinity made in the Hebrew Bible is repeated by Jesus as the one who achieves the eschatological salvation and the universal recognition of YHWH’s unique divinity that it entails.”

See Bauckham’s *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, p247.

### ***Suggested Readings:***

Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple* (Baker, 2007)  
D.A.Carson, *John: Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1990)  
Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Fortress, 1983)  
A.E.Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (SPCK, 1976)  
Andreas Kostenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters* (Zondervan, 2009)  
Francis Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John* (Baker, 2013)  
Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Eerdmans, 1982)

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