

It is in John, for example, that we have the record of our Lord's interviews with Nathanael (John 1:47-51); Nicodemus (John 3); the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4); the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11).

Through both His miracles and messages, John demonstrates that our Lord was pursuing His chief purpose in coming into this world - "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

[3] PASSION ... THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD; 13:1-21:25.

This section of the Book presents the events of the Passion Week, culminating in Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead - the final and climactic sign of His glory.

Here we encounter:

- (a) Instructions by the Son of God**, 13:1-16:33;
- (b) Intercession of the Son of God**, 17:1-26;
- (c) Crucifixion of the Son of God**, 18:1-19:42;
- (d) Resurrection of the Son of God**, 20:1-21:25.

John's closeness to Jesus allowed him to portray the events of Christ's final week on earth in an extremely passionate manner. Famous theologian, B.B. Warfield, has said: "In the highest and best sense of the word, John's is the Gospel of passion. ... The Gospel could not have been written save by him who leaned on Jesus' breast. It can be understood only by those who lean on Jesus' breast."

So full of the glory and grace of Christ is this fourth Gospel that, as we travel through it, the sentiments of John Newton seem to fill the air:

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

Dear name! the Rock on which I build,
My Shield and Hiding-Place;
My never-failing Treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.

BIBLE STUDY NOTES by Rev. Ian Brown (Londonderry FPC) 2005.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN ... OVERVIEW

Though John never claimed that his Gospel provided a complete picture of Christ (John 21:25), he is unquestionably the greatest painter for whom the Lord Jesus ever sat.

1. UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THIS GOSPEL.

- There is no mention by John of the birth and early years of Jesus.
- Nor is there any description of His baptism, no mention of His temptation, or of His transfiguration, or of His ascension.
- Many of the events related in John are found nowhere else in Scripture: he first miracle at Cana, the first cleansing of the temple, Nicodemus' visit with the Lord, Lazarus' resurrection, etc..
- Over against 20 miracles that are recorded in Matthew, 18 in Mark, and 21 in Luke, there are only 8 in John (cf. John 20:30).
- Whereas the first three Gospels major on describing events in the life of Christ, John emphasised the meaning of these events; e.g. all four Gospels record the feeding of the 5000, but only John records Jesus' sermon on 'The Bread of Life' which followed the miracle when He interpreted it for the people (John 6:32-59).

2. UNIVERSAL APPEAL OF THIS GOSPEL.

John's beautiful and compelling portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ is one that demands global interest. While the other three evangelists appealed to more restricted audiences (Matthew wrote primarily to Jews, Mark and Luke to Greeks), John's Gospel has a universal emphasis!

- His appeal to the Jews centred on the truth that Jesus not only fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, but He also perfectly fitted its famous majestic word-pictures, the types.

For example, John emphasised how Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29), the Ladder from heaven to earth (John 1:51), the New Temple (John 2:19-21), the Serpent lifted up (John 3:14), and the Bread of God that came down from heaven (John 6:35ff) – all pictures that would have been instantly recognisable to every Jew who knew his Torah (Old Testament Scriptures).

- We know that John also had Gentiles in mind, because he often "interpreted" Jewish words or customs for his readers (John 1:38, 41&42; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13&17; 20:16).

Even from his opening sentence in John 1:1, it is apparent that he is making his appeal to both Jews and Gentiles ("In the beginning" (Jews); "the Word - Logos" (Greeks)).

Thus John's Gospel issues a global call, proclaiming to both Jew and Gentile that eternal life is to be found in Christ (cf. John 1:4).

This plainly evangelistic purpose of the fourth Gospel is the reason why new converts are often advised to begin their daily reading of the Bible with the Gospel of John.

[1] PROLOGUE ... THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD; John 1:1-18.

John crafts his introduction superbly. He lifts his brush for portraiture, applies several bold strokes, and while he brilliantly paints One who is "The Word" (1:1&14), "the Light" (1:4-9), the Creator of the world (1:10), and the Saviour of souls (1:12) ... still we are not told precisely who it is that John is speaking about. Not until the end of this section (1:17), does John plainly identify his great subject as our Lord Jesus Christ: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

With this flourish, John has sketched the plain outline of his portrait, for the one who is to be the subject of his Gospel, the one John knew personally, is none other than the Son of God who is God Himself. The first few majestic sweeps of colour onto this Gospel canvas have revealed that Jesus is God!

This is not merely the great disclosure in the introduction to the Gospel of John, it is what the Gospel of John is all about, start to finish! The book begins (John 1:1) with the assertion that "Jesus is God" and it ends - or nearly ends - with the statement "Jesus is God" (John 20:28), and in between, we are treated to plenty of demonstrations of Christ's deity.

7 TITLES OF DEITY IN JOHN 1

Within this opening chapter alone, John records seven names and titles of our Lord Jesus Christ that identify Him as eternal God: 1. The Word (John 1:1-3&14); 2. the Light (John 1:4-13); 3. the Son of God (John 1:15-28&49); 4. the Lamb of God (John 1:29-34); 5. the Messiah (John 1:35-42); 6. the King of Israel (John 1:43-49), and 7. the Son of Man (John 1:50&51).

[2] PRESENTATION ... THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE SON OF GOD; 1:19-12:50.

The deity of Christ is presented via:

SOME PERSONAL DECLARATIONS

John presents seven witnesses who testify that Jesus is the Son of God: 1. John the Baptist (John 1:34); 2. Nathanael (John 1:49); 3. Peter (John 6:69); 4. the blind man who was healed (John 9:35-38); 5. Martha (John 11:27); 6. Thomas (John 20:28); and 7. John himself (John 20:31).

These are reinforced by two further testimonies to His own Deity by the Lord Himself, (in John 5:25 and John 10:36). We therefore quickly get the idea that this Gospel is the accumulation of testimony on behalf of the proposition that Jesus is the Son of God!

SOME POWERFUL DEMONSTRATIONS

John presents seven tremendous miracles that Jesus performed in this section of the book: 1. Jesus changes water into wine (John 2:1-11), 2. restores a sick boy's health (John 4:46-54), 3. makes a lame man walk (John 5:1-18), 4. feeds thousands with practically nothing (John 6:1-14), 5. walks on the life-threatening sea (John 6:16-21), 6. gives sight to a blind man (John 9:1-41), and finally 7. raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-45).

John is careful to present Jesus' miracles as "signs" - distinguishing marks or seals of genuineness (John 2:23; 3:2; 4:54; 6:2&14). They confirm Jesus was from God (John 3:1&2; 5:36; 9:3&4, 30-33) and identify Him as the Messiah (John 7:31).

Because seven is the perfect number in Scripture, the number of completion, we could push a point and say that these seven miracles provide complete demonstration that Jesus is the Son of God!

The miracles may also be viewed as illustrations of miracles that Christ is currently doing in the life of each of His people. Collectively, they emphasise that an individual miracle is needed in our hearts - the miracle that Jesus draws attention to when He speaks of the necessity of the "new birth" for entrance to heaven (John 3:1-21).

SOME PRIVATE DISCOURSES

Interspersed with the record of seven signs in these chapters are several important discourses by our Lord. While it is by no means a hard and fast rule, it is largely true that the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) record Christ's public speeches to the multitudes, while John specialises in His private conversations, to individuals and to His disciples.