

Telling the Story, Part 3: John

How do you begin to tell the story, the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, the Messiah? We have four written narratives of the actions and teachings of Jesus, culminating in his suffering, death, burial, and resurrection-ascension. Each one is written by a disciple of Jesus. Two are **apostles who accompanied Jesus for three years (Matthew and John)** and the two others are written by close associates of apostles, Mark (Peter's memoirs) and Luke, who traveled with Paul and did historical research. These four present Jesus in the days of his flesh as he lived among the people. We also have one who tells the story of Jesus' current ministry in heaven, namely the author of Hebrews. It is instructive to see how each begins to tell the story of Jesus. Now the story of Jesus is actual interpreted facts which have the power when received by faith to connect people savingly to God. We refer to this as "the gospel." Paul writes in Romans 1:16-17, ¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* ¹⁷ *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

Prologue

John is the most unique of the gospel narratives. He begins his presentation of Jesus of Nazareth with a prologue located in eternity. In words that echo Genesis 1:1-3 he writes: **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** ² **This one was in the beginning with God.** ³ **All things came into being through him, and apart from him not one thing came into being that has come into being.** ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of humanity. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Now here is how Genesis 1 reads, **In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.** ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

¹⁶ A man came, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ This one came for a witness, in order that he could testify about the light, so that all would believe through him. ⁸ That one was not the light but came in order that he could testify about the light. ⁹ The true light, who gives light to every person, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, and the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own things, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But as many as

received him—to those who believe in his name—he gave to them authority to become children of God, ¹³ who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a husband, but of God.]

14 And the Word became flesh and took up residence among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John testified about him and cried out, saying, “This one was *he about* whom I said, ‘The one who comes after me is ahead of me, because he existed before me.’” ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, and grace after grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came about through Jesus Christ. **18 *No one has seen God at any time; the one and only, God, the one who is in the bosom of the Father—that one has made him known.*** (LEB)

Like the first verses of John echoing Genesis, there are interesting parallels in John 1:14-18 with Exodus 33-34. In Exodus Israel finds grace in Yahweh’s sight while the disciples receive grace upon grace. God tells Moses in Exodus 33:20, “You cannot see my face, for a man shall not see me and live.” John repeats this truth, “No one has ever seen God” (v.18a). Yahweh shelters Moses in a cleft of a rock and covers him with his hand while his glory passes by him (v22). The disciples behold the glory of the incarnate Word- *we have seen his glory as of the only Son from the Father.*

Yahweh declares His name to Moses as he passes by- And Yahweh passed over before him, and he proclaimed, “*Yahweh, Yahweh, God, who is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding with loyal love and faithfulness (truth).*”

Jesus in John 1:14,17 is said *full of grace and truth.*

Yahweh in the days of Moses with Israel in the wilderness dwells in the tent of meeting. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and remain at the entrance to the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. (Exodus 33:9.) John writes, *The Word became flesh and took up residence among us.*

We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). The literal translation is he “pitched his tent” or “tabernacled” among us.

In Exodus 34:27-8 Moses was given the law and John asserts the same in 1:17. Lastly, Moses was the mediator between Yahweh and Israel. But Jesus is the mediator between God and humanity (John 1:18). The one and only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared him. Or made him known.

John’s narrative is the last one written. His purpose in writing is plainly stated in John 20:30, ³⁰ Jesus performed many other **signs** in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But ***these are written that you may believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying about these *things*, and who has written down these *things*. And we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵ Now there are also many other *things* that Jesus did, which—if they were written down one after the other—I suppose not even the world itself could contain the books that would be written (John 21:24-25 NIV).

Some Bible scholars see two major divisions in John's narrative which are labeled "the book of signs" from John 1:19 and ending at John 12:50. The second division is called "the book of the passion" which begins in chapter 13. The second section begins with an extended teaching discourse by Jesus in the Upper Room preparing his disciples for his imminent suffering and death, followed by his resurrection and ascension and the coming of the Spirit. John then gives his eyewitness account of Jesus' trials, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection ministry.

The Book of the Signs

We learn that John writes of certain selected signs which Jesus did to which he and other apostles were eyewitnesses. These works of divine power validated Jesus' messiahship. The first of these recorded miracle signs was the turning of pots of water into the best wine at a wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. ***What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.***

So John's purpose is to convince his readers that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Promised One, so that believing in Him people will receive eternal life. He develops his witness around 7 signs:

1. The Turning of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana - John 2:1-11.
2. 2/8 The Cleansing of the temple, John 2:13-25. In v. 18-19 we see the prediction of his resurrection which was fulfilled in John chapters 20-21.

¹⁸ So the Jews answered and said to him, "What sign do you show to us, because you are doing these *things*?" ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up!" Then the Jews said, "This temple has been under construction forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the saying that Jesus had spoken.

3. Healing the Official's Son John - 4:46-54
4. Healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda at the temple - John 5:1-18
5. Feeding of the Five Thousand with five barley loaves and two fish - John 6:1-15

This is linked with the feeding of Israel in wilderness in John 6:31-33.

Exodus 16:15 in the Amplified Bible says:

"When the Israelites saw it, they said one to another, Manna [What is it?]. For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat."

Jesus is indeed the true Bread of Life.

6. Jesus Walking on water to his disciples during the night when the boat is on the storm-tossed sea. John 6:16-21 cf Psalm 107:26-30

*Rising up to the sky, sinking down to the depths,
their courage melting away in anguish,*

*²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunken men,
and all their skill was useless.*

*²⁸ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
and He brought them out of their distress.*

*²⁹ He stilled the storm to a murmur,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.*

³⁰ They rejoiced when the waves grew quiet.

Then He guided them to the harbor they longed for.

7. Healing of a man who was born blind - John 9:1-41

² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him"

8. Raising of Lazarus from the dead after he had been in the grave 4 days - John 11:1-46 - This event foreshadows Jesus' own resurrection as well as that of believers.

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

³⁹ "Remove the stone," Jesus said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told Him, "Lord, he's already decaying. It's been four days." Jesus said to her, "*Didn't I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?*"

⁴¹ So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me. ⁴² *I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so they may believe You sent Me.*" ⁴³ After He said this, He shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him and let him go."

⁴⁵ Therefore, *many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what He did believed in Him.*

The 8th all-conclusive sign was Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead on the 3rd day after his crucifixion - John 20-21.

With each of these signs Jesus gives an explanation which connects him to the revelation of God in Israel's history or the event's timing points to the meaning itself. In connection with the signs, John records revelatory conversations.

Another mark of John's gospel is the association of Jesus with the revelation of God in his attributes. These **seven "I am" statements** connect Jesus to the name of God – "I am" or, "***I am that I am.***"

⁵⁰ I do not seek My glory; the One who seeks it also judges. ⁵¹ I assure you: If anyone keeps My word, he will never see death—ever!"

⁵² Then the Jews said, "Now we know You have a demon. Abraham died and so did the prophets. You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste death—ever!' ⁵³ Are You greater than our father Abraham who died? Even the prophets died. Who do You pretend to be?"

⁵⁴ "If I glorify Myself," Jesus answered, "My glory is nothing. My Father—you say about Him, 'He is our God'—He is the One who glorifies Me. ⁵⁵ You've never known Him, but I know Him. If I were to say I don't know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him, and I keep His word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day; he saw it and rejoiced."

⁵⁷ The Jews replied, "You aren't 50 years old yet, and You've seen Abraham?"

⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, "**I assure you: Before Abraham was, I am.**"

⁵⁹ At that, they picked up stones to throw at Him.

Jesus declares:

I am the bread of life John - 6:35, 48, 51 Feast of Passover
Feast of Booths/Tabernacles **John 7-8**

Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "***When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?***" John 7:31

I am the light of the world - John 8:12, 9:5

I am the gate - John 10:7

I am the good shepherd - John 10:11, 14

I am the resurrection and the life - John 11:25

I am the way and the truth and the life - John 14:6

I am the true vine - John 15:1

So as we think about the way John's Gospel begins we see that there are obvious links to the beginning of the Bible in Genesis and Exodus – with creation itself - God bringing light into the world as Christ was the light of the world - and with Yahweh's revelation of himself to Moses – so Jesus reveals God's nature to humanity.

The Book of John, or the Gospel of John, is also known as the "Book of Signs," for it presents seven (7) signs that reveal Jesus is the Son of God - such as his raising Lazarus from the dead.

And lastly, we have seen that Jesus' nature or attributes are exactly the same as Yahweh's in the Old Testament - there, for example, we see that God is the great Shepherd of his people and in John's Gospel we see that Jesus declares that he is the Good Shepherd who came to lay down his life for his sheep.

The apostle John, from his intimate knowledge of Christ and being led by the Spirit, presents to us in this Gospel, the Word who became flesh, Jesus himself, the divine Son, who lived, died, and rose for the salvation of his people.

John's Gospel brings us face-to-face with the Christ of God, Jesus the Lord, the only Savior from sins. **To read of him brings us to the knowledge of him and to faith in him. This is true and eternal life.** Read on, learn, and receive the blessing of the living God.

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