John: An Introduction

Intro: In the four accounts of the gospel of Jesus Christ: Matthew wrote particularly for the Jews, Mark for the Romans, Luke for the Greeks or Gentiles, and John wrote for everyone but especially the Christian. Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets. Mark presents Jesus as one with power and strength, while Luke presents Him as the Perfect Man.

John presents Jesus as the Son of God and the one in whom we are to place our faith. Yet, John is vastly different from the other three accounts (called Synoptics). Notice some things John does not include: the birth of Jesus, His baptism, His temptation, the healing of the demon possessed, the parables, the Last Supper, Gethsemane, and the Ascension. Then John gives the following which are not included in the Synoptics: the marriage feast at Cana, Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, the raising of Lazarus, washing the disciples feet, and the coming of the Comforter. In this chapter, we wish to study the background material for a proper study of the gospel account of John.

I. AUTHOR

A. His Identity And Name

1. Not directly stated but universally held that the apostle John, the son of Zebedee is the author.
   a. Denied by a small heretical sect, the Alogi, about 170.
   b. Denied by some modern critics.
   c. The reason these denied John’s authorship is because of his presentation of Jesus’ deity which conflicts with their views.

2. External evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of John.

3. Internal evidence.
   a. Comparison with 1 John shows they are written by the same person.
      (1) The style and language are the same; often the same words and phrases being used.
      (2) He expresses things both affirmatively and negatively.
         (a) John 1:3, 20 “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made...20And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.”
         (b) John 3:16-17 “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. 17For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”
         (c) 1 John 1:5 “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”
         (d) 1 John 2:27 “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”
   (3) Use of Logos
      (a) John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
      (b) 1 John 1:1 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;”
(4) Use of “only begotten Son” in reference to Jesus (only found in John’s writing).
   (a) John 3:16 “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.”
   (b) 1 John 4:9 “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”

(5) Repeated use of life, light, love, darkness, death, world, fellowship, and truth.

(6) Both books begin and end with same thought.

(7) The purpose and scope is the same.

(8) At least 35 passages where the thoughts are parallel.

b. The author was a Jew.

(1) He quotes from the Hebrew Old Testament, not the LXX.
   (a) John 12:40 “He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.”
   (b) John 13:18 “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.”
   (c) John 19:36-37 “For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.”

(2) Familiar with Jew feasts.
   (a) Passover
      i) John 2:13, 23 “And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem....23Now 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.”
      ii) John 6:4 “And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.”
      iii) John 13:1 “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”
      iv) John 18:28 “Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.”
      v) Possibly but might be feast of Purim; John 5:1 “After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”
   (b) Feast of Tabernacle; John 7:37 “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”
   (c) Feast of Dedication; John 10:22 “And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.”

(3) Familiar with Jewish customs
   (a) Purification
      i) John 2:6 “And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.”
ii) John 3:25 “Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying.”

iii) John 11:55 “And the Jews’ passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.”

(b) Burial

i) John 11:38, 44 “Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it...44And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

ii) John 19:40 “Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.”

(c) Position of women; John 4:27 “And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?”

(d) Derisive attitude of the Palestinian Jew toward the Jews of the Diaspora (Dispersion); John 7:35 “Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?”

(e) Law forbidding the Jews to leave a dead body on the cross the day of the Sabbath; John 19:31 “The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”

(f) Strong hatred of Jews and Samaritans; John 4:9 “Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”

(g) Superiority of the law of circumcision over the law of the Sabbath; John 7:22 “Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.”

c. He was a Jew of Palestine.
   (1) He was familiar with the countryside of Palestine.
   (2) There is an exactness of the topography of Jerusalem (exceptional in light of its destruction in 70.

d. He was contemporary with the incidents he records and an eyewitness to many of them.

e. He must have been an apostle of our Lord.

4. The author is described as the disciple whom Jesus loved.
   a. Only three could lay claim to such a relationship—Peter, James, and John.
   b. Peter is listed separately in John 21.
   c. James was martyred at a very early date; Acts 12.
   d. John is the only one who remaining of the three.

B. His Family And Background

1. Family
   a. Father was Zebedee.
      (1) A well-to-do fisherman on the Sea of Galilee.
When James and John were called by Jesus, Zebedee had hired servants; Mark 1:19-20 “And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.”

b. John’s mother was Salome, one of the noble women who followed Jesus.

(1) She supported Him with their means; Luke 8:3 “And Joanna the wife of Chuzas Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.”

(2) She brought spices to the tomb; Mark 16:1 “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.”

(3) Salome was thought to be the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus, making Jesus and John cousins.

c. Because James is always mentioned first, it is thought that he was the older of the two.

2. He, along with James, was first a disciple of John the Baptist.

a. John 1:35-39 “Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 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? 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.”

b. They become apostles to Jesus; Mat. 10:2 “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;”

c. They were often found in the company of Peter.

d. Peter, James, and John were considered pillars in the church at Jerusalem; Gal. 2:9 “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”

3. John’s nature:

a. Probably seen in his attitude toward those who rejected Jesus.

(1) Jesus sent word to a Samaritan city to make ready for him, but they did not receive him.

(2) James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven and destroy them; Luke 9:51-56 “And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.”

(3) Jesus surnamed them; Mark 3:17 “And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder.”

(4) They seemingly had a violent, vehement temper.

b. Through his association with Christ that nature was brought under control.
C.  His Apostleship

1.  Often found in the company of Peter.
   a.  In partnership with Peter in their fishing business; Luke 5:10 “And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.”
   b.  At the raising of Jairus’ daughter; Luke 8:51-56 “And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. 52And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepest. 53And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 54And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. 55And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. 56And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.”
   c.  On the Mount of Transfiguration; Mat. 17:1-2 “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, 2And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”
   d.  Questioning Jesus about the destruction of Jerusalem; Mark 13:3-4 “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?”
   e.  Preparations for the keeping of the Passover; Luke 22:7-8 “Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.”
   f.  In the garden of Gethsemane during Christ’s agony; Mat. 26:36-37 “Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. 37And he took with him Peter and John and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.”
   g.  Entering the temple and the healing of the lamb man.
      (1) Acts 3
      (2) This afforded them the opportunity to preach the gospel.
      (3) They were arrested and stood before the Jewish council at Jerusalem; Acts 4.
   h.  Sent by the apostles at the conversion of the Samaritans and imparted miraculous power to them.
   i.  Pillars in the church at Jerusalem; Gal. 2:9 “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”

2.  John played an important part in the early church.

D.  Tradition

1.  Left Jerusalem at the beginning of the Jewish war in 66.
2.  He went to Ephesus where he lived before being banished to Isle of Patmos during the reign of Domitian (81-96).
3.  Nerva allowed his return in 96.
4.  While on the Isle of Patmos he wrote the Revelation; Rev. 1:9 “I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”
5.  Other traditions:
   a.  Speak of his feebleness.
b. Rushing from the bathhouse when the apostate Cerinthus entered with him exclaiming, “Let us flee, lest even the bathhouse fall down because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth is within.”

6. Died at the beginning of Trajan’s reign about 98.
   a. John 21:20-23 “Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. 23Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him,  He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”
   b. Rev. 22:20 “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

II. DATE
A. Variously dated from 40 -140.
   1. Rylands Fragment
      a. Preserved a scrap of John 18.
      b. Shows John was in use in the first half of the second century.
   2. Goodenough argues that John wrote at 40 but few accept such an early date.
B. From Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria we learn that John wrote after the other gospel accounts.
   1. From a comparison study we learn that John fills in a great deal which the Synoptics omit.
   2. Written in opposition to Gnosticism which would demand a later date.
   3. Irenaeus said John wrote from Ephesus prior to his banishment to the Isle of Patmos which would place the writing between 85-90.
   4. Most agree on the date of 90 which is the date the early church accepted.

III. THEME, SCOPE, OR PURPOSE
A. Supplement the Synoptics
   1. Clement of Alexandrian and Eusebius said that it was written to supplement and fill in the gaps of the Synoptics.
      a. The Synoptics deal with Jesus ministry in Galilee; John mainly deals with His ministry in Judea.
      b. The Synoptics mention one visit to Jerusalem (at His passion) John mentions four.
   2. Comparisons:
      a. Totality of material that is peculiar to each:
         (1) Matthew — 42%
         (2) Mark — 7%
         (3) Luke — 59%
         (4) John — 92%
      b. Totality of material that is similar to the others:
         (1) Matthew — 58%
         (2) Mark — 93%
         (3) Luke — 41%
         (4) John — 8%
3. Synoptics give the facts of Jesus’ life, John reports the effects.
   a. The brethren had believed the facts, but were not believers in Christ.
      (1) The belief needed to be practical, more than mere orthodoxy, theological, or philosophical.
      (2) Faith is to be a pervading force of life; John 14:12 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

B. Refute Gnosticism (see below)

C. Produce Life-Giving Faith
   1. John 20:30-31 “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: “But 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.”
   2. Signs (Greek ἱμείον, semeion).
      a. Translated sign[s] four times.
         (1) John 2:18 “Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou dost these things?”
         (2) John 4:48 “Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.”
         (3) John 6:30 “They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?”
         (4) John 20:30 “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:”
      b. Translated miracle thirteen times.
         (1) John 2:11, 23 “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him....23Now 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.”
         (2) John 3:2 “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) John 4:54 “This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.”
         (4) John 6:2, 14, 26 “And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased....14Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world....26Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”
         (5) John 7:31 “And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?”
         (6) John 9:16 “Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.”
         (7) John 10:41 “And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.”
         (8) John 11:47 “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.”
         (9) John 12:18, 37 “For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle....37But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:”
      c. A sign is something that points to something else.
d. The sign (miracle) pointed to the fact that Jesus came from God.
   (1) John 3:2 “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.”
   (2) The signs (miracles) were to produce faith in Jesus.

3. Believe (Greek πιστεύω, pisteuo).
   a. This is the reaction called for.
      (1) The evidence is presented (the signs and testimonies).
      (2) The result within the person should be faith or belief.
      (3) The other reaction is reject the evidence.
   b. John uses faith or belief 98 times in the book.
   c. As used by John belief is more than mental assent that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.
      (1) Belief is a call to obedience to who He is.
      (2) Since He is the Christ the Son of God, He has authority and we must submit ourselves to Him.
      (3) John 3:36 “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth [obeyeth—ASV] not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”
         (a) “Believeth” is the Greek πιστεύω (pisteuo).
         (b) “Believeth not” is the Greek ἀπείθεω (apeitheo) which is not to be persuaded and thus obeyeth not.
         (c) If you believe, you obey; if you do not obey, you do not truly believe.

4. Life (Greek ζωή, zoe).
   a. John uses this word 36 times in this book.
   b. It is not simply an existence in this realm.
      (1) It is a way of life originating in Jesus.
      (2) John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
   c. It is an abundant life.
      (1) John 10:10 “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”
      (2) Includes the way we live in the here and now with its blessings and results.
      (3) It more refers to eternal life in the hereafter.
   d. Through our belief (obedience) to whom Jesus is, we have the abundant life.

5. To the end that we might believe John gives 7 testimonies or witnesses in John 5, and 8.
   a. The Father.
      (1) John 5:37; 8:18 “And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape....I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.”
      (2) Twice the Father said this is my Son.
         (a) Mat. 3:17 “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
(b) Mat. 17:5 “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

b. Jesus Himself.

(1) John 8:14 “Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go.”

(2) John 18:37 “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

(3) Supported by 7 “I am” statements.

(a) Bread of life.
   i) “John 6:33-35 “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

   ii) Bread represents food which gives strength; Jesus is our strength.

(b) Light of the world.
   i) John 8:12 “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

   ii) John 9:5 “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

   iii) John 12:35-36, 46 “Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. 36While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them....46I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”

(c) Door of the sheepfold.
   i) John 10:1, 7 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber....7Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.”

   ii) This concerns our salvation, He is the only way by which we can be saved.

(d) The Good Shepherd
   i) John 10:11, 14 “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep....14I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”

   ii) Shepherds provide security; Jesus is our security.

(e) The Resurrection and the life.
   i) John 11:25-26 “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”
ii) We have hope through Him.

iii) We know we will be raised from the dead and given eternal life if found in Him.

(f) The Way, the Truth, the Life.

i) John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

ii) He is the standard, the authority in religious matters.

(g) The True Vine.

i) John 15:1-8 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

ii) We will be productive in our lives; bearing fruit (we will be successful).

c. The Spirit.

(1) John 15:26 “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:”

(2) John 16:14 “He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

d. His works.

(1) John 5:36; 10:25 “But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me....10:25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.”

(2) Supported by 7 miracles evidencing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

(a) Turning water into wine (non-alcoholic grape juice).

i) John 2

ii) Shows He is **Master of Quality**; He made the best wine; John 2:10 “

(b) Healing the Nobleman’s son.

i) John 4:46-54

ii) Shows He is **Master of Distance or Space**; the son was over 20 miles away.

(c) Healing a man impotent for 38 years.

i) John 5:1-18

ii) Shows He is **Master of Time**; the longer a disease affects one the harder it is to cure.
(d) Feeding the 5000 men (beside women and children) with 5 loaves and 2 small fishes.
   i) John 6:1-14
   ii) Shows He is **Master of Quantity**; the amount of food or people did not matter.

(e) Walking on the water.
   i) John 6:16-21
   ii) Shows He is **Master of Natural Law**.

(f) Healing a man born blind.
   i) John 9
   ii) Shows He is **Master of Misfortune**; there was no sin involved in his misfortune but that the work of God would be done.

(g) Raising Lazarus from the dead.
   i) John 11.
   ii) Shows He is **Master of Death**; he had been dead for 4 days, yet Jesus raised him and all saw “the glory of God.”

(3) Each miracle showed His “control over the factors of life with which man is unable to cope. Quality, space, time, quantity, natural Law, misfortune, and death circumscribe humanities world. Daily existence is a struggle against their limitations. Christ’s superiority over them as revealed by these events called signs was proof of His deity and a clue to understanding what the writer desired to say about Him.” (Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1948), p. 31.)

(e. The Scriptures.
   (1) John 5:39-46 “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. 40And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. 41I receive not honour from men. 42But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. 43I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. 44How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? 45Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. 46For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.”

   (2) The Old Testament pointed to the one coming—the Messiah who would save man from His sins.

(f. John the Baptist.
   (1) John 1:7 “The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.”

   (2) John 5:33-35 “Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. 34But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. 35He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.”

   (3) John 1:29-30 “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.”
The apostles.

(1) Jesus speaking to the apostles; John 15:27 “And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

(2) John speaking of himself; John 19:35 “And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.”

(3) The apostles went throughout the world witnessing for Christ.
   (a) We are not witnesses today.
   (b) Through these witnesses and our study of their testimony, we come to believe in Jesus and through that belief we have life.

D. Insight into the content of John.

1. John 20:30-31 “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But 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.”

2. It is a selective account.
   a. Jesus did many other miracles not recorded in John.
   b. The Spirit selected certain events to the purpose of producing faith and avoiding repetition.

3. It is an attested Gospel.
   a. The miracles were in the presence of the disciples.
   b. The feeding of the 5,000 men was a well-attested miracle.

4. It is an apologetic book; John was making a defense of Jesus to produce belief in Him.

5. It is an interpretive book; John was interpreting the life of Jesus in light of His Messiahship.

6. It is a definitive Gospel.
   a. Jesus presents Himself as having a special relation to the Father; He is the Son of God in a way no other is.
   b. John defines Jesus as being the Son of God.

7. John’s account is effective.
   a. It is written that its readers might have life.
   b. It is successful in its purpose.

IV. GNOSTICISM

A. Origin and Meaning of Gnosticism

1. Arose during the lull following the Neronean persecution (64-68 A.D.

2. It comes from the Greek γνώσις (gnosis) meaning “knowledge, intelligence, understanding.
   a. The verbal form is γινώσκω (ginosko).
   b. The people claim a superior knowledge, a heavenly apprehension of truth, a “more excellent way.”
   c. By an intellectual enlightening they knew the gospel better, more accurately than the apostles and prophets.
   d. Scripture became unnecessary and unimportant.
   e. Their brethren who were not “in the know” were looked down upon.
   f. They were puffed up, egotist, not having a love for others.
B. Basic Premise of Gnosticism

1. Blended the Greek doctrine of the supremacy of intellectual enlightenment with the Oriental doctrine that matter and everything material is evil.
   a. They believed in a dualism—Spirit is good; matter is evil.
   b. The Spirit and body are two separate entities.
      (1) The Spirit is of God, the body or flesh is of sin.
      (2) The two, Spirit and body, can have no enduring relationship.
      (3) The Spirit was eternal, the body was subject to death and decay.
   c. God (Spirit) is good, the creation (matter) is evil.
      (1) How could God who is total good, create the world (matter) which is evil?
      (2) Emanations, Aeons, or Angels proceeded from God, from these other Aeons were descended, each being a little less God or less perfect.
      (3) Two views arose.
         (a) The lowest of these Emanations are almost wholly corporeal so the spiritual element almost lost. Finally the world of man and of matter is reached (the abode of evil).
         (b) We reach an Emanation called the Demiurge.
            i) He rebelled against God (the Supreme Being).
            ii) The Demiurge created the world and rules over it.
            iii) This Demiurge is considered to be the God of the Jews.
            iv) The Anti-Jewish Gnostic represented the Demiurge as being insolent and resisting the purposes of God.
            v) The Judaizing Gnostic considered him to be a restricted unconscious instrument of God to prepared the way of redemption.

2. Salvation comes by escaping from the realm of matter to the realm of the Spirit; not faith in Jesus Christ.
   a. This escape comes through knowledge, to this the gnostic could attain and impart while others did not know.
      (1) If the human body is inherently evil, it is a matter of indifference what it does.
      (2) The gnostic need not trouble himself with conduct for his spirit was steeped in light.
      (3) Good actions could not greatly increase his enlightenment.
      (4) Bad actions could not seriously detract from it, rather they could be sought to add to his knowledge.
   b. Sin is ignorance, so knowledge brought you away from sin.
   c. Jude describes the gnostic; Jude 4 “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

C. Gnostic consideration of Jesus Christ

1. God is Spirit—inherrently good, free from evil, eternal.
2. The body is matter—inherrently evil, full of sin, subject to death.
3. Christ is God (Spirit), who then is Jesus?
   a. How can the Spirit Christ (who is sinless and eternal), occupy a body subject to sin and death?
      (1) If God, how could he die?
      (2) If He died on the cross, how could He be God?
   b. Either Christ is not human or Jesus is not divine.

4. Both the Deity and Humanity of Christ Jesus were being denied.
   a. Docetics.
      (1) From the Greek δοκέω (dokeo) meaning “seems.”
      (2) They argued that Christ only seemed to be; he did not really exist.
      (3) Christ was not really flesh and blood.
      (4) They denied the humanity of Christ.
      (5) Notice John’s emphasis.
         a) John 20:31 “But 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.”
         b) John 1:1, 14 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... “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.”
         c) 1 John 1:1-3 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”
      (6) John emphasized that the man Jesus is the Spirit Christ.
   b. Cerinthians.
      (1) Named after Cerinthus, its chief advocate.
      (2) A separation of Jesus from the Christ (making 2 entities).
         a) Jesus was a man born in Bethlehem; subject to sin, decay, and death.
         b) He was born of Joseph or illegitimately.
         c) At his baptism, the Spirit Christ entered into the man Jesus through the descending dove; Mat. 3:16-17 “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
         d) The Christ, Spirit, permeated the man Jesus for the rest of His sojourn upon the earth.
         e) Just prior to death the Spirit Christ left the man Jesus and returned to heaven so only Jesus died.
         f) This was the meaning of Jesus’ statement; Luke 23:46 “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”
         g) At that time the Spirit Christ left the man Jesus who died on the cross and the Spirit Christ lived on.
John: An Introduction

(3) Denied the deity of Jesus.

c. Ebionites (possibly, but some say not a form of Gnosticism).
   (1) Christ was merely a creature—He was only a man.
   (2) Denied the deity of Christ.

D. Results (Practical consequences) of Gnosticism

1. Asceticism
   a. The punishment of the body; abstention from all pleasure.
   b. Since the body is evil then all its wishes and desires must be denied, the body must be punished.
   c. They practiced:
      (1) Celibacy, (Forbidding to marry).
      (2) Fasting, (starving oneself almost to the point of death).
      (3) Rigid ill-treatment (physically beating) of the body.
   d. Led to the monasteries where most things were denied the body.

2. Epicureanism and Antinominionism.
   a. The philosophies:
      (1) Epicureanism is the belief that pleasure of the senses is the ultimate good; heap luxury and pleasure on self.
      (2) Antinominionism come from the Greek means against law.
   b. Since the body is evil, it is not responsible for its acts.
   c. The body could commit sin, but since it is only the body, the spirit could continue in its relation to God.
      (1) Gratify the body’s lust and passions without any control or limit.
      (2) Physical chastity does not matter, it is not of any importance what is done with the physical (evil) body.
         (a) 1 John 1:6 “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:”
         (b) 1 John 2:4-6 “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”
      (3) The body could continue in sin while the spirit was dedicated and one with God.
         (a) Rom. 6:1 “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”
         (b) They would answer yes, but Paul said no; Rom. 6:2 “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”
   d. They were the libertines and Nicolaitans.
      (1) 2 Pet. 2:19 “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”
      (2) Rev. 2:6 “But this thou hast, that thou hastest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

3. Perfectionism.
   a. Believed they received a second working or experience of grace making it impossible for them to sin.
b. Man was regarded as altogether spiritual, having shed all material things of life and having released his spirit from the bondage of matter.
   (1) For them sin ceased to exist.
   (2) They had reached spiritual perfection.
   (3) 1 John 1:8-10 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

   a. Those who had this special knowledge and those who did not.
   b. Resulted in pride and arrogance of the Gnostic.

5. Destroyed belief’s of the Bible.

V. **STYLE AND PLAN**

A. **A gospel of Simplicity**
   1. Sentence structure is simple.
      a. Short sentences, connected by co-ordinate conjunctions.
      b. Few direct quotations, few dependent clauses.
   2. Some of the simplest Greek to be found in the New Testament.

B. **A gospel of Depth**
   1. Just consider some:
   2. Christ’s origin (John 1)
   3. The New Birth (John 3)
   4. How man can have the living water which “shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4)
   5. Eating the proper food—the bread from heaven (John 6)
   6. Teaching concerning the Holy Spirit, Comforter, whom the Father would send to the apostles along with His work (John 14-16).

C. **A gospel of Isolation**
   1. Each step is treated as an isolated narrative.
   2. Each narrative is separate and isolated from the rest rather than merged into a whole.

D. **A gospel of Repetitions and Parallelisms**
   1. The numbers 3 and 7 prevail the book both in what is recorded and in the arrangement of topics.
      a. 7 “I ams”
      b. 7 miracles.
      c. 7 testimonies to Jesus as being the Christ
   2. Repetitious words and phrases:
      a. John 1:1-5 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”
      b. John 15:11 “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”
      c. John 11:33 “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.”
      d. John 5:32 “There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnessed of me is true.”
3. Parallel statements; John 14:27 “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

E. A gospel of Contrasts
   1. Consider some:
   2. Light and darkness; and to see and become blind; John 1:5 “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”
   3. Truth and falsehood; John 8:44-45 “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”
   4. Good and evil.
   5. God and Satan.
   7. From above and from the earth.
   8. Life (abundant life and eternal life) and death.
   10. Love and hate.
   11. To rejoice and to lament.
   12. To be troubled and to trust.

F. A gospel of Testimonies
   1. The theme of the book is John setting forth a case for the deity of Jesus.
   2. He goes about as a lawyer setting about to prove his case.
   3. He calls 7 witnesses to establish his premise.
   4. Upon the establishment of that fact, we place our trust in Jesus as the Christ the Son of God;
      a. Rom. 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
      b. We obey what He says leading us to eternal life.

G. A gospel of interviews
   1. There are 27 interviews recorded; some lengthy and some very brief.
   2. “Included in the list are passages which can be classified under other headings, such as the miracle of the nobleman’s son (4:46-54), or the trial before Pilate (18:28-19:16). On occasions like these the interest of Jesus in the individual is prominent rather than the action itself. In the Synoptics, for example, the trial before Pilate is an important feature of the denouement of Jesus’ life, while in the Gospel of John Jesus’ personal interest in Pilate and his effort to bring Pilate to a recognition of his claims are much more plain.” (Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), p. 195-196.)

H. A gospel of Feasts (see previous study on this p.3 of notes)

I. A Spiritual gospel
   1. “Clement of Alexandria declared that John wrote a gospel of spiritual things, while earlier Evangelists wrote Gospels of material things. By this he meant that they were more matter of fact, and did not enter into the deep questions, or take the deep spiritual views which are constantly exhibited in John.” (B. W. Johnson, *The New Testament Commentary, John* (Delight AR: Gospel Light Publishing, 1886), p. xx.)
   2. The Synoptics deal more with historical facts while John develops the meaning of the facts.
   3. John is remarkable for its depth in light of its simplicity, opening the deepest recesses of the spiritual life.

J. A Theological gospel (as noted written to combat the false doctrine of Gnosticism)
K. A Gospel of the Incarnation

1. John 1:1, 14 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... 14And 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.”

2. John presents someone who is more than mere man; He is the God-man.
   a. Mat. 1:23 “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”
   b. 1 Tim. 3:16 “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

3. “In the earlier gospels the Son of David, the Son of Mary, is demonstrated to be the Son of God; in the last Gospel he is seen as the Godhead in bodily form, the son of God who is the manifestation of the Father. In the first three the human is divine; in the Fourth the Divine is human.” (B. W. Johnson, The New Testament Commentary, John (Delight AR: Gospel Light Publishing, 1886), p. xx.)

L. A gospel of Love

1. 1 John 4:8, 16 “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.... 16And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

2. John shows the greatest demonstration of that love; John 3:16 “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.”

3. He reveals what true love for God is; John 14:15 “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

4. He reveals that we are to love one another as Christ loved us; John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17 “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.... 12These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

VI. OUTLINE

A. From Merrill Tenney

1. The Prologue (1:1-18)
2. The Period of Consideration (1:19-4:54)
3. The Period of Controversy (5:1-6:71)
4. The Period of Conflict (7:1-11:53)
5. The Period of Crisis (11:54-12:36a)
6. The Period of Conference (12:36b-17:26)
7. The Period of Consummation (18:1-20:31)

B. Chapter Outline detailing each chapter.

1. Word became flesh; the ministry of John the Baptist.
2. First miracle; Cleansing the temple
3. New birth into the kingdom; John the Baptist’s work and teaching
4. Samaritan woman at the well
5. Healing on and questions about the Sabbath
6. Feeding the 5,000; Jesus the bread of life
7. Teaching in the temple and opposition
8. Woman taken in adultery; the father of the Jews (Abraham or the devil)
9. Healing of the man born blind
10. Jesus the Good Shepherd  
11. Raising of Lazarus  
12. Anointing of feet by Mary; triumphal entry into Jerusalem  
13. Washing the disciples feet; Judas to betray Him and Peter to deny Him  
14. Jesus comforts His disciples; the Comforter  
15. Jesus the true vine; love and persecution  
16. The Comforter to come; Jesus speaks of His death  
17. The Lord’s prayer  
18. Trial before the high priest and Pilate  
19. Crucifixion and burial  
20. Resurrection and appearances  
21. Third appearance to disciples and Peter’s love questioned

C. Chapter Outline of a portrait of Christ.  
   1. Son of God  
   2. Son of Man  
   3. Divine Teacher  
   4. Great Personal Worker  
   5. Great Physician  
   6. Bread of Life  
   7. Water of Life  
   8. Forgiver of the Fallen  
   9. Light of the World  
  10. Good Shepherd  
  11. Resurrection and Life  
  12. Great King  
  13. Great Servant  
  14. Great Consoler  
  15. True Vine  
  16. Great Giver  
  17. Great Intercessor  
  18. Great Sufferer  
  19. Crucified Christ  
  20. Great Victor  
  21. Forgiver of the Penitent

VII. Why the Jews Hated Christ So?  
   A. He challenged everything about their lives.  
      1. He challenged their axioms, their philosophies, their hedonistic world, their religion, politics, etc.  
      2. John 8:31-34 “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”  
      3. Every facet of His life touched theirs.  
      4. They were made to realize what sinners they were.
B. **The urgency of His purpose and His zeal for God.**

1. Jesus goes into the temple and drives out the money changes; John 2.
   a. John 2:16 “And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.”
   b. John 2:17 “And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”

2. He made them feel so inadequate (especially in their service to God).
   a. His zeal showed their lackadaisical attitude, their lukewarmness, and indifference.
   b. His purity showed their immorality, and worldliness.

C. **Because He was not afraid.**

1. John 8:46 “Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”
   a. They had claimed that He had a demon.
   b. He placed Himself on the altar and told them to bear witness of any sin.
   c. Even those who knew Him best could not accuse Him of any sin.

2. Before Pilate.
   a. Pilate asked where He came from and He said nothing; John 19:9 “And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.”
   b. Pilate became angry and says he has the power of life or death; John 19:10 “Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?”
   c. Christ tells him he has no power but from God; John 19:11 “Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”

3. They mocked Him, scourged Him, crucified Him, yet no plea for mercy.
4. They could take His life but not quench His spirit.

Conclusion: Through a study of John we are given adequate evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This should lead us to recognize His authority in spiritual matters and humbly submit to His commands leading us to the abundant life in the here and now and eternal life in the hereafter.