

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lesson 64: Introduction and Outline, The Book of John

Introduction:

We have spent five weeks in the "synoptic" gospels, or those accounts of the "good news" that should be seen together. Putting Matthew, Mark, and Luke together gives us a complete, reliable, and credible eye witness account of the person, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ.

The Book of John is also a gospel, in that it is also the good news of Jesus, but is much different than the synoptics:

1. It is more theological and less biographical.

Just look at the first verses of the four. Matthew: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus . . ."; Mark: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus . . . as written by the prophet Isaiah . . ."; Luke: . . . "it seemed fitting to me to write it out in consecutive order."

But John begins, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

He was not just the fulfillment of the hope of the Jews, or Romans, or Greeks. He spoke and the universe came to be, stars shone in the heavens, planets orbited suns, the earth went from formless and void to beautiful and full. Things sprouted, blossomed and grew. Creatures ran, swam and flew. Man and women became living, thinking, speaking, and loving beings in personal contact with God.

Everything in existence, as we know it, began when Jesus spoke.

2. Its audience is obviously much broader.

It is accepted by most evangelical scholars, who agree with many of the early church fathers, that John wrote his Gospel after the other three Gospels were written and he was well aware of their writings. John's disciple, Polycarp indicated that he wrote while pastor of the church in Ephesus, when he was already old, but not yet exiled to Patmos. That would put the writing between 80 and 90 AD.

I believe that John wrote to deal with certain questions that arose in the early church about the nature, life and work of Jesus. This would account for his revelation of the deepest spiritual truths about the meaning of the life so well described by the others.

Yes, Jesus came to fulfill prophecy, to complete the Law, to meet the needs of man, to point man to God, to be a sacrifice for sin. But John explains that the ultimate plan of God is, *"that Jesus would die to be a ransom for many, that He might bring them to Himself."*

3. Its unique purpose is plain.

We don't need to speculate on the purpose of John's Gospel. It contains the most clearly written purpose statement in all of Scripture: ". . . *these have been written that you may believe the Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*" (John 20:31)

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

The Jesus of Matthew, Mark, and Luke may convince the Jews, Romans, and Greeks, that He was uniquely suited to meet their needs, but John tells them clearly **how** those needs can be met.

The key word is *believe*, found in John nearly one hundred times.

His purpose then is two pronged:

1. To confront individuals with the life and claims of Jesus in order that they might surrender they lives to Him. --***Evangelism***
2. Since the tenses of the phrase "may believe" allows us to translate it "may continue to believe," it would indicate that the purpose includes an ongoing surrender to His rule. --***Discipleship***

Author:

There is virtually unanimous agreement that the writer of this Gospel is the same John who wrote the three John letters and the Revelation. Though he is not named specifically there is both internal and external evidence. We don't have time to investigate this at length, but I will mention two points:

1. He is mentioned by name in events described in other Gospels. Since some of those events are duplicated in the Book of John and he is involved as "the disciple that Jesus loved," we know it is he. (This is especially true in reference to the three close disciples whom we know were Peter, James, and John.)
2. The early church fathers identify the Apostle John as the author. John was introduced to us along with his brother James, the sons of Zebedee, a wealthy fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus called them "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). His mother was Salome, who faithfully served Jesus and was a witness to His crucifixion.

He had been a follower of John the Baptist and was in his twenties when he started following Jesus. He was one of Jesus' closest friends and was, it appears, the only one to remain faithful to Him through His arrest, trials and crucifixion.

He lived through tremendous changes:

He was a leader in the early church at Jerusalem.

He was persecuted by Roman and Jewish authorities.

He pastored at Ephesus where he wrote four portions of Scripture.

He witnessed the destruction of the Temple.

He was banished to the Island of Patmos by the emperor Domitian and, while there, he wrote The Revelation.

He saw all of the other Apostles martyred and lived to a very old age.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Lets look, then, at John's unique view of Jesus -- *Creator, Son of God, Savior.*

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JOHN

Introduction:

Isaiah described the coming of the Messiah as the "child born and the "son given" (Isaiah 9:6), expressing both the humanity and deity of Jesus. Matthew and Luke give us a good look at the Child born. Now, John will give us a view of the Son given; ". . .*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.*" (John 3:16)

There will be only two possible responses to this message: belief or unbelief!

I. WONDERS OF GOD'S SON (Chapter 1:1-18)

There is no deeper theology in Scripture than presented here. ***Jesus is God!***

A. Designer (1-5)

1. Co-existent (1-2)

God was not invented or created, He has always existed, and right there with Him "*In the beginning,*" before time began, was Jesus. And, Jesus was, in essence, all that God is.

2. Creator (3)

Jesus was there, *and* He was active. He created everything. (v. 3)

B. Deity (6-18)

1. Man (6-15)

In order to become the substitute sacrifice for our sin, Jesus put aside His deity and became a flesh and blood man. (Phil. 2) "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten from the Father, . . .*" (v 14) (Incarnation)

2. Manifestation (16-18)

Jesus also came to help us understand God. "*No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten God, . . . He has explained (revealed) Him.*" (v 18)

II. WITNESS OF GOD'S SON (Chapters 1:19-4:54)

A. In Galilee (1:19-2:12)

The witness to who Jesus is would come from three sources: God, the prophet John the Baptist, and by sign miracles. When the religious leaders went out into the wilderness to see the weird crowd-drawer, he told them who Jesus was. They never had listened to the prophets.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

1. First Call

His first disciples came from the followers of John. One of them, Andrew, called his brother, Peter, and Jesus soon gathered a small band of follower into whom He would pour His life.

2. First Sign

The first recorded sign Jesus used was at the wedding in Cana. He turned water into a very fine wine and the miracle had its desired effect, *"His disciples believed in Him."* (2:11)

B. In Judea (2:13-3:36)

Jesus traveled, with His family and disciples, down to Capernium and then on to Jerusalem for the Passover.

1. Cleansing the Temple

Righteousness always brings reaction. Jesus cannot stand to see them, *"making His Fathers house a house of merchandise."* (2:16) He drove them out, and they were unable to stop him and yet, they did not understand why He did it.

2. Calling the Tax Collector

His calling of the tax collector, Nicodemus, gives us one of the clearest presentations of the Gospel in Scripture including the concept of re-birth and the way to receive eternal life.

C. In Samaria (4:1-42)

Jesus took His disciples into the land of their sworn enemies. While there He did the unbelievable thing of talking to a woman in public, and worse, a Samaritan woman. If they had known all . . .

1. Witness to Woman

In witnessing to this woman Jesus presents to us another view of salvation; this time receiving living water.

2. Witness to People

Her witness to her city brought many out to see the man who had so affected her life, and when they heard Him, they said *"we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is indeed the Savior of the world."* (v. 42)

D. Back in Galilee (4:43-54)

1. Feast Results

When Jesus returned to Cana people followed Him because of what he had done earlier at the feast. He had also made water into wine, which may have helped.

2. Faith Response

Among those who came was a royal official who came to ask for healing for his son. Even though Jesus would not go to his home, the official believed His word that his son would be healed and, of course he was, at the exact moment Jesus spoke. He and his entire household were saved.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

III. WELCOME OF GOD'S SON (Chapters 5:1-12:50)

When Jesus returned to Jerusalem, things had heated up and the welcome was certainly mixed.

A. In Jerusalem (5:1-10:42)

1. Actions

This portion of Scripture is filled with action. Jesus healed a paralytic, feed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish, walked on water during a storm, preached and debated with the religious leaders at the Temple.

2. Reactions

These actions brought equal and opposite reactions. He was attacked for healing on the Sabbath, the people wanted Him to set up a permanent welfare state providing them with food, and the Jewish leaders began a campaign that would intensify until they had brought the death of the only man who could save them, their Messiah.

John 7:53-8:10

B. In Bethany (11:1-12:11)

1. Actions

In Bethany He continued to minister to the needs of needy people and culminated His ministry by raising Lazarus from the dead. Only Mary seemed to get it, as she anointed Him with valuable perfume.

2. Reactions

Raising a friend from the dead should have had a positive effect on the Jewish leaders, but they were afraid if too many people followed Jesus the Romans would get nervous and take away their religious freedom and their lucrative and prestigious positions.

Even the disciples were nervous about the loss of money when costly perfume was spilt. We have heart attitude problems. Where your wealth is, there will your heart be also.

C. Back in Jerusalem (12:12-50)

1. Triumph

This long chapter relates the triumphal entry of Jesus back into Jerusalem. Many seem to understand. Many seem to believe. Many seem to care. But it was all a shallow understanding, *"the multitude went out and met Him because they heard He had performed a sign."* (v 18) He had done the ultimate trick and they flocked to see what He would do next.

2. Teaching

Instead they got hard teaching on faith and rejection. He was the one sent from God to shed light so that they might have eternal life, not to judge, but to save. The choice is now theirs.

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

IV. WORK OF GOD'S SON (Chapters 13:1-21:25)

Jesus' ministry to the world is fast coming to an end and He will now focus on His close disciples, not the perfect, but those who believe in Him. They must be ready for the coming events they don't even understand. They will be the only physical presence of God the world will see when He is gone. They will preach, they will serve, and they will die, all for this Man.

A. In Words (13:1-17:26)

1. Instruction

Jesus teaches His disciples intently, demonstrating a servant spirit and explaining about forgiveness, His betrayal, His leaving, Heaven, the Holy Spirit, peace, fruitfulness, the world system, and His soon return.

2. Intercession

He carries on his instruction all the way to the garden where He prays in agony, not only for himself, but for them.

B. In Deeds (18-21)

Actions speak louder than words, and so Jesus suffers and dies for us, who were far off both in time and attitude.

1. Rejection

He was arrested, endured three mock trials, and was executed in the most painful way yet devised by cruel men. "He could have called ten thousand angels to destroy the world and set Him free, but He died alone, for you and me."

2. Rejoicing

Fortunately John does not stop there. After all, his purpose is to tell us that Jesus is God in the flesh and able to carry our sins in His own body. How will we know His sacrifice was adequate? Because God raised Him from the dead.

Again the proof:

The women saw and talked to him.

The disciples saw and talked to Him.

Doubting Thomas saw, and touched Him.

The disciples spent time with, ate with Him.

Peter had a personal counseling session with Him. (John was his witness)

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books which were written." --The Apostle John, John 21:25

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Lesson:

1. It is because of John that we call God, "the Father." The Father is active bringing blessing on those He loves.
2. We know he loves us because He gave His Son to die in our place.
3. Through Jesus, God has revealed to us what He is like.
4. The proper response to God's great gift and Jesus great sacrifice is to love Him and have a servant spirit.