

A Study of the Book of John

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Circa 1950

1. Purpose. Why was this book written? Chapter 20:31.

To inspire faith in Jesus as the Son of God. John accomplishes this purpose by recording the testimonies concerning Christ, the miracles of Christ, and the claims of Christ which produce faith in him (John) and other people.

2. External evidence for John's authorship.

From writers of the early Church, we learn that John wrote the book that bears his name in response to a request from the Church for a record emphasizing the spiritual truths of the Gospel.

This book was to supplement the other records of the life and ministry of Christ.

3. Internal evidence for John's authorship.

Let us prove from the book itself that it was written by John the apostle.

A. Was the book written by an eye-witness? Chapter 20:1-9.

The book was written by an eye-witness, who is described as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

B. To what company must this person have belonged? Chapter 13:23-25.

He was an apostle, as shown by his presence at the last supper.

C. To what special group must he have belonged, as shown by his nearness to the Lord? Matthew 17:1.

He must have belonged to the inner circle composed of Peter, James and John.

D. Which of these is mentioned by name in John's Gospel? Chapter 13:24. What happened to the other before the book was written? Acts 12:1-2. Then who remains as the author of the book?

1. Peter is mentioned by name.

2. James was martyred before the book was written.

3. John the Apostle remains as the author.

THE FOREWORD OR INTRODUCTION. Chapter 1:1-18

These verses present the summary and theme of the story that John is going to tell. What is the story?

The earthly manifestation of the Son of God. John tells us how Jesus revealed Himself to men in every way that was likely to win faith.

The results of that manifestation: The faith of some and the unbelief of others.

Christ is called the Word of God because just as we communicate with others by our word, so God has spoken to man through Christ.

I. THE INTRODUCTORY TESTIMONY CONCERNING CHRIST AND HIS INTRODUCTORY WORK.
Chapters 1:19 through 4:54.

A. Testimony of John the Baptist. Chapter 1:19-36. What was the testimony?

John the Baptist testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God, the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, the Son of God.

B. Testimony of the first disciples. Chapter 1:37-51. What disciples are named in these verses? Who is the disciple who is not named? What was their testimony to Christ?

Andrew, Peter; Philip, Nathanael (Bartholomew). John is the disciple that is not named.

Testimonies to Christ:

Andrew, "We have found the Messiah."

Philip, "We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus...."

Nathanael, "Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

Three stages in the call of the apostles:

1. A call to follow Him, without leaving their work.
2. A call to leave their occupations.
3. A call to be apostles.

C. Christ's first miracle. Chapter 2:1-11.

What was the main effect of this miracle? Why does John record it?

The manifestation of Christ's supernatural power. It inspired the disciples with a deeper faith in Christ.

D. Christ's introductory work in Judea. Chapters 2:13-3:36. What important events are mentioned in this section?

1. The first cleansing of the temple. Verse 2:22.
2. Christ's miraculous power led many of the people of Jerusalem to believe in Him.
3. To inform us that Christ's miraculous power impressed a group of Jewish leaders who sent Nicodemus to interview Christ.

Purpose of the record: To reveal some Jewish errors concerning the kingdom.

Nicodemus thought that he could join Christ's kingdom, but the Lord told him he must be born into the kingdom. Then Nicodemus thought that the Messiah must be lifted up upon a throne.

4. The dispute with John's disciples and John the Baptist's further testimony.

"Witness"--another key-word.

E. Christ's introductory work in Samaria. Chapter 4:1-42. What events are described in this section?

Christ's interview with a Samaritan woman. Result: He reveals Himself to her as the Messiah; she believes and testifies. Christ preaches to the Samaritans; they believe and testify.

F. Christ's introductory work in Galilee. Chapter 4:43-54.

What miracle is recorded here?

The healing of the nobleman's son. Verses 50-53
Chapter 4:25-26 claims of the Messiah.

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST'S GLORY TO THE WORLD; ITS NATURE AND RESULTS.
Chapters 5-12.

- A. A Sabbath-day healing. Chapter 5. What miracle is described here? What title would you suggest for the sermon that followed? What revelation of Christ is seen in the miracle?

The healing of a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years.

When the Jews complained about Christ healing on the Sabbath, He preached a sermon on the following subject: "The Son is the Giver of Life." Each miracle recorded in John's Gospel is a sign pointing to the divine nature and power of Christ. The healing of the paralytic points to Christ as the One Who can and will raise the dead.

- B. The crisis in Galilee. Chapter 6. What miracle is described? What was the effect on the people? What title would you suggest for the sermon that followed? What was the effect of this sermon?

The feeding of the 5,000. They decided that a man who could so easily feed the multitude was just the kind of ruler the country needed. The title: "The Bread of Life." In this sermon, Christ explained that He had not come as an earthly ruler to give them political life, but as a heavenly sacrifice to give them spiritual life. Many of the disciples left Him; but the apostles stood by Him, and expressed their faith in Him.

- C. Teaching during the Feast of Tabernacles. Chapter 7. What two-fold effect did the preaching of Christ have on the people? Make a note of the verses that indicate this.

Some believed, and admired, and accepted; others disbelieved, despised and rejected Him. Key verses: 43, 12.

- D. The woman taken in adultery. Chapter 8:1-11. What trap was set for the Lord? Compare and contrast Matthew 5:17 and Luke 19:10. To what court did Jesus refer the case?

If He said that the woman should be stoned, He would have been accused of contradicting His own teachings concerning mercy. If He said she should not be stoned, He would be accused on contradicting Moses. He referred it to the court of conscience.

- E. Christ teaching in the temple. Chapter 8. What great claim does He make in 8:12-20? What were the results of the teaching that followed? In His conversation with the Jews, who believed in Him? 8:21-30. What did He test? How did the conversation end?

Some believed; others opposed and contradicted. He tested their faith and found it shallow. They attempted to stone Him. Claim: that He was the Son of God.

- F. The Light of the world. Chapter 9. What miracle is described here? What revelation does it give concerning Christ? What were the results?

The healing of the man born blind. It shows that He is the One Who gives spiritual light to the eyes of the soul. The Pharisees denied that Christ performed the miracle because they say that Jesus is the Sabbath-breaker. But the blind man stubbornly insisted that Jesus had healed him.

The church leaders expelled him from the synagogue, but Jesus found him. Jesus revealed Himself to the man as the Son of God and the man believed.

- G. The Good Shepherd. Chapter 10:1-21. In making this claim, with whom does Christ contrast Himself? Read what has gone before. What were the results?

Christ was contrasting Himself with false shepherds, particularly the Pharisees who had cast out this poor blind man simply because he testified that Jesus had healed him.

The result: division of opinion. Some believed Him to be God-inspired; others believed Him to be demon-inspired.

Lesson: if they said these things of Christ, they will say the same things of His followers.

- H. Jesus at the Feast of Dedication. Chapter 10:22-42. These verses record the Lord's final public testimony concerning Himself. What were the results?

Questionings: an attempt to stone Him and to arrest Him for blasphemy. Many believed.

- I. The raising of Lazarus. Chapter 11. What revelation concerning Christ does this miracle give us? What was the effect of this miracle? This is the last of the seven signs or miracles that John selects for the two-fold purpose of showing how faith and unbelief developed during Christ's ministry, and of inciting the reader to faith. Chapter 20:30. Name the first six of these signs. Chapters 2-10.

He is the Resurrection and the Life.

1. A revival of Christ's popularity in Jerusalem.
2. The rulers were disturbed over this and feared that it might lead to a public disturbance and so cause the Romans to suspect a rebellion. At a council meeting they decided that Jesus was a political danger to the nation and therefore must be removed.

Seven miracles -- seven signs pointing to the true nature of Christ and answering the question, "Who is He?" These miracles are as follows:

1. Water into wine -- creative power.
2. Nobleman's son healed -- authority of Christ's word.
3. Impotent man -- Life-giver.
4. 5,000 fed -- Bread of life.
5. Walks on the sea -- Lord of nature.
6. Heals blind man -- Light of the world.
7. Raising of Lazarus -- Resurrection and Life.

- J. The sad summary. Chapter 12:37-42. In these verses, what outstanding reason does John give for the Jewish nation's rejection of Christ? What explanation does he give for the fact that none of the leaders became His disciples?

Spiritual blindness.

Many of them believed, but they were afraid of being put out of the synagogue.

III. MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST'S GLORY TO HIS DISCIPLES. Chapters 15-17.

Rejected by the nation, the Lord now turns to His disciples and delivers His farewell message.

- A. The humiliation of the Son of God. Chapter 13. What made it necessary for the Lord to stoop to the task of washing His disciples' feet before the last supper? Luke 22:24-28. Are we to imitate the Lord literally in the washing of one another's feet, or are we to be moved by the same spirit that inspired the act? John 13:14-17. Of what is the Lord's action on this occasion a type or picture? John 13:3-4. Compare Philippians 2:5-8.

The apostles had been disputing as to who should be the greatest. Christ saw that they were in no condition to receive His farewell message. In order to cleanse them of the spirit of pride and ambition, He stooped to the lowest task given to any servant.

Since the custom of washing the feet of guests is no longer practiced, how shall we obey Christ's command to wash one another's feet?

When we lay aside our pride and dignity in order to help those who are defiled by sin.
Also, when we sacrifice comfort and dignity in order to serve the brethren.

It is a picture of Christ laying aside His heavenly glory, coming down to earth in the form of a servant and humbling Himself to cleanse sinners.

We learn from this incident that in order to belong to Christ, we must be cleansed by Him.

It is a picture of their love for one another.

- B. The farewell message. Chapters 14-16.

1. What three-fold cure does Christ offer for troubled hearts?
 - a. Faith in Christ.
 - b. He was not going away as a result of failure and tragedy, but in order to prepare a heavenly home for them.
 - c. He assures them that He will return.

2. What do these chapters teach concerning the ministry of the Spirit in relation to the Church and the world?

Ministry in relation to the Church: He would take the place of Jesus; He would be their teacher; He would bring to their minds all that Christ had taught them; He would guide them into all truth; He would testify through the disciples; He will reveal the future; He will glorify Jesus.

In relation to the world: the Holy Spirit is described as Christ's attorney pressing His case against the sinner, convincing the world of the righteousness of Christ's cause and convincing people of a coming judgment.

3. What are the disciples warned to expect from the world?

In order that they might not be taken by surprise, the Lord warned His disciples of coming persecution.

4. What supreme command are the "little children" to keep in the absence of the Parent?

In His absence, there must be no disputes in the family; they must love one another.

C. The last prayer meeting. Chapter 17. For what three classes of people does the Lord pray, and what does He ask for each class?

1. Christ and the Father -- prays for His glorification.

2. Christ and the disciples -- prays for those who are around Him.

- (a) Preservation
- (b) Sanctification (consecration)
- (c) Unity

3. Christ and the Church -- united with one another on earth and united with Him in heaven.

IV. THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST'S GLORY IN SUFFERING AND DEATH.

A. Trial and crucifixion. Chapters 18 and 19. What details does John record concerning the Lord's trial and crucifixion that are not recorded by Matthew and Luke?

1. Arrest: The falling back of the multitude.

Name of the servant wounded by Peter.
John's acquaintance with the high priest.
Judas' knowledge of Gethsemane.

2. Trial: Trial before Annas.

Christ's conversation with Pilate in which He testifies concerning the true nature of His kingdom.

3. Crucifixion: Jews' complaint about the inscription.

Christ commends His mother to John.

The words from the cross, "I thirst" and "It is finished."

4. Death: Crucified people generally lingered about three days, but Christ was dead in a few hours. Therefore, we conclude that He did not die merely because of physical suffering. This is confirmed by the fact that from His pierced side there came forth water and blood, which medical men tell us would indicate death from a broken heart.

5. Burial: Nicodemus comes to embalm the body of Jesus.

B. The resurrection. Chapter 20. What five scenes are described in this chapter?

1. Peter and John see the grave clothes in the empty tomb.

2. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and gives her a message for the disciples.

3. The appearance of Jesus to the ten disciples, Thomas being absent.

4. Thomas refuses to believe in Christ's resurrection without positive evidence.
5. Christ appears to Thomas and gives him the evidence that he asks.

APPENDIX. Chapter 21.

What events are recorded in this chapter? The book really ends with Chapter 20. Can you think of a reason why John found it necessary to add this chapter?

Christ appears to seven disciples who had gone fishing by the Sea of Galilee.

Christ's three-fold question and three-fold commission to Peter.

Christ predicts Peter's martyrdom.

Peter's questioning concerning John. When Christ as much as said to Peter that it was none of his business even if John were to live until His coming, it was believed that John would live to see the Second Coming of Christ.

To correct this misunderstanding, which might have proved disastrous to the faith of the early Church, John was inspired to add this chapter.