

# John

## Authorship

The author claims to be an eye-witness to the ministry of Jesus (cf. 1:14). He is referred to in the third person in the Gospel as the “beloved disciple” but never directly by name. He is often associated with Peter. The internal evidence points to John, the son of Zebedee. External evidence makes it clear that Irenaeus believed John to be the author, on the basis of Polycarp’s testimony, and the fact that the book was published at Ephesus. Though many other suggestions have been proposed, there is no compelling reason to deny that the Apostle John was the author of the Gospel that bears his name.<sup>1</sup>

## Date

Most scholars, liberal and evangelical alike, place the date of John in the late first century A.D., c. 90-110. However, there are persuasive arguments for dating this gospel before A.D. 70. John 5:2 seems to read most naturally as though Jerusalem is still standing. External testimony for dating is vague. Even those who think it was written late think it contains much earlier tradition and tone (e.g. Dodd).<sup>2</sup> The dating of Revelation will affect one’s view on the dating of the Gospel if it is concluded that they are by the same author. See there for arguments for a pre-70 dating of the Apocalypse.

## Historical Setting

The contents of John pertain to the birth, ministry and death of Jesus of Nazareth, covering the years between 4-2 B.C. and A.D. 33 in the environs of Jerusalem, Judea and Galilee.

## Original Readers

Opinion is split, among all stripes of interpreters, between viewing the intended readership as unbelievers or believers. The universal appeal of the soteriological affirmations lends credence to a Gentile target audience, at least in part. However, this may be confusing historical intent with actual effect. Several internal textual features make it unlikely that

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<sup>1</sup> See Donald Guthrie, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. rev., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 252-83 for an extensive discussion of the evidence for authorship.

<sup>2</sup> Robinson feels that “it bears all the marks of having been shaped in Jewish-Christian circles in Judea, very much in touch with the synagogue, prior to the rebellion of 66—and then to have suffered from an extended period of cultural isolation and arrested development until it was reused in Hellenistic circles of Asia Minor in the 90s” John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 265.

Gentiles are the target audience. Whereas the Synoptics are replete with references to Gentile contact and a shift from Jewish to Gentile ministry, there is no direct reference to Gentiles anywhere in the Gospel (10:16 and 12:20 notwithstanding). The Gospel is very Jewish, even more so than Matthew according to some. Its interpretation is utterly dependent upon familiarity with Old Testament themes. The Gospel of John's milieu is Palestinian, and in fact Judean rather than Galilean. External evidence leads to the conclusion that John's conscious focus was on preaching the Gospel to the circumcision (Gal. 2:7-9). The best position regarding readership is that John was writing with a view to the evangelization of Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora with the additional aim that they openly reflect the Light (within a largely Gentile culture) once embraced.<sup>3</sup> This makes the most sense out of such passages as 3:19-21; 10:16; 12:20-22, and 12:42-43. It is much like the situation with the original readership of Hebrews except that with Hebrews the issue is clearly continuance in the faith rather than an initial acceptance of it. The fact that the recipients are Jews born and raised in a Gentile environment helps in explaining the meaning of the so-called *Logos* theme in the prologue. Jesus is the "Word" according to the Old Testament use of the term as relating to the God's work in creation (cf. Gen 1:3, 6, 9), revelation (cf. "thus says the Lord"), and redemption (cf. Ps 107:20). This Old Testament based understanding of the *Logos* gave Jewish believers living in a Gentile environment a bridge to speak with their Greek friends about the true nature and identity of what they had come to think of as some kind of "world mind."

### **Occasion**

If John indeed was focused on the evangelization of Jews of the Diaspora it would argue for an earlier date for the Gospel (50's or 60's) rather than a later date since by the end of the first century the need for convincing Israel of its mistake in rejecting Jesus would have been much reduced. In addition, it would help explain the spread of Christianity to Asia Minor, the area in which John is traditionally thought to have ministered.

### **Special Issues**

Historicity. There has been a growing trend to question the historical veracity of certain events as recorded in John due to their marked differences with the Synoptic tradition.

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<sup>3</sup> For a well reasoned argument supporting this thesis see John A. T. Robinson, "The Destination and Purpose of St. John's Gospel," in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1962): 107-25. Robinson observes that the only three uses of *diasporav* in the New Testament are by the three mentioned in Gal. 2:9, James (Jas 1:1), Cephus (1 Pet 1:1), and John (John 7:35).

For example, it is felt by some that Nathanael simply could not have made a confession of Jesus as Messiah so early as John indicates (1:49) since Mark (the “prior” document) does not record Peter’s (authoritative) confession until relatively late in Jesus’ ministry (Mark 8:29). From this the conclusion has been drawn that John simply “puts things in the mouth” of his characters in order to accomplish his theological purpose. This is a hermeneutically questionable practice when on the surface John clearly seems to be reporting a historical event. Such a view has ramifications for such basic issues as how one understands the meaning of “believe” in John, which affects not only the doctrines of soteriology, but also the biblical meaning of discipleship and even the practice of evangelism.

Prologue and Epilogue. As part of a larger discussion on the unity of the book, this issue the prologue and epilogue affects both authorship and interpretation. The epilogue seems to have been added later, perhaps in conjunction with the death of Peter in A.D. 67/68.<sup>4</sup> However, there is insufficient reason to conclude that it was by someone other than the author of the main part of the Gospel. The doctrine of inspiration does not exclude the editorial process, nor even the composition of a work over time. The canonical form of John may be accepted as God’s intended, inspired revelation, with the implication that the Book should be interpreted as a whole. The prologue is less problematic since most of the themes introduced there can be traced rather easily throughout the rest of the book.<sup>5</sup>

### **Message**

John’s account of Jesus’ ministry reveals that eternal life is imparted supernaturally through faith in Jesus, the divine Son, who desires to develop the ensuing relationship into a deep friendship.

### **Outline**

Prologue on Life: The eternal Son has been manifested in human form.	1:1-18
A. The Eternal Existence of the Son.	1:1-5
1. As the creative “Logos,” Jesus has always lived in the presence of the Father.	1:1-3
2. As the possessor of Life, Jesus forever outshines the darkness.	1:4-5

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<sup>4</sup> This assumes an early dating of the book.

<sup>5</sup> See John A. T. Robinson, “The Relation of the Prologue to the Gospel of St. John,” *Twelve More New Testament Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1984): 65-76.

B.	The Earthly Manifestation of the Son, Jesus.	1:6-18
1.	As Light, Jesus illuminated the darkness of the world.	1:6-13
a.	The Light was marked by a divinely appointed witness.	1:6-8
b.	The Light was both received and rejected.	1:9-13
2.	As Logos, Jesus manifested the glory of the Father	1:14-18
a.	The Logos become flesh, full of grace and truth, was testified to by John.	1:14-15
b.	The Logos, full of grace and truth, was received by man.	1:16-18
	Body: Jesus reveals eternal life and provides for its experience in himself.	1:19–20:30
I.	The Impartation of Eternal Life by Faith in Jesus as the Lamb of God.	1:19–12:50
A.	The Introduction and Unveiling of the Logos and Light: The Person, Purpose and Proclamation of the Son.	1:19–4:54
1.	<i>The Man</i> : Jesus is introduced as the Lamb of God.	1:19–2:12
a.	John the Baptist prepares for Jesus' presentation.	1:19-28
b.	John the Baptist proclaims Jesus as the Lamb of God.	1:29-34
c.	John the Baptist presents Jesus to future followers.	1:35-42
d.	Jesus is confessed as Son of God and King of Israel.	1:43-51
e.	Jesus reveals his divine nature at a wedding in Cana.	2:1-12
2.	<i>The Mission</i> : Jesus reveals his divinely directed mission.	2:13-25
a.	Jesus aligns himself with the Father's concerns	2:13-17
b.	Jesus reveals the nature of his ultimate task.	2:18-22
c.	Jesus displays his non-dependence on human assistance.	2:23-25
3.	<i>The Message</i> :	3:1–4:54
a.	Jesus' message is delineated.	3:1-36
1)	Jesus' message: Belief in Jesus brings eternal life.	3:1-21
2)	John's message: Belief brings life; unbelief results in judgment.	3:22-36
b.	Jesus' message is believed.	4:1-42
1)	A Samaritan woman believes the message.	4:1-26
2)	The disciples are recruited to preach the message.	4:27-38
3)	Many Samaritans believe the message.	4:39-42
c.	Jesus is accepted in Galilee.	4:43-45
d.	Jesus' ability to perform his word is demonstrated.	4:46-54
B.	Opposition to the Logos and Light despite its powerful manifestation and evident blessing.	5:1–10:21
1.	Jesus is persecuted for doing the will of the Father.	5:1-47
a.	Jesus violates human traditions of the Sabbath.	5:1-15
b.	Jesus claims the authority of the Father over the Sabbath.	5:16-47
1)	He is condemned for claiming equality with the Father.	5:16-18
2)	He claims the Father's authorization to work.	5:19-23
3)	He claims the Father's authorization to give life and to execute judgment.	5:24-30
4)	He claims the Father's authorization in John.	5:31-35

- 5) He claims the Father's authorization in his miraculous deeds. 5:36
- 6) He claims the Father's authorization directly. 5:37-38
- 7) He claims the Father's authorization through the Scriptures. 5:39-47
- 2. Jesus is abandoned for claiming to be the bread of life sent from the Father. 6:1-71
  - a. Jesus feeds a multitude in Galilee. 6:1-14
  - b. Jesus walks on the sea. 6:15-21
  - c. Jesus declares himself to be the Father's manna from heaven, the only source of eternal life. 6:22-40
  - d. Jesus is rejected and abandoned as the bread of life. 6:41-71
- 3. Jesus is rejected as the Light sent from the Father. 7:1-10:21
  - a. The context: Jesus delays his visit to the Feast of Tabernacles due to hostile Jewish opposition. 7:1-9
  - b. As the heavenly Scholar, Jesus is the perfect communicator of divine revelation. 7:10-8:59
    - 1) Jesus proclaims his truthfulness as teacher. 7:10-52
      - a) The source of his doctrine is the Father. 7:10-18
      - b) He correctly interprets regulation of the Sabbath. 7:19-24
      - c) His bold speech confounds the rulers. 7:25-31
      - d) Certainty of his destiny confounds the rulers. 7:32-36
      - e) He correctly applied biblical prophecy. 7:37-39
      - f) His teaching disarms his adversaries. 7:45-52
    - 2) Jesus demonstrates his ability to apply Torah. 8:1-20
      - a) His knowledge corrects an unjust charge. 8:1-12
      - b) His self-witness squares with Torah. 8:13-20
    - 3) Jesus' crucifixion will confirm his truthfulness. 8:21-29
    - 4) Jesus promises freedom to those who abide in his words of truth. 8:30-36
    - 5) Jesus establishes the basis for the reliability of his teaching. 8:37-59
      - a) He is from and with the heavenly Father. 8:37-47
      - b) As the "I AM" He is equal with the Father. 8:48-59
  - c. As the heavenly Physician Jesus is the powerful agent of human illumination. 9:1-10:21
    - 1) Jesus gives sight to a man born blind. 9:1-12
    - 2) Jesus' miracle is rejected by the leaders. 9:13-34
    - 3) Jesus applies the miracle to the issue of spiritual sight. 9:35-10:21
      - a) Truth stated: belief brings spiritual sight. 9:35-41

	b)	Truth illustrated regarding Jesus as Shepherd.	10:1-21
	i)	The Pharisees did not understand about Jesus as the true Shepherd.	10:1-6
	ii)	The Pharisees are not of the fold of the Good Shepherd.	10:7-21
C.		Rejection of the Logos and Light despite its powerful manifestation.	10:22–12:50
	1.	Rejection of the testimony of Jesus' works results in an attempt to put him to death by stoning.	10:22-39
	2.	Away from Jerusalem many believed in him.	10:40-42
	3.	Resurrection of Lazarus results in the plotting of Jesus' death.	11:1-57
	a.	Jesus' return to Bethany displays the confidence of his timing, derived from walking in Light.	11:1-16
	b.	Jesus comforts Martha and Mary.	11:17-37
	c.	Jesus reveals God's glory by raising Lazarus.	11:38-44
	d.	Some Jews believe but the leaders plot Jesus' death.	11:45-57
	4.	Jesus' final manifestation of the light is rejected.	12:1-50
	a.	Jesus is prophetically anointed for his death.	12:1-8
	b.	Lazarus' death is plotted for his testimony to the Light.	12:9-11
	c.	Jesus is formally presented as King and rejected.	12:12-19
	d.	Jesus makes final declarations about the Light.	12:20-50
	1)	His death will initiate a new phase of discipleship.	12:20-26
	2)	Jesus implores the people to become sons of light by believing in the one who is about to be lifted up.	12:27-36
	3)	Isaiah convicts the rejecters as blind in unbelief.	12:37-41
	4)	Jesus implores all to believe and walk in the Light.	12:42-50
II.		The Enjoyment of Eternal Life through Fellowship with the Father in Jesus' Name.	13:1–17:26
A.		Jesus instructs the disciples about the basis of fellowship.	13:1-30
	1.	Jesus symbolically performs the service of fellowship.	13:1-11
	a.	Divine-human fellowship is based on love.	13:1
	b.	Divine-human fellowship is authorized by the Son.	13:2-3
	c.	Divine-human fellowship is made possible through cleansing from sin.	13:4-11
	1)	Foundational basis: the bath of regeneration.	13:10a
	2)	Daily basis: footwashing from defilement.	13:10b
	2.	Jesus teaches the disciples to serve one another for the sake of fellowship.	13:12-17
	3.	Jesus laments the one who could never experience fellowship.	13:18-30
B.		Jesus commands love as the mark of discipleship in his absence.	13:31-35
C.		Jesus encourages the disciples regarding his imminent departure.	13:36–14:31
	1.	The disciples will eventually join the Son.	13:36–14:4
	2.	The disciples know the way to follow the Son.	14:5-6
	3.	The disciples know the Father through the Son.	14:7-14
	a.	They know the Father through the works of the Son.	14:7-11
	b.	They will do greater works to the glory of the Father.	14:12-14

4.	The disciples will not be abandoned by the Son.	14:15-31
a.	The Holy Spirit will be a permanent companion.	14:15-18
b.	The Father and Son will manifest their abiding presence.	14:19-24
c.	The Holy Spirit will bring the understanding of peace.	14:25-31
D.	Jesus instructs the disciples in the matter of a fruitful life.	15:1-16
1.	They are responsible to maintain vital contact with the Christ.	15:1-8
2.	They will abide through keeping Christ's commandments unto a life of love.	15:9-16
E.	Jesus prepares the disciples for the difficulties of following him.	15:18-16:33
1.	They will be hated by the world for Jesus' sake.	15:18-25
2.	They will testify by the Spirit and be rejected.	15:26-16:4
3.	They will sorrow over Jesus' departure.	16:5-24
a.	He must depart so that the Holy Spirit can come.	16:5-15
b.	Though he departs, they will see Jesus again.	16:16-24
c.	He will depart in victory so that they may have peace.	16:25-33
F.	Jesus prays for all disciples.	17:1-26
1.	Jesus prays for the Father to glorify him.	17:1-5
2.	Jesus prays for the Father to keep the disciples in his absence.	17:6-19
3.	Jesus prays for the Father to unite the disciples together in him.	17:20-26
III.	The Procurement of Eternal Life through the Offering of Christ.	18:1-20:31
A.	Jesus is arrested and tried for bearing witness to the truth.	18:1-19:16
1.	Jesus is betrayed in the garden.	18:1-11
2.	Jesus is examined by Annas and Caiaphas.	18:12-27
a.	Jesus is delivered to Annas.	18:12-14
b.	Peter denies Jesus.	18:15-18
c.	Annas interrogates Jesus over his doctrine.	18:19-23
d.	Annas delivers Jesus to Caiaphas.	18:24
e.	Peter denies Jesus twice more.	18:25-27
3.	Jesus is examined by Pilate	18:28-40
a.	Jesus is accused by the Jews.	18:28-32
b.	Pilate questions Jesus about his royal claims.	18:33-38
4.	Barabbas is requested for release instead of Jesus.	18:39-40
5.	Jesus is mistreated and mocked for his royal claims.	19:1-4
6.	Jesus is delivered to crucifixion despite his obvious innocence.	19:5-16
B.	Jesus is executed in a voluntary act of sacrifice.	19:17-42
1.	Jesus' title as king is accurately written despite Jewish objection.	19:17-22
2.	Jesus' garment is gambled for in fulfillment of prophecy.	19:23-24
3.	Jesus entrusts his mother to the beloved disciple.	19:25-27
4.	Jesus voluntarily dies in completion of his mission.	19:28-30
5.	Jesus' death is validated according to prophecy.	19:31-37
6.	Jesus is buried in demonstration of the Father's acceptance.	19:38-42
C.	Jesus is raised as final validation of his messianic claims and work.	20:1-29
1.	Several disciples view the empty tomb.	20:1-10
2.	Disciples see the risen Lord.	20:11-29
a.	Mary sees the risen Lord.	20:11-18

- b. The disciples, minus Thomas, see the Lord. 20:19-23
    - c. The disciples with Thomas see the Lord. 20:24-29
  - D. Summary: Eternal life is appropriated and enjoyed through faith in Jesus as Messiah. 20:30-31
- Epilogue on Fellowship: Jesus continues as the enablement for living life. 21:1-25
  - A. Jesus arranges breakfast by the Sea of Galilee. 21:1-14
  - B. Jesus restores Peter to sacrificial service as a shepherd of Christ's sheep. 21:15-19
  - C. Jesus comments on the ministry of John. 21:20-25

### **Message**

John's account of Jesus' ministry reveals that eternal life is imparted supernaturally through faith in Jesus, the divine Son, who desires to develop the ensuing relationship into a deep friendship.

### **Argument**

The purpose of John is clearly stated in 20:30-31; it is to bring people to faith in Jesus as the Messiah so that they might come into the possession of eternal life. A major sub-theme of the Book concerns Jesus' desire to develop a deep friendship with those who have exercised such appropriating faith. While the gift of life is conditioned upon faith alone, friendship with Christ is conditioned upon consistent obedience within the context of a continuance of fellowship (cf. 13:8; 14:21; 15:14). Faith is the sole requirement for receiving the gift of eternal life; life always results from placing faith in Christ because the source of that life, the eternal Son, has made it freely available through his death. The construction is always "in" (ejj") plus the accusative—whether it be "the son" (toVn uiJon), "me" (ejmeV), "the son of God" (toJn uiJon tou' qeou'), or "his name" (toV o]noma oujtou').

### Prologue on Life: The eternal Son has been manifested in human form (1:1-18).

The prologue concerns the identity of Jesus as the eternal, divine Son who has always existed in the presence of the Father and who has recently (from John's standpoint) come to earth to deliver people out of the darkness of sin into the same experience of fellowship. As the *Logos*, Jesus is the very manifestation of the eternal God. As the Light he is the revealer and conveyor of the life which resides in him, eternal life, the very life of God. As an introduction to John's account of Jesus, the prologue prepares the reader to understand how Jesus displayed his glory—the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth (1:14-18)—as a demonstration of who he really was and, on that basis, to offer the light of life to all who

would receive it (1:6-13). The fact that a majority did not receive it, is a major sub-motif in the book.

Body: Jesus reveals eternal life and provides for its experience in himself (1:19–20:30).

I. The Impartation of Eternal Life by Faith in Jesus as the Lamb of God (1:19–12:50).

The first half of John shows how Jesus manifested himself as the divine Son and offered eternal life to those who would allow his light to illuminate them. John introduces Jesus' person and ministry in 1:19–4:54 and then shows the various ways in which this Life was manifested, even in the midst of opposition (5:1–10:21). Finally, he juxtaposes the greatest demonstration of the Light (the raising of Lazarus) against the climax of Jewish unbelief as a development of the summary statement in 1:11 (“he came unto his own and his own did not receive him”).

A. The Introduction and Unveiling of the Logos and Light: The Person, Purpose and Proclamation of the Son (1:19–4:54).

As in the Synoptic Gospels, John the Baptist serves as “introducer” of Jesus to the nation of Israel. His ministry includes explanation to the Jewish leaders (1:19-28) and identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God for the sake of his own disciples who would transfer their allegiance to Messiah (1:29-42). However, this only marked Jesus out as Messiah. The disciples also needed to see that he was God. To this end Jesus performs an act of creation in turning water into wine (2:1-12, cf. 1:3). This completes the introduction of the Man. His mission is the issue in 2:13-25. Jesus' cleansing of the temple reveals his commitment to the Father's concern, namely, how a holy God could dwell among and fellowship with sinful man. Ultimately, Jesus' mission would be the provision of a payment for sin as the solution to the alienation cause by sin. This is indicated in the veiled reference to Jesus' death and resurrection (2:19-22). Jesus' message is specifically introduced in his interview with Nicodemus (3:1-21). The Son has come to give eternal life to those who place their faith in him (3:16). Not to believe will result in eternal wrath (3:36). The goal of Jesus' message is not immediately realized in Nicodemus. However, the power of this gospel does receive dramatic confirmation in the response of certain Samaritans at Sychar (4:1-42). The disciples, who have already believed this message, are invited to participate in the joyous labor of reaping a harvest of souls, a labor taken up by the newly converted Samaritan woman as well (4:27-38). There is little hint of opposition at this point and even his own countrymen receive him (4:43-45). The second sign miracle concludes the positive

introduction of Jesus and his message to the nation. From Cana Jesus performs a second sign (4:54) by healing a young boy in Capernaum. This miracle effectively demonstrates his ability to give life regardless of the obstacles involved (4:46-54).

B. Opposition to the Logos and Light despite its powerful manifestation and evident blessing (5:1–10:21).

1. Jesus is persecuted for doing the will of the Father (5:1-47). References to Jesus' going up to Jerusalem seem to mark important junctures in John's account of Jesus' ministry (cf. 2:13; 5:1; 7:10; 10:22). Questions over authority (2:18) and requests for information (cf. 3:4; 4:12) have now given way to accusation of impropriety (5:12), persecution, and threats of death (5:16). Reaction over Jesus' healing of a lame man on the Sabbath leads to an extended treatment of his relationship with the heavenly Father (5:17-47). Jesus claims equality with the Father—and is condemned for it (5:16-18). He claims that the Father has authorized him to do the same works (5:19-23) and to give life and execute judgment (5:24-30). In every way Jesus has been authorized to proclaim and provide salvation (5:31-47). But for all that, the Jews would not believe and come to him for life (5:38-40), prevented from doing so by their own desires for human honor (5:41-47).

2. Jesus is abandoned for claiming to be the bread of life sent from the Father (6:1-71). The same three truths about the person of Christ mentioned in 1:1-5 are developed in this central section of the Gospel: Jesus is equal with the Father (5:1-47), he is Life (6:1-71) and he is Light (7:1-10:21). The Bread of Life discourse is one of the most powerful images of Jesus' substitutionary death for mankind's sin. It is delivered in response to the feeding of the five thousand (6:1-14) and the resulting attempt of the multitudes to make him a "Bread King" (cf. 6:26, 34). Jesus' response is to teach them that he himself is the True Bread from heaven, that is, life itself. They must appropriate this life by faith in his person and work. The relationship of Jesus' walking on the water to the Bread of Life discourse is not immediately apparent. It perhaps serves to indicate, at least to the disciples, that though his methods may be mystifying, his provision of their true needs stands as proof of his divine identity (6:15-25). Perhaps it is this demonstration that prevents the disciples from abandoning Jesus over his difficult words, as others had (6:60-71). He has the words of eternal life because he is the Messiah, the Son of the living God (6:63, 68-69).

3. Jesus is rejected as the Light sent from the Father (7:1–10:21). This section is tied together by the two "I am the Light" statements (8:12; 9:5) and their respective develop-

ment. The two aspects of light that are being dealt with are revelation and illumination, both of which occur in the prologue.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the context for John's presentation of Jesus as the Light of the world. This is appropriate since one of the two main features of the feast was a lamp-lighting rite. The other was a water-drawing rite (cf. 7:37).<sup>6</sup>

The first treatment of Jesus as the light reveals him as the heavenly Scholar who is the perfect communicator of divine revelation (7:1–8:59). Frequent reference is made to Jesus teaching in the temple (7:14, 28; 8:2, 20, 59). There is a repeated emphasis on Jesus' words and doctrine and on the necessity of believing and keeping them. Jesus proclaims his truthfulness as a teacher by appealing to the Father as the source of his doctrine (7:10-18). He correctly interprets the law of Moses with respect to work on the Sabbath (7:19-24). His bold speech is unanswerable by the antagonistic rulers (7:25-31). Jesus' assurance of his destiny confounds the Jews (7:32-36). On the last day of the feast Jesus proffers the water of the Spirit in confirmation of prophecy (7:37-40). The officers sent to arrest Jesus fail to do so because of the way he spoke (7:45-46). So spiritually powerful were his words that one ruler even dared to defend him, namely, Nicodemus, who by now was most likely a believer! In respect to the woman taken in adultery (8:2-11), Jesus displays supernatural knowledge of the situation and apparently reveals generally unknown truth about the individuals involved. He demonstrates his ability to correctly apply Torah, perhaps even to write it as God had at Mt. Sinai (cf. 8:6; 8). In fact, even Jesus' self-witness is a proper application of Torah's rule of multiple testimony (8:13-20). The truthfulness of Jesus' words will be confirmed by the manner of his departure (8:21-29).

The second treatment of Jesus as the Light reveals him as the heavenly physician who is the powerful agent of spiritual illumination (9:1–10:21). No matter how bright the light of revelation may shine, without the assistance of divine illumination, a person is incapable of seeing and believing. The theme that ties this section together is blindness (cf. 9:1; 13, 39-41; 10:21). The miracle of restoring sight to a man born blind reveals Jesus working with the man to bring him to an understanding of his messianic identity and thus to faith (9:1-12; 35-38). The Pharisees are blind to this and, therefore, reject the miracle and punish the man. Their spiritual blindness puts them in danger of judgment for their sin (9:39-

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<sup>6</sup> See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 305.

41). Introduction of the Shepherd motif is awkward at this point given the absence of any device of demarcation, which is a regular feature in John. Reference to opening the eyes of the blind in 10:21 may alert the reader to the fact that in some way the issue of spiritual blindness is still involved in the great shepherd passages. The Pharisees' spiritual blindness has made them deaf to the voice of the Shepherd (10:1-6).<sup>7</sup> The tragic consequence is that the Pharisees refuse to enter the sheepfold through Christ and therefore would not enjoy abundant life as a member of his flock (10:7-18). Jesus' work of illumination has not had its desired effect with respect to the leaders.

C. Rejection of the Logos and Light despite its powerful manifestation (10:22–12:50).

Mention of yet another feast, Dedication, indicates a major division break at 10:22 even though the shepherd/sheep motif continues. This section brings to a climax the tension between Jesus and the religious leaders. The ultimate miracle, raising Lazarus from the dead, is denied, leading directly to Jesus' execution in Jerusalem.

The section begins with two more instances of Jesus' claim to deity, which results in a renewed effort to kill him (10:22-39), and forcing Jesus to withdraw beyond the Jordan, where many do believe in him (10:40-42). Again, the resurrection of Lazarus brings together Jesus' claim to deity with the Jews' desire to do away with him (11:1-44 with 11:45-53) resulting again in his withdrawal to Ephraim (11:54). However, Jesus had been appointed to die in Jerusalem and the ensuing events show that he purposefully presents himself for execution.

The final manifestation of the Light takes place as Jesus enters Jerusalem in accordance with Davidic prophecy and is roundly rejected by the leaders (12:1-19). A request by certain Greeks<sup>8</sup> triggers Jesus' declaration that the hour had finally arrived for him to be glorified through the accomplishment of the work of redemption. This is accompanied by a challenge to discipleship (12:20-26). His death on the cross is affirmed by the Father as his will for the Son (12:27-34). Jesus again appeals for a response to the Light, which, to this point, has been largely ignored due to unbelief, as foreseen by the prophets (12:35-41). For

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<sup>7</sup> The shift in metaphor is noted. However, note also the fact that the passage makes it clear that the Pharisees are still in view (10:6).

<sup>8</sup> Probably Greek-speaking Jews of the diaspora; Cf. Robinson, "Destination," 120-21 and John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 292-98.

the sake of those rulers who had believed, Jesus holds himself up as the example of walking in the light in obedience to the Father (12:44-50). But for the nation as a whole the Light has been rejected.

## II. The Enjoyment of Eternal Life through Fellowship with the Father in Jesus' Name (13:1–17:26).

Throughout John's presentation of Jesus as *Logos* and Light to the unbelieving world, there has been an important sub-motif of discipleship, a relationship that is also presented as that of friendship between the Lord and his own (cf. 15:9-17). Very early on the disciples' belief had been noted (cf. 1:49; 2:12). From that point onward Jesus had been involving them in his ministry of Light. Now he sets forth specific instruction on the nature of discipleship in light of his soon departure. They had enjoyed the presence of Jesus as the means of fellowship with the Father. After his departure there would be a change in the means and method of this fellowship. This is the substance of chapters 13-17.

### A. Jesus instructs the disciples about the basis of fellowship (13:1-30).

Through the service of foot washing Jesus teaches the disciples that, having been bathed unto regeneration, they needed only to cleanse the daily defilement of sin in order to maintain fellowship with him and the Father. Tragically Judas would not partake of either provision for sin. Jesus' departure would require a compelling reminder of his continued presence with the disciples. Love for one another as he had loved would suffice (13:31-35).

With respect to his plain declaration that he would be leaving them, Jesus comforts the disciples with various assurances including the promise of answered prayer, the arrival of the Holy Spirit, a unique manifestation of himself and the Father, and the gift of peace (13:36–14:31). They will be able to produce the fruit of harvested souls through their continued connection to him, their Vine (15:1-8). They will abide in Messiah's love through keeping his commandments and thus experience great joy (15:9-16). Regardless of the difficulties awaiting them they will know the sustaining presence of the Spirit and a joy that no one will be able to thwart because of Jesus' victory over the world (15:18–16:33). Jesus' intercessory prayer to the Father on the disciples' behalf will guarantee the spiritual resource needed to glorify him continually (17:1-19). This resource will extend to all future believers as they become united in the Father and Son along with the original disciples (17:20-26).

Having welcomed and believed in Messiah, the disciples had received the gift of eternal life. Now they were granted the authority to experience the fullness of that life in

fellowship with the Father just as had the Son. This is the implication of the “in my name” statements in this section.

### III. The Procurement of Eternal Life through the Offering of Christ (18:1–20:30).

Though Jesus had promised and actually granted the gift of eternal life, the price for its procurement had not yet been paid. Despite rejection by his own nation Jesus gave himself as an offering for sin out of his and the Father’s love for the whole world (3:16). Through the skillful interweaving of (1) treachery by the Jewish leaders (2) complicity of the Roman officials and (3) denial and abandonment of his own disciples, John makes it crystal clear that it was all mankind that put Jesus on the cross of Calvary as a substitute for the punishment that all deserved (cf. taking the place of Barabbas–18:39-40). Even though human treachery is so plainly evident, it is Jesus, under the direction of the Father, who is actually carrying out the agenda of redemption established in eternity past (cf. 13:31; 18:11, 36-37; 19:11, 24, 28-30, 36-37). Two disciples, one being Nicodemus the Pharisee, remove Jesus’ body from the cross and bury it with honor, testimony to the power of the Light which had shown into their hearts (cf. 3:21).

The Jews had requested a sign signifying Jesus’ right to cleanse the temple on the Father’s behalf (2:13-18). On the basis of Jesus’ response to that request (“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up”–2:19) it might be argued that the final sign in this book of signs is the resurrection of Jesus (20:1-29). Appearances to the disciples serve at least two purposes: (1) to confirm all that he had told them so that they would be strengthened in their faith (cf. 2:22; 12:16) and (2) so that they could serve as witnesses to the truth (cf. 17:18). The fact that their faith was still very much in need of strengthening is seen in Jesus’ words to Thomas “Do not be unbelieving, but believing” (20:27).

John’s purpose has been accomplished. He has recorded these signs so that people may come to faith in Jesus as Messiah, and that, having so believed, they may share fully in the same life enjoyed mutually by the Father and Son—eternal life!

### Epilogue on Fellowship: Jesus continues as the enablement for living Life (21:1-25).

The prologue has introduced the primary theme of entrance into the Life of the Father through the eternal Son. The epilogue focuses on continued fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is an integral part of the book, not a mere afterthought or later addition by a different author. The sharing of a meal is clearly an act of fellowship (21:1-14). It reveals Jesus’ interest in an ongoing relationship with the disciples as well as his intent to provide for

such a relationship. The forgiveness of foot-washing taught in the Upper Room is applied in the case of Peter as Jesus affirms his acceptance of the one who had denied him, commissioning him to shepherd the Lord's own sheep (21:15-19). By indicating the manner of Peter's death, Jesus demonstrates that he is still in control of everything and that his goal is still the glory of the Father. A personal note about John serves to underscore the sovereignty of Jesus in the manifestation of the Life.

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