

The Gospel of John – An Overview

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Introduction

The fourth gospel is in some senses unlike the synoptic in presentation style but not content or message (Zondervan NIV study Bible 1623). The apostle John writes this gospel from a stand point of one who actually walked and interacted with Christ, lay on his bosom and was part of the inner circle of disciples. While the synoptic gospels capture some factual narratives surrounding his genealogy, birth, death and resurrection, John only captures what he considered essential to telling his compelling story. Thus the apostle omits some perspectives that the others include in their narratives though inserts unique aspects which others omit. The author was evidently selective as Dr Mark C Black and others have observed (Black et al 3). For instance, John does not record the nativity story but straight away dives into the nature of Jesus Christ (i.e. pre-existence and incarnation) and the miracles he did which all point to his divinity having briefly introduced his (Jesus') predecessor, John the baptizer. A meticulous study of this gospel is therefore a well worth activity. The aim of this paper is to give an overview of the nature and essence of this fourth Gospel.

Bird's Eye View of the Gospel of John

John's gospel stands as one of the key narratives that flowed from the pen of the apostle John, offering yet another witness to the factual life of Jesus Christ, the logos and creator of the world, incarnated and walked amongst humanity. Jesus is pictured as the pre-existent one who came on the earth with a mission to save his own but sadly, most of them rejected him as the saviour (John 1:11-12). None the less, the only begotten Son of God saved the world from sin and its consequences having believed in *Yahushua* for salvation (John 3:16). Unlike other gospels, the author of this gospel proceeds straight to the nature and mission of Jesus Christ, his works, miracles, elaborate and deeply rich sayings/discourses (although John does not record any of Jesus' parables as does the other synoptic gospels. He however records seven outstanding miracles many of which are not recorded by other writers). Each of these, evidently written from an eye witness' perspective, is calculated to point men to the saviour so that they may have life. Jesus is portrayed variously in this gospel. He is said to be the *light*, the *life*, the *word*, the *vine*, the *door*, the *way*, the *truth*, the *bread of life*,

the *shepherd* etc (e.g. in John 6; 7; 10; 14 and 15). It is in this gospel that the Father-Son relationship is largely introduced and referred to more frequently than in any other New Testament writings. In this unique narrative, Jesus claims to be the eternal Son of God (i.e. eternal generation; *monogenes*), and therefore equal with God, which fact infuriated the Jews at times, hence their repeated attempts to lynch or stone Jesus to death (e.g. John 8:59). Because his time had not arrived, they failed to capture him but in the end, they conspired, laid false charges against the saviour of the world and had him crucified. The author of this gospel spends quite a considerable amount of time in mind of slowly but meticulously narrating the last hours of Jesus' life far more than any other gospel writer, giving unique graphic details, meaning, import and insights to what actually transpired until Jesus finally cries "It is finished," giving up the ghost (John 19:30). Dr Black and others rightly observe this unique fact of Jesus' emotional time with his disciples when they state the following: "*Preparation for his death leads Jesus to spend time with his disciples to prepare them for the event of his death and for their role in announcing the kingdom afterward. The fourth Gospel stands alone in its detail of Jesus' time with his disciples...*" (Black et al 2). But the gospel writer does not end there, he demonstrates that Jesus actually died and rose again on the third day, had encounters with some select people, including his disciples, in the process reinstating Peter to his former estate after soliciting commitment from him (John 20 & 21). In the last chapters therefore, we have Jesus triumphantly rise from the dead before ascending to Heaven. John concludes his narrative by declaring that not all was recorded because it was too much and could have filled the whole world (John 21: 25).

Author, Primary Target, Location and Date of writing

The Gospel of John is attributed to the apostle whom Jesus loved. Both internal and external evidence points to this author as having penned down the gospel for which the entire world is indebted. Early church tradition and writings of the apostolic fathers or their successors all state that the apostle was indeed the author, although the gospel itself does not directly declare that John is the writer of this narrative. Rather, John writes in the third person about himself as '*the disciple whom Jesus loved*', so some suggest (Zondervan NIV study Bible 1623). He evidently enjoyed a privileged position and relationship with the master alongside a limited circle of friends. Some other evidence that points to the apostle is the style, nature and depth of insight of the narrative, very detailed and unique in approach. For instance, his approach to engaging discourses recorded in this gospel stands alone and apart from all other gospel narrations. Another aspect is that the gospel spends far more time about the latter parts of Jesus' ministry as compared to synoptic gospels. Only a person who had intimate contact and interactions with Jesus could have so written in such a graphic and compelling manner. Thus, we may safely assert that John, as it were, goes to the marrow and meat of Jesus' mission to the world. However, some argue that the writer could not have been John the apostle himself but others (Berkhoff 57).

One suggested alternative author is John the presbyter who was an elder rather than an apostle. The possibility of another is John Mark or any other such writer that carried a similar name. This debate is not conclusive and can go either direction. The Johaniene authorship was unquestioned for a long time until much later when sceptics queried the assumption of the apostle having been the author based on the language, developed/advanced theology and somewhat different approach to gospel narrative presentation. Dr Black and others make a very correct observation when they state the following:

The Gospel of John was circulated widely in the early church. It was used by both friend and foe of the true incarnate word of God. General respect was accorded the Gospel for most of the years thereafter. But with the onset of the age of enlightenment, scepticism over the Gospel's trustworthiness developed. A publication by anti-supernaturalist David Friedrich Strauss in 1835 opened the way for discounting the significance of the fourth Gospel... (Black et al 3-4).

This excerpt scarcely needs any further comment but we must go on to state that these sceptics further argue that John was an apostle rather than an elder thus knocking him out as a possible writer (refer to 1 & 3 John to substantiate this argument further since the same writer of the gospel is believed to be the same of the epistles). But then the apostles were sometimes referred to as elders in the scripture as well. The argument rages on.

As to the location and date of writing the gospel, no firm conclusion has been arrived at either but given its developed theology and clear deep insights, the Gospel of John is believed to have been the last gospel written by the apostle or under his direction (Ngewa 5). Some place it to the late AD 80s (Zondervan NIV study Bible 1623) while others much later into the second century. Most believe that it may have been written by AD 85 thereabout¹. The location is believed to have been at Ephesus where John is said to have spent some considerable time after his island of Patmos encounter and laboured among the saints before being transported to glory, a ripe, seasoned and aged man. Other suggested possible places of authorship have been forwarded but the Ephesus proposition is held more universally.

The gospel is primarily designed to appeal to Christian people probably of Asia Minor whether Jewish or not, hence the elaborate explanation of the nature of Christ, his incarnation, mission and work². That alone gives credence to the claim that the author must certainly have been of Jewish blood or descent (Berkhof 55; Zondervan NIV study Bible 1623). The Greeks definitely understood what John had to say because Jesus is styled the “*logos*” or word which word is unique and

¹ Others suggest AD 98 because of the allusion by Irenaeus to Trajan who reigned from AD 98 onwards. Still others have suggested an even earlier date before AD 70.

² Berkhof suggests that the target readership were probably Gentiles with a philosophical world view.

hardly used to a Jewish context only. An interesting aspect about the gospel is that it is universal in its appeal encompassing people from all walks of life, ethnic backgrounds or affiliation, hence the opinion held by other scholars that John was not necessarily written for Christians alone but a combination (Black et al 2). Thus, we read of “his own”, in apparent reference to the Jews, the Samaritans and finally “the world” that have a place in him is only they believe. This attribute sets John apart as authorities like Prof Louis Berkhof have rightly asserted.

Purpose and Aim of Writing

John states his express purpose and aim for writing in John 20:31 that people may believe and therefore be saved. Thus, from the outset, John writes to his primary target readership who may include both the Jews and Gentiles, presenting Jesus as the saviour of the world regardless of where one hails from, if only they believe. Hence, in John 3, Jesus’s discourse with Nicodemus points to regeneration³ (i.e. the new birth), in the fourth chapter, Jesus talks to the Samaritan woman at the well and so forth, all aimed at different classes of people pointing to himself as the long awaited saviour of the world. Jesus portrays himself as the eternal son of God and the shepherd whose voice is heeded by his sheep (John 10). But then, Jesus is personal and shows emotion in this book as well as performing some miracles that posit him as divine. The case of Lazarus rising from the dead is a case in point (John 11). Jesus expresses emotion by weeping over dead Lazarus because of the attachment he had for the family despite having delayed two days (John 11:35). Christ is also said to be one that forgives sin and points to himself as the source of life, from whom rivers of living waters flow that would quench one’s thirst forever (John 6 & 7). The gospel further points Jesus as the vine, in whom to dwell is eternal life (John 15). The eternal son of God states that he must go to the Father first (through the cross) before the *paraclete*, the Holy Spirit may descend to continue Jesus’ mission in the world (John 14-16). The Spirit would proceed from the Father (and the son) as He comes to remind the believers about Christ, his mission and work in addition to revealing new truths to them. The other role of the Spirit is to reprove or convict the world of sin. All this is covered in chapters 14 to 16 and then in the 17th chapter, Christ prays to the Father for the unity of the believers because they would be left in the world to face the hostile troublesome world, but the comfort is that the Spirit would be present throughout. Only John records this pneumatological aspect in that detail. In Chapter 19, Jesus is crucified and gives out that triumphant cry of “it is finished”, now that the passive and active obedience of Christ has been accomplished. The atonement is complete and

³ Or the ‘new birth’ as others like William Plumer (1802-1880) suggest (‘The New Birth defined’, Free grace broadcaster, issue # 202, 2007 pp1-5). George Smeaton has a section on regeneration on pages 175-220 where he traces this doctrine in detail drawing from different parts of scripture including John. For instance, he quotes John 3:3-6 as teaching regeneration or the new birth. Another, JC Ryle has an extensive treatment from John 7:37 & 38 related to spiritual thirst which Jesus promises to quench and fill one’s life if only they come to him.

they that would believe are saved from their sins. Thus we can state that John's aim is to present a compelling factual case to the world attracting people from all walks of life to the one and only saviour, whose eternal generation from the Father remains enshrouded in mystery but none the less true.

Unique Features and Content of the Book of John

There are many unique features about this great gospel which beg high lighting. The first is that the gospel is relatively longer than Mark but shorter than Luke or Matthew, yet presents deep truths. Secondly, the approach that John takes is uniquely different. His theological insights are far more developed and better reasoned out compared to the other gospels. For instance, his logos doctrine, pre-existence and divinity of Christ stand unique and definitely more advanced relative to other gospels. Third, the gospel highlights discourses and truths that fell from the mouth of the saviour that other gospel writers do not point out. For instance, the Nicodemus encounter is nowhere else recorded as in John (Zondervan NIV Study Bible 1623). Fourth, John does not capture or record any parables as do others but effectively brings out the way to be saved. The book highlights several particular signs that prove that the saviour is come (African Bible Commentary 1251). Jesus is said to be the way, the truth and the life (John 14). Fifth, the gospel was written relatively later as compared to the other three gospels (app. AD 85-90). Sixth, John is not among the synoptic gospels because it does not capture several aspects of the gospel or present the same truths in a similar way as others. Although John is relatively different in style and approach, it none the less presents the same truths that others do and thus complements or blends well with them (Berkhof 55). Seventh, John is the other gospel that is directly attributed to an apostle, alongside Matthew. The writer never directly refers to himself as "John" the apostle but rather writes in the third person with respect to self. Eighth, the gospel of John gives successive chronological progression of events. He mentions words like "*The next day*" or the Jewish feasts thereby giving an idea of the timing and progression of events. This attribute is largely found in John's gospel unlike the other gospels. By that token, John is more definite in relation to timing and progression as Berkhof has rightly pointed out (54). Lastly, it appears the author of the Gospel of John, did not use the other Gospels as source documents although he may have been aware of their existence. His use of the word "*Logos*" is uniquely John's and would resonate with some one of Hellenistic or Greek influence (Berkhof 59).

What about the content? What are the main salient features the gospel presents? For one thing, the gospel is both historical and theological in outlook. It was probably written much later after the other gospels had been written and appears to have a much more developed theological thought neatly weaved into the narration as each epoch progresses to the next. For another thing, John's gospel touches on pertinent issues among which are the points we highlight in the following points:

- a. The gospel begins on a very deep theological note stating the pre-existence of the word who created the world and in effect was God. From here, we note right away that what John is introducing is a divine person who existed before he was born (John 1:1-3).
- b. Then the writer digresses for a while and in the process introduces Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist. This forerunner is clearly not the Christ himself but sent as one to prepare the way.
- c. The narration quickly reverts back to Jesus and retains that picture for most of the rest of the gospel except for a few scattered places where the Baptist and others are mentioned in relation to Jesus of course.
- d. In chapter two, Jesus performs the first miraculous sign at Cana where his mother and other invited guests are present. It is startling how Jesus answers his mother when she places her request but then it appears she understood him well and instructs people to obey what he said. In the end, Jesus brings glory to God and demonstrates traits of his divinity from such an early stage. People have argued about the central idea of this miracle, whether it was to justify the taking of alcohol, the best of which came at the last or it was to show that Jesus could do the impossible. This writer prefers the latter position with the following qualification: "every miracle was to the glory of God and this was just one of them".
- e. In the third Chapter, the famous encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus takes centre stage. Being a religious and devout leader, one would have expected Nicodemus to either revile Jesus or speak ill of him due resulting from the latter's multiple claims, Nicodemus' posture surprises the reader because he comes across as a genuine enquirer and that by night! We have no telling why he pitched up at that late hour but one may not be entirely mistaken that he avoided retribution from his colleagues the Pharisees. However, what is more important is that this Pharisee came to seek life and that he probably got because much later, there is some evidence that Nicodemus may have possibly been converted (John 7:50; 10:39). When the million dollar question is posed, Jesus answers the man from a very different angle stating that what Nicodemus really needed was an inward transformed heart rather than outward forms or subscribing to some empty religious ritual baptised in the teachings of men. Naturally, Nicodemus was puzzled at the Lord's response because he could not possibly imagine what the master spoke. The reason is that they were on different pages in terms of spirituality or perception. Jesus thus explains the nature and fact of the new birth, which is a spiritual transformation rather than mere association with rituals or code of conduct. This new birth is not water baptism as some would think, suggest or argue from verse 5-8 but is deeper to mean the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit whereby a new principle of life is implanted into a soul. That person that

was previously alienated from God is brought to life and for the first time realise their utter helplessness and hopelessness outside Christ. They thus cry to the lord Jesus for mercy and are saved. This latter part happens in the conscious life and is called “conversion”. Dr Samuel Ngewa captures this idea relating to Jesus’ response very beautifully when he states the following in his Gospel of John exposition:

Jesus responded to Nicodemus’ question by explaining more about the new birth. In 3:5-8 he says key things about it: 2) the new birth is birth of water and the Spirit, and b) the new birth is like the activity of the wind. The two genitives, ‘of water’ and ‘of the Spirit’, in 3:5 are qualitative genitives. The quality of birth in question is not birth by a woman but birth of a different kind. It involves water and the Spirit. The exact meaning of this phrase is a matter of debate, but it should probably be interpreted in the context of John the Baptist’s baptism and Jesus’ baptism. John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance. He called men and women to leave their old ways of life in preparation for the coming of Jesus (see Luke 3:7-14). At the same time, he testified that Jesus would baptise with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). While John the Baptist’s water baptism signified cleansing or repentance, Jesus’ baptism with the Holy Spirit brought newness of character and the energy to move on as a member of the family of God... (Ngewa 53-54).

From the moment of conversion, a person begins a new life. As much earlier alluded to, some hold and teach that Jesus is here talking about water baptism or some such outward moral change but I would argue that he uses figures of speech to point to a spiritual reality, as Dr Ngewa has ably elucidated. Another passage that closely approximates what is here taught is Titus 3:4-6 where the phrase “*washing of regeneration*” is used in the King James Version of the Bible (KJV). Yet another passage would be 2 Corinthians 5:17 where the apostle asserts the fact of a transformed heart, mind and character. The old is said to be gone and replaced by a new heart and mind. Thus, salvation is not a process or a progressive over time putting away of bad habits but rather an instantaneous internal change wrought by the Holy Spirit.

But then, the writer in the same chapter proceeds further to talk about God’s love for the world in verse 16 stating that any that does not accept him is already damned. This is both good and bad news for people because one either enters eternal bliss or eternal retribution contingent on their faith in Christ. Salvation is by grace alone not works. Another deep theological point worth noting is the eternal generation concept that is suggested in this verse. Jesus is said to be the eternally begotten son of God, meaning he is pre-existent and has always been the Son of God, without beginning or end. From an Economic Trinity perspective, Jesus is the son, proceeding from the Father. From an Ontological Trinity perspective, God is one and all in all.

There was much debate about this matter in history and still generates not a little stir even today. The Church councils settled the Trinitarian and Christological issues once and for all and in many senses refined matters. That said, there is need to take care not to impose our thinking into the text what it is not saying or meant to say. Happily, the John 3:16 passage does actually infer the eternal generation of the Son. One more point and we are done on this 16th verse. Incidentally, the use of the word “love” is relatively more prominently used in John’s gospel relative to the others.

- f. In the fourth chapter, Jesus enters a discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well. This was unprecedented in his day because the Jews and Samaritans were avowed enemies and never mixed, worse for different genders. Jesus however breaks this barrier and engages this woman of low reputation pointing her to himself as the source of the water of life. As they discourse, he Jesus makes very serious categorical and yet deeply theological statements. For instance, he states that God is Spirit and thus does not have any physical form or shape. Secondly, Jesus states by implication that God is ever present and not limited to a given locality or building. In stating this point, Jesus seems to suggest that at a future date, God would not be solely found in a structure such as the celebrated physical Temple at Jerusalem but rather everywhere, including in men’s hearts. Sadly, many today still do not grasp this point and would quarrel or fight over buildings, sacred places and all when God is supposed to dwell in their hearts by faith. No wonder the apostle Paul would assert that the believer was the Temple of God for he knew better, far better than many of us even do today (I Corinthians 6:19, 20).
- g. In John five, Jesus talks about a resurrection of some sort that would come about (John 5:25). Having performed some miracles in the opening parts of the chapter, Jesus alludes to the resurrection as he gives his testimony about his relationship to the father. It is not clear whether this is a spiritual or actual resurrection but it would appear he is talking about spiritual life of people being raised from the sleep of death. In the same breathe, one would not be entirely wrong to assert that Jesus has a future resurrection in view as well. Jesus is the source of all life and not to be in him is everlasting death.
- h. In John six, Jesus enters some discussions with various people but in the end makes strong statements to the effect that only those drawn by the father respond to the gospel call. It would appear that some resisted his summons to eternal life but Jesus knows better why, they have hardened hearts and would not respond. In this chapter, Jesus claims to be the bread of life, which to eat is eternal life (John 6:22-37). Naturally, they were confused and infuriated! How could a mere man ask them to eat his flesh? That was unacceptable. But Jesus meant a deeper spiritual truth, which they failed to grasp. Many still do miss the point today instead of trusting Jesus, they trust in what he offers, the rewards of effects rather than the giver himself.

- i. In chapter seven and eight, Jesus encounters the religious leaders on various fora and in the end angers some of them or their followers to the extent that they want to stone or arrest him, though they do not succeed. What irks them most is his claims to be the Son of God and thus equating himself to be God. Much more, Jesus claims to pre-exist Abraham which clearly infuriates the Jew charging Jesus with blasphemy at another point (John 8:58-59). Chapter eight highlights some cultural bias in Jesus' day as the lopsided group thrusts a woman caught in adultery before Jesus to make a comment, with the intent of finding fault. Jesus answers them by way of indirect question or accusation. In the end, the woman goes scot free but obviously as a transformed person. A few questions that beg answering though, did Jesus by his words to the woman's accusers condone sin or not? The other question could be, where was the man with whom the said woman was committing this sinful act? At times, we too can be unconsciously biased in our judgments, let alone inconsistent. In chapter nine, Jesus heals a man born blind on the Sabbath which ruffles not a few waters. Jesus' adversaries are inquisitive and hope to pin Jesus down but do not succeed. In the end, the man is excommunicated but meets Jesus later. There is a price to be paid to be a Christian as not everyone has faith.
- j. Jesus is said to have come to give life to his sheep that would hear him (John 10). These sheep are said to hear his summons and respond when he calls. This of course means the people who respond to his call are said to be akin to the obedient sheep while others are said not to be part of the sheep pen. The comforting thing is that these sheep are safe as long as they are in the father's hand and will receive eternal life. Further, Jesus was evidently human when he traversed this terrestrial ball. In John 11, he is said to have 'loved' Lazarus' family as well as wept when he came to the tomb. Thus, he was fully qualified to be our saviour based on these two qualities of being both God and Man at the same time. This fact however has been misunderstood and cause confusion in many circles with some extending the idea out of proportion while others rejecting the fact altogether. In history, the Gnostics while rejecting some aspects of the gospel liked John because it taught some of the tenets that apparently agreed with their interpretation of things. John, Hebrews and Revelations have accordingly generated not a little dust in religious circles, many of which are needless if one objectively reads the text for what it is as well as determine the authorial intent. Jesus was the God-man.
- k. The Gospel goes on with various deep themes which would be an inexhaustible mine to bring to the surface in this short dossier campus. Suffice it to say that at every point, the writer highlights the fact that Jesus is the light, life, door, the shepherd of the world and only they that fly to him by faith are saved. Further, once they are in Him, they must abide in Him or else be lost (John 15). As Jesus leaves the world, he sends the Holy Spirit to

comfort his people as well as to bring to remembrance the things that are of Christ.

- I. The upper room discourse is uniquely detailed in this gospel far more than any other gospel. The graphic detail and slow narration of the moments before the cross are some of the most moving write ups in the world. Jesus' emotions and anguish is brought forth so vividly much more than any other gospel has done. Unlike Mark which is a relatively faster narration, John details and captures some facts that leave one without any doubt that surely, the writer must have been present when events took place. This alone knocks out any sceptic that claims that John or any other writer for that matter cooked up this story. But then Jesus is arrested, tried and eventually crucified. On the third day, he rises from the grave giving many convincing proofs that he was alive and in the process restores Peter. Having served three public years, Jesus is taken up to Heaven with a promise to return. One cannot read this great book without coming away with a feeling of triumph in the end.

Thus, we can see that John was very clear in writing his gospel, adding yet another perspective and dimension to the already existing narratives. He writes in such a way as to ensure that whoever reads the book may believe and in the same breathe silencing any wrong teaching or sceptic. No wonder many have suggested that this is the first Gospel to be read by a new believer, despite having been written last, probably the finest akin to the best wine Jesus made in John 2.

How John's Gospel Differs and Blends with the Synoptic Gospels

As earlier intimated in the uniqueness point above, John differs from the synoptics in some aspects of content and style. Its approach is to break into the anatomy of the gospel, its essence and nature. John records some key aspects which others do not and vice versa. For instance, no parable is found in John. The Nicodemus encounter is only found in John but other gospel authors do not highlight. The eternal generation (i.e. begotten son of God) doctrine or the 'Father-Son' relationship is highly pronounced in this gospel only (Ngewa 6). The detailed narrative relating to the final moments of Jesus' life are more elaborated in this gospel as well as the encounters with and reinstatement of Peter. At the cross, Jesus tells John to adopt Mary as his mother and then voluntarily gives up the ghost to suffer the very dregs, yea, the full cup of God's eternal wrath on behalf of the world. No other gospel gives such graphic details.

Perceived Challenges with the Gospel of John

Like any other gospel, John has some perceived challenges raised by critics and sceptics alike suggesting that John the Apostle is not the author of the gospel in

question based on the nature and style of writing. They argue that the insights presented in the gospel are too advanced to be for the first century alone. They further argue that John omits and at the same time incorporates some aspects which other gospel writers do not record. The date of the write up is consequently claimed to have been much later, probably deep into the second century, and therefore a work of an imposter of sorts. Still others argue that the John whose name is tied to the gospel is the presbyter rather than the apostle. They also suggest others like John Mark as the possible authors. The popularity of this gospel with the early heretics such as the gnostic raises some concerns and ground to suggest that the book was a second century production, hence its style and approach. But these arguments are hardly sufficient to dislodge the traditional view that John the apostle indeed did author the book. For one thing, he was an apostle. For another thing, John is an eye witness as evidenced by the graphic detail highlighted in the book. These and many other arguments point to John the apostle, although admittedly, the debate is inclusive. The form and style is very similar and in sync with the epistles which itself suggests that the writer of this gospel is the same.

John remains a classic write up pointing to the ministry and life of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God.

Lessons from the Gospel

The gospel covers many lessons that both edify and build one. The narrative offers a compelling case for one approaching it from a presuppositional perspective. Below are some of the salient lessons in point form:

1. John is probably one of the clearest gospels in relation to the humanity and divinity of Christ. It presents Jesus as both God and man.
2. The gospel offers the good news to the entire world if only they believe.
3. The claims of Jesus are unique and powerfully presented in this book.
4. People are different and thus express themselves differently as well. They may be speaking about the same issue but each presents it so differently. Such is the case with the gospel of John in relation to the synoptic gospels. The content may be differently presented but the substance is essentially the same.
5. The apostles had a great capacity to recollect what they encountered with Jesus and wrote them down much later with remarkable accuracy. These truths could have initially been preserved in oral form but later were written down, benefiting the 21st century reader. We need to learn to document what

we experience in our generation so that our progeny may have a written record.

6. The new birth is a reality which one ignores at their own peril. The great theologian George Smeaton was correct when he asserted that “*..and till the nature is renewed by the restoration of the Spirit, no motive brought to bear on men’s minds avails to turn them toward God...for this impotence the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost is absolutely indispensable.*” (Smeaton 178,179). Octavius Winslow was also spot on when he uttered similar sentiments in his work on the Holy Spirit. People must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God.

The gospel is very special and should be recommended for the Christian to have a powerful over view. To master John is to get to the very core of the gospel and easily grasp the person, mission and nature of Jesus Christ as he walked on this terrestrial ball.

Conclusion

John is unquestionably unique in its expression of the gospel of Christ. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it approaches the same message from a totally different angle by dwelling on the marrow of the gospel as it were. It highlights not only the work of Jesus but exactly who he was and is, the God-man. The word indeed became flesh and dwelt amongst us and truly, this gospel compels all of us to believe in Jesus, the saviour of the world. Though his own rejected him, the others (Gentiles, Greeks or Romans etc.) found salvation in him (John 1:12; Acts 4:12). John has been rightly recommended as the first gospel a novice should read if they are to get a thorough “bone marrow” grip of the truth as it is in Jesus. Try it out, and I am confident you will not be disappointed!

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