Jesus in the gospel of John

1. Introduction

a. Anyone reading through the first three Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—will immediately notice their striking similarities. The three tell many of the same stories, sometimes with identical wording, and follow the same basic storyline. Because of these similarities, these three are called the "Synoptic Gospels" (synoptic means "a common perspective"). While ninety percent of Mark's stories appear in either Matthew or Luke, ninety percent of the Fourth Gospel—the Gospel of John—is unique.

b. In the Synoptics, Jesus' central message concerns the coming of the kingdom of God and Jesus' healings and exorcisms are meant to demonstrate its presence and power. People are called to repent and believe in the good news of the kingdom. In this way, they "enter" the kingdom and receive God's promised salvation. Jesus tells parables of the kingdom to describe its nature.

c. In John's Gospel, by contrast, there are no parables or exorcisms. Jesus' teaching focuses much more on his own identity and his unique relationship with the Father. Jesus is the eternal Son who has come to reveal the Father. Salvation comes by knowing the Father through the Son.

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

d. While in the Synoptics salvation is primarily described as entrance into the kingdom, in John it is especially knowing God and eternal life with him.

e. In the Synoptics, Jesus' identity as Messiah is on centre stage. Messiah means "Anointed One" and refers to the promised King and Saviour from the line of David, who would save God's people from their enemies and establish God's kingdom (2 Sam 7:11–17; Isa 9:1–7, 11:1–16) John's portrait of Jesus focuses less on his messiahship and more on his true humanity and true deity. He is the eternal Son and the "Word" (logos) of God, God's self-revelation (John 1:1, 1:14, 1:18)

f. So how do we account for the differences? The likely answer is that John was written in a different context and a different time than the Synoptics, probably near the end of the first century. John is addressing issues of importance and concern for the church of his day.

g. When the Synoptics were written in the 50s–70s, the burning issue for the church was to show that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, the fulfilment of Old Testament promises. (We have often referred to passages in Matthew and Luke when looking at Jesus in the Old testament.) How has the kingdom of God arrived if Jesus was crucified and the Romans were still in power? The Synoptics answer that the kingdom came in a different way than expected and that Jesus' messiahship was vindicated and confirmed through his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God.

h. John is writing somewhat later when the church was confronting different challenges. False teachers have arisen in the church. Some are challenging the deity of Christ, claiming he is not fully God. Others are questioning his true humanity,

denying that God could become a human being. From his opening lines, John confirms both the full deity and the true humanity of Jesus.

John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

2. John's purpose

a. John has a clear statement of purpose near the end of his Gospel:

John 20:30-31 *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; [31] but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

b. It's for this reason that John's gospel is often the first book a new believer is encouraged to read. I remember 57 years ago when I made my commitment of faith at a Billy Graham crusade the little pack I received included a John's gospel.

c. For someone who has not yet encountered Jesus, they can see Jesus absolutely with clarity. But also, for those of us who have been Christians for even decades, there's so much profundity, there's so much depth to dwell on and to meditate on. So as we look at this gospel afresh we are looking to see more of who this Jesus is but also equip ourselves with the truth that we can share so that others may *"believe and have life in his name".*

d. John writes to provoke faith in Jesus, resulting in eternal life. "That you may believe" could also be translated "that you may continue to believe." John is likely writing both to call unbelievers to faith in Jesus and to provide confidence for those believers who are struggling in their faith.

e. Not only is Jesus the Messiah, but he's also the son of God who gives eternal life to everyone who believes in his name. We see this reality through the signs and miracles he performs. And when people question if he's the son of God, seven times Jesus responds, "I Am."

f. John emphasizes Jesus' unique ability to give eternal life—something only God has the authority to do. He also introduces people to a new life in him. By believing that he is the Messiah and God's son, they have eternal life and freedom from sin and are empowered to perform radical acts of kindness, generosity, and selfless love as they live according to God's Kingdom.

g. The Gospel of John emphasizes Jesus as God incarnate and the reality to which the entire biblical story points. As such, it is the perfect place in the New Testament to continue our study of who Jesus is.

3. Come and see

a. One of things that helps us when studying God's word is to look for repetition. Phrases and words that are regularly repeated are like signposts to the importance of a certain theme or focus. In the first chapter of John the phrase "Come and see" stands out as an invitation.

b. Four people encounter Jesus for the first time in John 1:35-51 (Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathaniel). Each of them have a different experience. Jesus invites each of them, not to memorise a creed or join an institution, but to follow him and to come and see where he abides. That is the invitation of the Gospel of John. Come and See who Jesus is and how we can abide with God each day.

c. It's John the Baptist saying come and see, it's the disciples as they gradually get to know him, saying, come and see to each other. There's testimony from God the Father, there's the Holy Spirit at work and there's the miraculous signs. It all testifies to the truth of who Jesus is. It's all laying that foundation of evidence that John wants to gives us that everything that we need is available so that we may have life in his name. After 400 years of waiting John makes it clear that all we need is now with us and available to us.

d. The last time God spoke to his people was about 400 years ago. It's been a dark period for God's people. And then how significant, how beautiful that in the opening verses, Jesus is described as the word - God speaking again in the flesh and out of the darkness bringing light.

John 1:1-5,14 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ***2*** *He was in the beginning with God.* ***3*** *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* ***4*** *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* ***5*** *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it….*
14And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

e. From the very beginning John is calling us to come and see the revelation of God in the flesh. To see the one who will not just speak the word but be the word, the one who brings the very glory of heaven to invade the darkness of the last 400 years.

4. The revelation of all that was spoken of

a. There's a well-known phrase, "In the Old concealed in the New revealed." In other words, much of what we read in the Old Testament only finds its true meaning in the New Testament revelation of Jesus. This is something John goes to great lengths to make clear. *Not so much by referring to OT scriptures but by the Hebraic nature of Jesus' ministry and refering Old testament events and themes.*

b. The introductory passage in John is a direct reference back to the beginning of Genesis. John is making it clear from the outset that this man is the fulfilment of everything that has gone before. The word from God and the word that is God are both revealed through the man Jesus.

c. The phrase in John 1:14 "*dwelt among us"* conveys the Old Testament idea of God tabernacling with man. Here John is clearly referring to the tabernacle and the temple where God met with his people and showing the people that they can now meet with God in the flesh as he dwells among them. He is now the tabernacle.

d. These references back to Old Testament themes continues throughout the book. In Chapters 2-4 John describes four events each of which takes place within a Jewish institution where Jesus reveals his character.

i Jesus' first "sign" at the wedding in Cana. Jesus demonstrates the great generosity that characterises his kingdom (John 2:1-12)

ii When Jesus cleanses the temple he declares that he is the reality to which the temple points.

John 2:18-22 *[18] So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" [19] Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." [20] The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" [21] But he was speaking about the temple of his body. [22] When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.*

iii When a rabbi comes to Jesus recognising him as a rabbi also Jesus makes it clear that more than teaching is needed – there needs to be a new heart.

John 3:1-3,10 *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. [2] This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." [3] Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."……. [10]Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?*

iv At Jacob's sacred well Jesus reveals himself as the "living water" providing a new quality of life not yet known - an eternal life.

John 4:12-14 *Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?*

e. Through each of these events Jesus speaks through the familiar institutions of Jewish life to reveal new truths.

f. John goes on to reveal Jesus through the Jewish feasts – once again revealing new revelation out of the old established life events.

i By "working" on the Sabbath and healing the man by the pool of Bethesda he reveals that he and the Father are one.

John 5:16,17 *And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. [17] But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."*

ii At the celebration of Passover he reveals himself as the "bread of life" which we can eat.

John 6:4-5 *Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. [5] Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"*

John 6:25-27 *When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" [26] Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. [27] Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to*

eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

iii At the feast of tabernacles as the people remember their wanderings in the wilderness Jesus reveals himself as the water from the rock – God's lifesaving gift. He also reveals himself as the light of the world – God's illuminating presence. (John 7)

iv At Hanukah as the people celebrated the rededication of the temple Jesus declares that he is one with the father and it is through him that the people can meet with the Holy One. (John 10:22-29)

g. As Jesus shows over and over again that he is God in the flesh so he comes more and more into confrontation with the Jewish leaders thus setting the scene for his ultimate crucifixion.

5. Our relationship with the Godhead

a. The latter chapters of John include the glorious revelation of the heart of the Godhead and a desire for intimacy and communion. As Jesus shares the Passover meal with his disciples he shows forth his heart for all those who will not only "come and see" but also "follow and dwell"

b. Throughout this glorious gospel is the revelation of who Jesus is; his relationship with the Father, his heart towards us and the life that he offers us. As we take the time to consider the things that John reveals to us we will grow deeper and deeper in relationship with the Godhead and become equipped messengers of the truth.

John 20:30-31 *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; [31] but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*