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## A Bigger Jesus: Introducing the Gospel of John

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### Introducing the Series

#### SLIDE – The Gospel of John

#### 1) What to expect ...

More of a survey approach

Three major parts of each message:

*Unpacking the Text* – basic meaning;

*Digging deeper* – diving into the text;

*The discipleship point* – not the main point, but the ‘takeaway’ we can use to grow in our walk with Jesus.

Character studies ...

From time to time, we’ll do biographical studies of prominent biblical characters as they come up in the text.

Blogs ...

The blogs will basically summarize the main points of the sermon in print with questions appended.

## Questions to Prepare for the Coming Lord's Day

These will provide those who so desire to consider the portion of Scripture we'll consider the following week. This will give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to "speak first" as it were in our consideration of the passage.

### Post-sermon discussion

We're bringing it back.

## **John, the Man**

### **SLIDE – John**

OK, so let's meet John; let's get to know the man ...

- 1) Before he met Jesus, John was a disciple of John the Baptist (**John 1:35**).

John was one of the disciples who was present when John the Baptist proclaimed that Jesus was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

- 2) We know that the apostle James was his brother – one of two sets of brothers among the Twelve (Peter and Andrew) are the other set.

### **SLIDE – Matthew 4:21-22**

He and his brother were sons of Zebedee (**Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10**) and Salome (**Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40, 16:1**) and were from the town of Bethsaida.

They were apparently from a family of some wealth and influence, probably derived from a profitable fishing trade (cf. **Mark 1:20; Luke 5:10; John 18:15**).

- 3) They were called by Jesus to follow Him in the spring or summer (A.D. 27) and they both responded with an eagerness that shows them to be wonderful examples of obedience (**Matthew 4:21-22; Mark 1:19-20**).

We know that they were dedicated to John the Baptist and his message of the coming Messiah and Kingdom of God.

The four brothers had traveled from Bethsaida to the Jordan, a distance of some 75 miles in a day when travel was difficult (**John 1:44**).

- 4) Now, something about their character.

**SLIDE – Mark 3:17**

Knowing the dispositions of John and his brother James, Jesus nicknamed them, “**Βοανηργές**” (Bo-an-er-gEs) (**Mark 3:17**).

They, like us, were less than perfect!

The word “**Βοανηργές**” (Bo-an-er-gEs) means “sons of thunder” and likely reflects their fiery character.

- a) We see this in **Luke 9:51–56**, NASB, in their desire to punish the inhabitants of a certain village in Samaria because they refused to receive Jesus:

**SLIDE – Luke 9:54, NASB**

“When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.

But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they

said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”] And they went on to another village.”<sup>1</sup>

So, we might agree that there were at least ‘shades’ of intolerance in Zebedee’s boys!

### **SLIDE – Transfiguration**

(They had just witnessed the Transfiguration where Jesus was seen talking to Moses and Elijah, and perhaps they were thinking of how Elijah once brought down fire upon the enemies of YHWH.)

I don’t know.

All I do know is that the Lord did not appreciate the suggestion at all!

### **SLIDE – Mark 3:17**

Do you see that whole ‘sons of thunder’ thing happening?

Their first response to the rejection of Jesus was to suggest that He blast them with *heavenly napalm* – not *exactly* loving your neighbor!

Jesus reminds them with some force that this was not His mission and that it wasn’t the Holy Spirit who was putting such thoughts in their minds!

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<sup>1</sup> Early manuscripts do *not* contain bracketed portion.

He'd come to *save*, He said, not to *destroy* men.

In other words, it took John a bit of time to understand grace!

It's an important lesson!

O, how the cause of Christ would have been served if only the Church had taken that whole 'love your enemies' thing to heart!

- b) Besides their fieriness, there's another character trait that emerges in the Zebedee boys: they were not without *ambition*!

**SLIDE – Matthew 19:28**

Now, in **Matthew 19:28**, Jesus made a promise to the Apostles:

“Jesus said to them, Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Well, John and James apparently got to thinking ... ‘I wonder if we could finagle a way to get a better seat than the rest of these guys!’ So, in the next chapter, they devised a scheme to get their mother to go to Jesus and ask for a favor ...

**SLIDE – Matthew 20:20-21**

“Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him with her sons, and kneeling before him she asked him for something. <sup>21</sup> And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom” (**Matthew 20:20-21**).

But Jesus, knowing exactly what they're up to, looks past Mrs. Zebedee and addresses the boys directly ...

**SLIDE – Matthew 20:22-23**

Jesus answered, “You [second person plural] do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” <sup>23</sup> He said to them, “You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father” (**Matthew 20:22-23**).

As we all know, ambition – especially inordinate ambition, often leads to contention, and this is no exception!

**SLIDE – Matthew 20:24**

And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers (**Matthew 20:24**).

Jesus used the boy’s failure and the disdain of the other ten to teach them something about leadership in His Kingdom ...

**SLIDE – Matthew 20:25-28**

But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, <sup>28</sup> even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (**Matthew 20:25-28**).

John would certainly grow to understand this. Remember, John is the apostle who would, more than any other, remind us to love one another!

Are you beginning to see some of the complexities that make up John the man?

He was imperfect, just like us – but the Lord transformed him through years of discipleship, just as He seeks to transform us too!

- 5) So, like many of us, John truly desired to follow Jesus, despite his shortcomings.

And Jesus truly loved him too! This intimacy is seen at the Last Supper.

**SLIDE – John 13:25**

It was John who placed his head upon Jesus' chest to inquire about His betrayer (**John 13:25**).

**SLIDE – John 18:15**

It was John who braved danger by entering the residence of the High Priest during Jesus' trial (**John 18:15**).

The fact that he could enter and also bring Peter in seems to suggest that he or his family had some access to the High Priest.

**SLIDE – John the Apostle**

He, with Peter and his brother James, made up Jesus' inner circle.

They were present at the transfiguration and at the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead and were the nearest to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He was the first of the Twelve to see the empty tomb.

And when he entered the empty tomb with Peter on resurrection day, we see a demonstration of his growing spiritual discernment.

He immediately understood the significance of the grave clothes being carefully arraigned.

**John 20:8-9** says that, when he entered the tomb, “he saw and believed,” even though “as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead.”

Of course, we find him gathered with the other apostles in the Upper Room after Jesus’ ascension into Heaven (**Acts 1:13**).

The book of Acts portrays him as an important leader of the young Christian church in the book of Acts – which records the acts of the Apostles after the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven.

He helps preach the famous sermon at Pentecost (**Acts 2:7-8**).

He healed the lame man at the gate called Beautiful along with Peter (**Acts 3:1-10**).

He and Peter were arrested and jailed for the faith in **Acts 4:1-3**.

Paul called him a pillar of the church in **Galatians 2:9**.

**SLIDE – John’s Books**

6) But there is no doubt that his most important contribution to the faith is the five pieces of writing he contributed to the New Testament:

There’s the Gospel that bears his name;

There are the three letters (or epistles) that bear his name; and

And there’s the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ – the ἀποκάλυψις, the unveiling – which describes for us the profound

glories that await believers – and the terrors that await unbelievers – all in the near future.

- 7) Interestingly, the deaths of the two Zebedee boys seem to bookend the Apostolic Age.

**SLIDE – John**

James, John's brother, was the first of the Apostles to be martyred, he was beheaded at the command of Herod Agrippa I in A.D. 44.

And yet, it is almost certain that John was the last Apostle to survive.

After the crucifixion John took Jesus' mother, Mary, into his own home (**John 19:25–27**).

Eventually, he relocated to Ephesus where he remained until persecution led to his being exiled to the island of Patmos.

It's there that he received the message that became the Book of Revelation (**Revelation 1:9**).

- 8) According to tradition:

**SLIDESHOW – John in Oil**

John had become shipwrecked off the coast of Ephesus and arrived there to check up on some heresies that sprang up there after Paul's departure.

During the persecution of the Church under the Emperor Domitian, John is said to have been taken to Rome, where he was thrown into boiling oil that, miraculously, had no power to hurt him

This theme is prominent in Christian iconography.

Domitian decided to remove him from other believers by exiling him to isle of Patmos where he received the Revelation.

When the persecution finally ended, John returned to Ephesus where he attested to the truth of the first three gospels and wrote a fourth Gospel to supply what he felt they lacked.

When old age set in – when all capacity to work and teach was gone and he lacked even the strength to stand – he would ask to be carried whenever believers assembled, and would simply say with a feeble voice, “Little children, love one another.”

### Why Did John Write *John*?

#### **SLIDE – Why?**

OK, but here’s the big question: *why* was the Gospel of John written? There were, after all, *three Gospels already!*

- 1) What is important to remember about all of John’s writings is this: they were all written late – they were the last books and letters written that are to be included in the New Testament.

They were written in the early 90s – some 60 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus!

He had a lot of time to consider what might be missing in Matthew, Mark and Luke!

#### **SLIDE – Four Gospels**

- 2) One of the obvious major goals that John had in mind was to present Jesus not merely as a man, *but as God Himself.*

Compared to the Synoptic Gospels that present Jesus as a historical figure, John stresses *Jesus' divinity*.

Now, the Synoptics present Jesus as divine too, but *nowhere near the degree that John does*.

And John wants to make sure we hear that loudly and clearly.

We see the proclamation of Jesus' divinity from the beginning to the end of the book.

**SLIDE – John 1:14**

The Word is God in **1:1** and becomes flesh in **1:14**.

**SLIDE – John 20:28**

And, as the book ends, Thomas confesses that Jesus is both his Lord and his God (**20:28**).

- 3) A John tells us why he wants us to understand that Jesus is not only a man, but very God as well!

In fact, there is no book in the Bible that has a clearer statement of purpose than the Gospel of John.

**SLIDE – John 20:30-31**

John tells us exactly why he wrote his Gospel in **20:30-31**:

“Now Jesus did many other **signs** in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written [i.e., *I chose to write these specific things*] 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.”

Notice: He is only the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, but *God's own Son!*

It is only in believing in THIS Jesus that one has eternal life!

- 4) Now, understand John purpose, we shouldn't be surprised to learn the *keyword* of the Book.

Take a guess.

What do you think is the key word in the Gospel of John?  
“These [things] are written so that you may *believe* ...”

**SLIDE – Believe**

The key word in the Book is the verb πιστεύω, “to believe.”

In fact, the verb “believe” appears 98 times in the Gospel of John!

I stress the “verb” because the noun form, πίστις, ‘that which is believed, the faith,’ does not even occur once!

Why? Because *John wants to stress the importance of the believer's active and vital trust in Jesus.*

This Book is not only about finding life; it's about *living!* N.O.W.!

**SLIDE – John 20:31**

- 5) And this declared purpose – that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we might have life in His name – carves the shape of his whole Gospel.

This accounts for what John puts in the book and what he leaves out.

He has nothing to say about Jesus' genealogy or birth.

Why? Because he wants us to see that *God is His Father* and that *He is the only-begotten God!*

He leaves out Jesus' baptism, His temptation, His casting out of demons, His transfiguration, the institution of the Last Supper, His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His ascension into Heaven.

Why? Because Matthew, Mark and Luke had already explained those things in their Gospels and they don't need to be repeated.

He sidesteps the parables too: not a single parable to be found in John's Gospel.

John will select only seven miracles (or signs) some of which neither of the other Gospel writers even mention (**John 2-12**).

But, unlike the others, John is very careful to record the discourses Jesus gave after these miracles which explained why they were important.

In this way, John is presenting Jesus as the *divine* Messiah.

So, what does all this add up to?

Here's what: 93% of the material that John includes in His Gospel is completely unique; it's not found in any other of the Gospels.

**SLIDE – I AM**

- 6) Also, John records Seven significant "I Am" statements that Jesus made – and THIS IS ON PURPOSE!

"I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) the bread of life," He said (in chapter 6).

"I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) the light of the world," He said (in chapter 9).

"I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) the door," He said (in chapter 10).

“I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) the good shepherd,” He said (in chapter 10).

“I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) the resurrection and the life,” He said (in chapter 11).

“I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) the way, the truth, and the life,” He said (in chapter 14).

“I am (ἐγώ εἰμι) the vine,” He said (in chapter 15).

**SLIDE – John 8:58**

Furthermore, in **John 8:58**, He told the Jews, “Before Abraham was, I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι).”

And then there’s John’s description of Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane:

**SLIDE – John 18:4-8**

“Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?” <sup>5</sup>They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “I am he” (ἐγώ εἰμι).”

Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>So he asked them again, “Whom do you seek?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” <sup>8</sup>Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he (ἐγώ εἰμι).” So, if you seek me, let these men go.”

Now, why do you think John would have this emphasis on all of these “I AM”’s?

Well, it’s simplicity itself!

When Moses met with God upon the mountain and sent him to Pharaoh to demand the release of the Israelites from slavery ...

**SLIDE – Exodus 3:13-14**

Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:13-14).

And there you have it! John needs us to see that the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us is none other than the great “I AM”!

**SLIDE – John 1:18, NASB**

And therefore, he declares – without apology to our Jehovah’s Witnesses friends – that Jesus is “only begotten God” (μονογενής θεός) in **John 1:18, NASB.**

**SLIDE – John 20:31**

- 7) John wants us to know that “Jesus is the Christ, the [very] Son of God” so that we might believe “and that by believing [we might] have life in His name.”

“Have life” is all encompassing here!

For the *unbeliever*, eternal life with the Father, having a home in Heaven, as it were, can only be gained by believing that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”

That’s a given.

But there's something else here!

“That [we might] have life in His name” means something for those who are already saved too!

### **SLIDE – John 10:10b**

Because it's John (and John alone) who records Jesus saying: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (**John 10:10b**).

Real life, real *living*, only happens when we *keep on* believing (in **John 20:31** we have the present active participle of the verb πιστεύω).

And we see God's desire that His people would experience real living, abundant life, all over John's Gospel!

So, unlike the other three Gospels which emphasize the Kingdom of God that is coming, John presents us with the present aspects of the Kingdom: the aspects of kingdom life that believers can enjoy right now as benefits of the new covenant: specifically, the Holy Spirit's ministries of indwelling and continually illuminating God's people.

### **Conclusion**

### **VIDEOS – Brayton Point Towers**

- 1) So, April 27<sup>th</sup> 2019 – less than a month ago – was a VERY important day for residents of the Swansea, Somerset area.

Because that was the day that the Brayton Point Cooling Towers which had been a blight on the landscape for far too many years – were imploded with great fanfare.

We were up early that morning – Mary and me and our two grandchildren.

We had to find a good spot to watch the towers fall.

I had no intention of getting too close – I didn't want the kids breathing the dust that the collapse would inevitably kick up – plus, I DON'T trust explosions.

My dad was a demolition man. He worked with dynamite all the time and, eventually a faulty blasting cap fired when he wasn't expecting it and it really hurt him.

So, I was looking for someplace far enough away, but with a good view of the towers.

To that end, I left the kids at home with Mary and at 6:30 in the morning I'm driving around scouting for a good spot.

Finally, I found one, scooped up Mary and the kids and watched it life.

I lasted less than 10 seconds!

When we got back home, I turned on the TV to watch the coverage of the implosion.

And I heard a great story!

There are two viewing restaurants just across the Taunton River that face the towers and they decided to cash in big on the biggest thing to happen in Fall River since the Lizzie Borden murder trial.

They charged big bucks for a brunch and a ringside seat for the implosion – and both places (*Barrett's on the Water & The Cove*) had sold out months ago.

In fact, they both sold out within days of advertising the brunch on *FaceBook!*

But the story I heard made me laugh.

One of the reporters from channel 12 said that when the towers came down, most of the people standing on the outside deck of *The Cove* missed it because they were looking at their phones either texting or setting up their cameras!

It lasted less than 10 seconds, after all!

And, despite the best seats in the world for the big event, they completely missed it!

**SLIDE – Weeping Over Jerusalem**

- 2) I think John was afraid that the people of his generation had missed something too.

And they'd missed it big time!

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Bible says, He looked over the city and wept.

Luke writes:

**SLIDE – Luke 19:41-44**

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup> saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side <sup>44</sup> and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:41-44).

In other words, you missed it.

John wrote his Gospel so that no one would miss it.  
That there would be no question about who we're talking about when  
we talk about Jesus.

**SLIDE – Jesus**

He is in every way, equal to God and at once very God.

Any picture that we have of Jesus that is less than one of the eternal  
Creator, the great I AM, the one who never had a beginning, nor an end,  
the One who is without father and without mother, without beginning or  
end of day, a flawed picture.

To find a home with God we must believe in Jesus as He truly is.

So, “these [things] 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.”

We'll begin with verses **1-18** next Lord's Day. Let's pray