Teaching the Gospel of John

Prestonwood Baptist Church  |  2014-2015

Introduction

John 21:24, 25

24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.  
25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

In these simple verses, John identifies himself, but then he tells us something remarkable. There is more. This is not all Jesus did. This is not all Jesus said. This tells us that John is highly selective. He ate with Jesus, was Jesus’ closest confidant, he knew more about Jesus than anyone, and with all of that interaction, he chose very specific things about which to write.

So here is the question that should haunt every teacher of any gospel. The question is, “Why did the writer select this material?”

This may seem confusing, but it is not. When we interpret an epistle, we may be asking, “Why did Paul, or Peter, or James say things this way?” When we are interpreting a gospel, we are asking, “Why did Jesus say or do that?” However, what we know about this epistle is that it’s selective. It’s not sleight of hand or trickery—after all, John tells us in the last verse that he is being selective: “I can’t tell you everything so I am telling you some things.”

Outlines in the Broadman Holman Commentary have been provided for you. Also provided are two outlines below, both by Andreas Kostenberger. One is an outline of the book, and the other a chronological outline of the life of Christ according to John.

However, we want to make good use of our time by attempting to answer this question of authorial intent so that, as you teach, if there is a textual “nut” that you are having a hard time cracking, you can see if the individual text you are wrestling with pitches to the larger theme of the book.

Recently, Dr. Mac Brunson gave a talk on “Preaching John” to the Expository Preaching Workshop at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The section below is a copy of the notes he gave to the pastors attending. While we will not cover each detail, the notes help us answer the question of John’s selectivity.
DEITY

If Matthew, Mark, and Luke take us into the Holy Place, John takes us beyond and into the Holy of Holies. In John’s Gospel Jesus is King (1:49), Servant (13:1–17), and Son of Man (4:7; 11:35). But He is preeminently the eternal Son of God who dwelt in the bosom of the Father and He came and exegeted Him.

Now here is a quick, short outline of John based on 16:28 where Jesus says: I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father.

I. “I Came forth from the Father” (Prologue) 1:1–18
II. “And am come into the world” (Ministry) 1:19–12:50
III. “Again, I leave the world” (Upper Room and Garden) 13–17
IV. “And go to the Father” (Arrest, Cross, Burial, Resurrection) 18–21

OMISSIONS & ADDITIONS

No genealogy appears in the gospel like you find in Matthew and Luke. John is showing that Jesus as God had neither father nor mother, nor beginning or end. He has no birth account, nor is there a lineage because He is the eternal Word. All of this is what John is saying in those magnificent opening words of his gospel.

There is no temptation account in John’s gospel because God cannot be tempted.

There are no parables; there are these great dialogues that Jesus has with various people such as Nicodemus and the woman at the well.

There is no account of the transfiguration. You see, to John it was not that His glory came busting through in that moment there on the mountaintop with Peter and James and John. To John, the great wonder of it all was that he was able to conceal it behind human flesh for 33 years.

Much of Jesus’ Galilean ministry is omitted, whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke carry so much of that ministry. John centers on the ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem and in Judea.

He makes mention of three Passovers (2:13; 6:4; 12:1). John mentions the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2), and the Feast of Dedication (10:22). Now Matthew, Mark and Luke only speak of one Passover prior to the Passion.

—

In John you will note that he pays special attention to things that the others pay no attention to, like geography, or topography, and time references.

There are a number of variations in the gospel of John, but remember, each of these writers, though writing under inspiration the Holy Spirit, does not negate their personalities or life experiences or who they are. They write from such different perspectives. Let me show you just a couple of these variations.

**The story of Mary of Bethany anointing Jesus.** In Matthew, Mary poured the oil on His head (26:7). That makes sense in Matthew’s gospel because he presents Jesus as King and a King’s head is where he is anointed.

Now John tells the story differently and has Mary anoint Jesus’ feet (12:3). Well, John is writing from the perspective that Jesus is God and where else would we be but at His feet in worship?

John’s gospel is the only one of the four gospels where you have Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. Now I might expect it in Mark or even Luke, but it comes in John’s gospel as He shows how far God was willing to condescend to reach us and cleanse us from our sin.

John is always in every way pointing to the deity of Jesus Christ. He does it by pointing out the seamless robe which speaks of the oneness of Jesus and God (19:23).

When they come for Christ in the Garden, they all fall to the ground when Jesus opens His mouth and responds to their question if He is Jesus and He says “I AM.”

From the Cross, in the three cries that John records you see His deity.

1. When He cries, “I thirst,” He does it in the fulfillment of Scripture.
2. He cries out in victory, “It is finished.”
3. He then dismisses His Spirit, which is proof that He controls it all. His life was not taken away from Him, but He laid it down (10:17–18).

**THE CONNECTION**

Look at how John reveals the connection between God the Father and God the Son. Jesus speaks of God as “My Father” over 30 times. He constantly highlights His Oneness with the Father.

1. **Relation**
   1. From the beginning, we see the relationship between God the Father and God the Son (1:1).
2. They had a glorious relationship before the world began, (17:5):

Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

3. Jesus mentioned the love of the Father that He enjoyed before the foundation of the world (17:24):

Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

4. He is the only begotten of the Father whom He has exhyhsato, that is, He has exegeted Him. He is the exegesis of the eternal God (1:1,14,18). By the way, here is a great place to do a little Church history and share about the Church Councils and what they had to say about the deity of Christ:

–Christ is fully divine Council of Nicaea 325
–Christ is fully human Council of Constantinople 381
–Christ is a unified person Council of Ephesus 431
–Christ is God/Man Council of Chalcedon 451

II. Mission

Jesus, over 30 times, speaks of being sent from the Father:
–In 7:29 Jesus said, “I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.”
–In 8:42 Jesus said, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.”

His mission involved two things:

1. A message to be proclaimed:

For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure (3:34).

2. A sacrifice to be offered:

For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him (3:17).

III. Submission
Jesus never acted independently. He never uttered a word nor carried out a single act unless He was under the clear direction of the Father. You see this so clearly in the Gospel of John:

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me (6:38).

So Jesus answered them and said, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me (7:16).

We must work the works of Him who sent Me... (9:4).

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works (14:10).

Jesus would sum up all of this in John 8:29:

And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.

REJECTION

Dr. Merrill Tenny stated that there were 26 conversations in the gospel of John. The word “believe” occurs some 98 times, more than in any other book of the Bible. Remember John says that these things have been written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

There were private discussions, public discussions. Some were casual, others calculated. One at night, one at noon. Some accepted, some rejected.

Three times we read of division among the people because of Him (7:43; 9:16; 10:19).

After the resuscitation of Lazarus, many believed, and there were those who plotted His death (11:45, 53).

We are told at the very beginning in 1:11 that He came unto His own and His own received Him not. That very phrase is fascinating. We read that He came to His own (neuter) and His own (masculine) received Him not. We could translate it this way: “He came to His own creation, or created things, but His own people received Him not.”

Now while His created people did not receive Him, in John’s gospel the apostle makes it clear He is God of all creation:
–A star led to His place of birth
–Waves held Him up on the sea
–Wind calmed down at His command
–A fig tree withered at His word
–Fish obeyed His command to fill empty nets
–A dove landed on Him
–A rooster crowed twice right on cue
–The sun hid its face
–The earth quaked at His death and Resurrection

It was people who rejected Him. The Jews in particular rejected Him which simply echoes Isaiah’s statement in Isaiah 1:3:

An ox knows its owner, and a donkey its master’s manger, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand.

THE SEvens

The great old commentator A.W. Pink points out that John has a penchant for the number seven, which we all know to be the number of completion, or perfection.

–Seven times we read “These things have I spoken to you.”
–Seven times Jesus addresses the woman at the well.
–Seven times Jesus referred to Himself as the Bread of Life.
–Seven times He made mention of “the hour.”

Here are the most significant sevens in the gospel of John:

The Seven Miracles
1. Turning water into wine, 2:1–11
2. Healing a nobleman’s son, 4:46–54
3. Healing the cripple at the pool of Bethesda, 5:1–47
4. Feeding the 5,000, 6:1–14
5. Walking on water, 6:15–22
6. Healing a man born blind, 9:1–42
7. Raising Lazarus, 11:1–46

The Seven Witnesses
The word witness occurs in John more than in all of the other gospels combined, about 46 times in noun or verb form.
1. John the Baptist calls Jesus “The Lamb of God” (only in John’s gospel), 1:29, 5:33
2. Nathaniel calls Jesus “Son of God” and “King of Israel,” 1:49
3. The Samaritan woman said He was the Christ, 4:29.
4. Peter affirmed that He was the Christ, 6:69.
5. Martha stated that He was the Christ, 11:27.

The Seven “I AMs”
1. I Am the Bread of Life, 6:35.
2. I Am the Light of the world, 8:12.
3. I Am the Door, 10:9.
4. I Am the Good Shepherd, 10:11.
7. I Am the True Vine, 15:5

Strategies for Teaching through John

1. Remember the purpose.
   a. The purpose of the book is to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth is, in fact, God.
   b. Watch to see how John develops that theme.

2. Remember to teach the text of the event.
   a. Because John is writing with a specific purpose and theme, he will include some things we think are not that important, and he will exclude things we think are important.
   b. He will also emphasize things in order to accomplish his purpose.
   c. Therefore, our responsibility is not to reconcile this with other gospels, but to use this as an illustration of John pitching to His purposes.

3. Remember that the Gospel is highly selective.
   a. Not everything about the life of Christ was written down. Therefore what was recorded is highly selective.

---

Outline of John

“The structure of John’s Gospel based on Jesus’ seven signs may be delineated as follows:”

I. Prologue: The Word made flesh (1:1–18)
II. The Book of Signs: The signs of the Messiah (1:19–12:50)
   A. The forerunner, Jesus’ inaugural signs, and representative conversations (1:19–4:54)
      1. The testimony of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (1:19–51)
      2. The first sign: Turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana (2:1–12)
      3. One of Jesus’ Jerusalem signs: The clearing of the temple (2:13–22)
      4. Further ministry in Jerusalem and Samaria (2:23–4:42)
         b. Interlude: The testimony of John the Baptist (3:22–36)
         c. The Samaritan woman (4:1–42)
      5. The second sign at Cana: The healing of the royal official’s son (4:43–54)
   B. Additional signs amid mounting unbelief (5:1–10:42)
      1. At an unnamed feast in Jerusalem: The healing of the lame man (5:1–47)
      2. Galilean Passover: Feeding the multitude and the bread of life discourse (6:1–71)
      3. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1–8:59)
         a. First teaching cycle (7:1–52)
         b. Second teaching cycle (8:12–59)
      4. The healing of the blind man and the good shepherd discourse (9:1–10:42)
         a. Jesus heals a blind man (9:1–41)
         b. Jesus the good shepherd (10:1–42)
   C. Final Passover: The climactic sign—the raising of Lazarus—and other events (11:1–12:19)
      1. The raising of Lazarus (11:1–57)
      2. The anointing at Bethany (12:1–11)
      3. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem (12:12–19)
   D. Conclusion (12:20–50)
      1. The dawning age of the Gentiles: Jesus predicts his death (12:20–36)
      2. The signs of the Messiah rejected by the old covenant community

III. The Book of Glory: Jesus’ preparation of the new messianic community and his passion (13:1–20:31)
   A. The cleansing and instruction of the new messianic community, including Jesus’ final prayer (13:1–17:26)
      1. The cleansing of the community: The footwashing and Judas’ departure (13:1–30)
         a. The footwashing (13:1–17)
         b. The betrayal (13:18–30)
         b. Jesus the true vine (15:1–17)
         c. The Spirit and the disciples’ witness to the world (15:18–16:33)
      3. Jesus’ parting prayer (17:1–26)
   B. The passion narrative (18:1–19:42)
      1. The betrayal and arrest of Jesus (18:1–11)
      2. Jesus questioned by the high priest, denied by Peter (18:12–27)
      3. Jesus before Pilate (18:28–19:16a)
      4. Jesus’ crucifixion and burial (19:16b–42)
   C. Jesus’ resurrection and appearances and the commissioning of his disciples (20:1–29)
      1. The empty tomb (20:1–10)
      2. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (20:11–18)
      3. Jesus appears to his disciples (20:19–23)
      4. Jesus appears to Thomas (20:24–29)
   D. Conclusion: The signs of the Messiah witnessed by the new messianic community (20:30–31)
 IV. Epilogue: The complementary roles of Peter and the disciple Jesus loved (21:1–25)
   A. Jesus appears to seven disciples (21:1–14)
   B. Jesus and Peter (21:15–19)
   C. Jesus and the disciple Jesus loved (21:20–25)
### Chronology of Jesus’ Ministry in John’s Gospel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location/Event</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1:1–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternity past</td>
<td>the Word was with God</td>
<td>1:1–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial ministry, A.D. 29–30</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1:19–2:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summer/fall 29</td>
<td>John the Baptist near the Jordan</td>
<td>1:19–34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsequently</td>
<td>Jesus’ calling of his first disciples</td>
<td>1:35–51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>winter 29/spring 30</td>
<td>the wedding at Cana of Galilee</td>
<td>2:1–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Passover and first full year of ministry, A.D. 30–31</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2:13–4:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7, 30</td>
<td>Jesus’ first Passover (Jerusalem), temple clearing</td>
<td>2:13–3:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spring/summer 30</td>
<td>John the Baptist near the Jordan</td>
<td>3:22–36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec./Jan./Feb. 30/31?</td>
<td>Jesus’ ministry in Samaria</td>
<td>4:1–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsequently</td>
<td>the healing at Cana of Galilee</td>
<td>4:46–54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second year of ministry, A.D. 31–32</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5:1–47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 27, 31</td>
<td>Passover not recorded in John</td>
<td>Matt. 12:1 pars.?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the Sabbath controversy</td>
<td>Oct. 21–28, 31?</td>
<td>(Jerusalem)</td>
<td>5:1–47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Passover recorded in John and third year of ministry, A.D. 32–33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:1–11:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ second Passover recorded in John (Galilee)</td>
<td>April 13 or 14, 32</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:1–21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsequently</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus’ teaching in the</td>
<td>6:22–71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>synagogue of Capernaum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles</td>
<td>Sept. 10–17, 32</td>
<td>(Jerusalem)</td>
<td>7:1–52; 8:12–59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>healing of blind man, good shepherd discourse</td>
<td>Oct./Nov. 32?</td>
<td>healing of blind man,</td>
<td>9:1–10:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the raising of Lazarus (Bethany near Jerusalem)</td>
<td>March 33?</td>
<td>good shepherd discourse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus’ withdrawal to the area near the Jordan</td>
<td>Jan./Feb. 33?</td>
<td>Jesus’ withdrawal to</td>
<td>10:40–42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the raising of Lazarus (Bethany near Jerusalem)</td>
<td>March 33?</td>
<td>Ephraim</td>
<td>11:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Passover in John, passion week, resurrection appearances, A.D. 33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11:55–21:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus arrives at Bethany</td>
<td>Friday, March 27, 33</td>
<td></td>
<td>11:55–12:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Page(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, March 28, 33</td>
<td>dinner with Lazarus and his sisters</td>
<td>12:2–11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, March 29, 33</td>
<td>“triumphal entry” into Jerusalem</td>
<td>12:12–50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday–Wednesday, March 30–April 1, 33</td>
<td>cursing of fig tree, temple clearing, temple controversy, Olivet discourse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 2, 33</td>
<td>Jesus’ third Passover recorded in John (Jerusalem), betrayal, arrest</td>
<td>13:1–18:11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, April 3, 33</td>
<td>Jewish and Roman trials, crucifixion, burial</td>
<td>18:12–19:42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, April 5, 33</td>
<td>the empty tomb, first resurrection appearance</td>
<td>20:1–25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, April 12, 33</td>
<td>second resurrection appearance recorded in John</td>
<td>20:26–31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before May 14, 33</td>
<td>third resurrection appearance recorded in John</td>
<td>21:1–25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Sources**

