

CHURCH.

LESSON 2

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] MARK 4:20 – 7:37
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Mark 4:20 – 7:37). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [CHRISTIAN CHARACTER] (2) 1 PETER 2:11
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Review two by two.

(2) Purity: 1 Peter 2:11. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) [GOSPEL OF JOHN] INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
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All Bible references are from the Gospel of John unless otherwise stated.

Read and discuss this study together.

A. THE WRITER OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Author of the Gospel of John is God, the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

The writer is the apostle John.

1. The writer was a Jew.

(1) He is acquainted with the topography of Israel.

For example, he knows places like Cana, Capernaum, and Bethsaida in Galilee, Aenon near Salim (3:23), the village Ephraim (11:54) and especially Jerusalem. He also knows that “the Bethany on the other side of the Jordan” (1:28) is different than “the Bethany that is only 15 stadia (two miles or three kilometres) from Jerusalem” (11:18).

(2) He knows the political conditions in Israel during that time.

For example, he knows that many Jews were living among the heathen nations (11:52); that “the Jews did not associate with Samaritans” (4:9) and that the Romans ruled over the Jews (11:48). He also knows that the Jewish Sanhedrin had no political power to condemn someone to death and that the Roman governor had to make such a decision (18:28,31).

(3) He is thoroughly acquainted with the Old Testament.

He knows the Old Testament in both the Hebrew and Greek languages, because he uses both in his quotations.

(4) He refers to Jewish and Samaritan religious beliefs.

For example: “Salvation is from the Jews” (4:22) and “The Samaritans worship on Mount Gerezim and not in Jerusalem” (4:20).

(5) He knows the Jewish religious festivals.

For example: “The Day of Preparation” (19:31), “the Passover Festival”, “the Feast of Tabernacles” (7:2) and “the Feast of Dedication” (10:22).

(6) He introduces and explains the Jewish customs in a natural way.

For example, it was a Jewish marriage custom to first offer the choice wine to the guests and later the cheap wine (2:10). It was the Jewish burial custom to wrap the dead person with strips of linen together with smelling spices in between, to tie a cloth around his face, to lay him in a cave or tomb and to place a large stone in front of it (11:38,44; 19:40).

2. The writer was an eyewitness.

The writer saw the works of Jesus with his own eyes. He remembers when the events occurred, and many times he even records the exact hour. Because he writes towards the end of the first century A.D. *to Gentiles*, he most probably used *the Roman method to calculate time*, that is, he started to count from midnight or from noon. For example, he remembers that he met Jesus for the first time on the day after Jesus was baptised. It was about the tenth hour (1:35,39), that is, about 10 A.M.

He remembers the exact words Jesus spoke to Simon when he gave him the name “Peter” (1:42), the exact words Jesus spoke to the other disciples when he called them and the exact words of the many sermons Jesus preached. The Gospel of John leaves the impression that the writer not only heard the very words of Jesus, but also might have made notes of what Jesus said shortly after hearing them. He might even have memorised what Jesus said.

3. The writer was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus.

The writer has intimate knowledge of the actions, words and feelings of the disciples of Jesus. For example, he knows that the disciples were *surprised* to find Jesus talking to a woman (4:27), or that they were *terrified* when they saw Jesus walking on the water (6:19).

4. The writer was the apostle John.

(1) The writer never calls himself by name.

He calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. He is the disciple who leaned back against Jesus at the Last Supper (13:23,25). And he writes as a disciple of Jesus who testifies to what he has seen and heard (21:20-24; cf. 1 John 1:3).

(2) The writer was one of the earliest disciples of Jesus.

According to John 1:35-40 and Mark 1:16-20, the earliest disciples of Jesus were Andrew and his brother, Simon Peter, and John and his brother, James. Peter, James and John formed the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples (Matthew 17:1). According to Acts 12, James was killed by Herod and according to John 21:18-19, Peter had already died in a way that glorified God. Therefore the only possible disciple who could have written this Gospel later as an eyewitness and “ear-witness” of events from the beginning is the apostle John!

(3) The writer was the son of Zebedee.

According to Matthew 27:56, Mark 16:1 and John 19:25, his mother was possibly called Salome and she was probably a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. If this is correct, then Jesus and John were cousins. Before he became a disciple of Jesus, he was a follower of John the Baptist. According to John 1, he met Jesus on the day after the baptism of Jesus. He continued to work on the fishing boat of his father until about one year later, when Jesus called him to be a regular disciple. Then he left his job as a fisherman to become “a fisher of men” (Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 4:19).

(4) John and his brother James appear to have been men with pent-up emotions and probably flying tempers.

They were called “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). For example, in Mark 9:38-41 John told a person ministering in Christ’s name to stop, because he was not one of Jesus’ disciples. When a Samaritan village refused to receive Jesus and his disciples (by giving them food and lodging), John and James cried out in a burst of emotions “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them” (Luke 9:51-56)?

(5) John was one of the most important apostles.

John was very often in the company of Peter, both in the four Gospels as well as in the book of Acts. After the resurrection of Jesus, John was regarded as one of the three “pillars of the church” together with Peter and James, the brother of Jesus (Galatians 2:9; Acts 15:6). When the Jews revolted against Rome in A.D. 66, John and all Christians probably left Jerusalem. According to Church history, John went to live and work in Ephesus.

B. THE DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1. The place of writing the Gospel of John.

According to the church father Irenaeus, who lived in A.D. 170, the Gospel of John was written while John lived in Ephesus, a city in modern Turkey.

2. The date of writing the Gospel of John.

(1) The Gospel of John was written before A.D. 110.

Two ancient fragments of the Gospel of John (John 18:31-34 and 37-38) have been dated about 130 A.D. Thus the Gospel must have been written before 130 A.D. The church father, Irenaeus, wrote, “The church in Ephesus was founded by Paul, and John remained among them permanently until the times of the Roman Emperor Trajan”. Trajan reigned from A.D. 98-117. The writings of the church father Ignatius, who was martyred in A.D. 110, shows clearly that he had read the Gospel of John. Thus the Gospel of John was probably written before the end of the first century.

(2) The Gospel of John was written after A.D. 70.

The apostle John does not repeat what the three other Gospels narrated and he takes for granted that people knew them. His purpose was to write especially about those things that had not been recorded in the other three Gospels and especially those things that caused people to believe that Jesus is the Messiah (the Christ, the Anointed One) (John 20:31) and that he is perfectly divine (John 1:1). Thus the Gospel of John must have been written after the other three Gospels were written, thus, after A.D. 63. Because John does not speak of such famous people as the apostles Peter or Paul anymore, it seems that they had already died. Also the fall of Jerusalem and its temple is no longer mentioned. Thus the Gospel of John was probably written some years after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

(3) We conclude that the Gospel of John was written between A.D. 70 and A.D. 98.

The church father Clement of Alexandria, who lived in A.D. 190, wrote that even after his return from Patmos, the apostle John carried on a very active ministry as chief administrator of the churches (congregation) that were located in the Ephesus district. We do not know whether the Gospel of John was written before or after his banishment to Patmos and we also do not know whether it was written before or after the book of Revelation.

C. THE DIVISION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Gospel of John may be divided into two parts, namely, the public and the private ministry of Jesus. These two parts may be divided into seven sections:

Part one. The public ministry of Jesus.

This consists of John chapters 1 to 12. It may be subdivided into three sections as follows:

Section 1. John chapters 1 to 6.

Before the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2).

The Word, Jesus Christ, reveals himself in ever widening circles of people, but is finally rejected by people.

(1) The inauguration of Jesus Christ. John 1:1 to 2:12.

December A.D. 26 to April A.D. 27 (4 months).

- John 1:1-14 describes the glory of the Word in the beginning before creation, at the creation, after the fall into sin and at the incarnation, when God took on the human nature in Christ.
- John 1:15 to 2:12 describes the Word, Jesus Christ, revealing himself to John the Baptist and to his early disciples.

(2) The early ministry of Jesus Christ in Judea and Samaria. John 2:13 to 4:42.

April A.D. 27 to December A.D. 27 (8 months).

- John 2:13 to 3:36 describes the Word, Jesus Christ, revealing himself to crowds at Jerusalem including Nicodemus.
- John 4 describes the Word, Jesus Christ, revealing himself to the Samaritans.

(3) The great ministry of Jesus Christ in Galilee. John 4:43 to 6:71.

December A.D. 27 to April A.D. 29 (16 months).

- John 4:43-54 describes the Word, Jesus Christ, revealing himself to the Galileans.
- John 5 describes the Word, Jesus Christ, rejected in Judea after the miracle at Bethesda.
- John 6 describes the Word, Jesus Christ, rejected in Galilee, after feeding the five thousand.

Section 2. John chapters 7 to 10.

From the Feast of Tabernacles to the Feast of Dedication.

The Word, Jesus Christ, makes his tender appeal to sinners.

(1) The retirement ministry of Jesus Christ. John 7:1-9.

April A.D. 29 to October A.D. 29 (6 months).

- John 7:1-9 describes the Word, Jesus Christ going around in Galilee, but finally going secretly to Judea.

(2) The later ministry of Jesus Christ in Judea. John 7:10 to 10:39.

October A.D. 29 to December A.D. 29 (2 months).

- John 7:10-53 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the crowds in the temple. "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (7:37-38).
- John 8:1-59 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the woman caught in adultery. "Go now and leave your life of sin" (8:11). It also describes his appeal to the crowds. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (8:12).
- John 9:1-41 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the man born blind. "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "You have now seen him; in fact he is the one speaking to you" (9:35,37).
- John 10:1-39 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees and disciples. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (10:11,27).

Section 3. John 10:40 to 12:50.

After the Feast of Dedication (10:22).

The Word, Jesus Christ, reveals himself clearly as the Messiah by two mighty miracles: the raising of Lazarus and the triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

The ministry of Jesus Christ in Perea and Bethany. John 10:40 to 11:57.

December A.D. 29 to April A.D. 30 (4 months).

- John 11:1-44. Jesus makes a journey from the other side of the Jordan (Perea) to Bethany, which is close to Jerusalem, to raise Lazarus from the dead.
- John 11:45-57 describes a meeting of the Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin in which they plot to kill Jesus.
- John 12:1-50 describes the anointing of Jesus at Bethany and his triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

Part two. The private ministry of Jesus Christ.

The final ministry of Jesus Christ. John 13 to 21.

April A.D. 30 to May A.D. 30 (7 weeks).

This consists of John chapters 13 to 21. This takes place during *the last seven weeks* of Jesus on earth, from one week before his crucifixion (John 12:1) till 6 weeks after his crucifixion (Acts 1:3). It may be subdivided into four sections as follows:

Section 4. John chapter 13. The Last Supper.

- Jesus gives a new commandment to love one another and illustrates it by washing the feet of his disciples.

Section 5. John chapters 14-17. The discourses and prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper.

- In John chapter 14, *Jesus comforts* his disciples. He promises the continuous presence of the Holy Spirit and greater works that the disciples will do.
- In John chapter 15, *Jesus exhorts* his disciples. He exhorts them to continually remain in him, to let his word continually remain in them, to pray, to bear much fruit, to love one another, to obey his commandments and to bear witness to the world.
- In John chapter 16, *Jesus makes promises* to his disciples. He promises not to leave them alone, but to send the Holy Spirit and he promises that they will see him again after his resurrection.
- In John chapter 17, *Jesus prays*. He prays for himself (17:1-5), for his disciples (17:6-19) and for the Church in the world (17:20-26).

Section 6. John chapter 18 to 19.

The suffering of Jesus.

- In John chapter 18, Jesus is arrested, *tried* before Annas, denied once by Peter, tried before Caiaphas, denied twice more by Peter, and finally tried before Pilate.
- In John chapter 19, Jesus is *persecuted* by the Roman soldiers, *rejected* by the Jews to be crucified, *crucified* at the place of the skull (Golgotha) by Romans, and after his death, *buried* in a new garden Tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Section 7. John chapter 20 to 21.

The resurrection and appearances of Jesus.

- In John chapter 20, Jesus *appears* to Mary Magdalene, to his disciples without Thomas and a week later to his disciples including Thomas. In John 20:30-31, the writer states the purpose of the Gospel.
- In John chapter 21, Jesus appears to seven of his disciples at the Sea of Galilee and reinstates the position of Peter as apostle. Then the writer concludes the Gospel with a united testimony of a group of people with respect to the reliability of the things recorded in the Gospel of John.

D. THE PURPOSE AND THEME OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The apostle John clearly states his purpose in John 20:30-31. His purpose is that his readers may continue to believe that Jesus is “the Messiah” (the promised Anointed One expected throughout the Old Testament) and that he is “the Son of God” (that is, perfectly divine, cf. Colossians 1:15; 2:9). His goal is moreover that they may have life through Jesus as the Mediator between God and man.

In contrast to the other three Gospels, some examples of the very distinct accounts in the Gospel of John are the following:

In chapter 1, Jesus is revealed as God who became man. Jesus Christ revealed the invisible God to man.

In chapter 3, to Nicodemus, he reveals that he is the one-and-only Son of God, through whom God gives eternal life to those who believe.

In chapter 5, Jesus reveals to the Pharisees that God is his Father and he is equal to God (5:17-18).

In chapter 7, Jesus reveals to the crowds at Jerusalem that he only can quench the spiritual thirst of every man (7:37-39).

In chapter 8, Jesus reveals to the religious leaders of Israel that he only can set people free from sin and death. He says that he is without sin and that whoever does not believe in him, will indeed die in their sins (8:46,24).

In chapter 12, Jesus reveals to the crowd that he is the King who would draw everyone in the world to himself (12:13,32).

In chapter 13, Jesus reveals to John that God the Father had put all things under the reign of Jesus (3:35; 13:3) and that whoever accepts Jesus, accepts God the Father (13:20).

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[INTERCESSION] PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two's or three's. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	[ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. **Preach, teach or study the Bible study** – Introduction to the Gospel of John - together with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Mark 8:1 – 11:19**.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** (3) Love: **Mark 12:30-31**. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
6. **Update your notebook** on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.