

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn how to build up the Christian Church. Today we will conclude the Bible study by making a summary of the Gospel of John.

(S) **POINT 1. THE WRITER, DATE, PLACE AND PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

First. The writer, date and place of writing.

The writer calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. This is the apostle John. He writes as a disciple of Jesus who testifies to what he has seen and heard. According to the church father Irenaeus, who lived in 170 A.D., the Gospel of John was written while John lived in Ephesus. The Gospel of John was written between 70 and 98 A.D., but we do not know if it was written before or after his banishment to Patmos or whether it was written before or after the book of Revelation.

Second. The purpose of writing.

The purpose of the Gospel of John is stated in John 20:30-31. John says that he wrote this Gospel so that his readers may continue to believe that Jesus is “the long expected Messiah” and that he is “the Son of God”. The term ‘Son of God’ has no physical meaning, but only spiritual meaning. Jesus Christ is the Son of God in the sense that God took on the human nature in Jesus Christ and entered his creation and our history in order to reveal himself and his plan to us. Jesus Christ is thus God. He is completely divine. By continuing to believe, Christians will have life and experience the reality of that life.

(T) **POINT 2. THE DIVISION AND TITLES OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

First. The title of the Gospel of John.

I would like to give the following title to the whole Gospel of John: “Jesus, the Christ, the Word of God, the Son of God.”

Second. 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.

One. The public ministry of Jesus consists of John chapters 1-12 and may be subdivided into three sections: The first section consists of John chapters 1-6 and describes the events before the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2). The second section consists of John chapters 7-10 and describes the events after the Feast of Tabernacles. The third section consists of John chapters 10:40 to 12:50 and describes the events after the Feast of Dedication (10:22).

Two. The private ministry of Jesus consists of John chapters 13-21. This takes place during the last seven weeks of Jesus on earth. It may be subdivided into four sections: The first section consists of John chapter 13 and describes the Last Supper. The second section consists of John chapters 14-17 and relates the discourses and prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper. The third section consists of John chapter 18-19 and describes the sufferings of Jesus during his arrest, trials and crucifixion. The fourth section consists of John chapter 20-21 and describes the resurrection and appearances of Jesus Christ after his resurrection.

(S) **POINT 3. THE DOCTRINAL CONCLUSIONS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

There are several important Christian doctrines in the Gospel of John, such as:

God the Father sent Jesus Christ. Thus God the Father *initiates* our salvation.

Jesus Christ is God and he *merits* our salvation.

The Holy Spirit is the Advocate of Jesus Christ and he *applies* that salvation to our personal lives.

Regeneration is God’s prerogative and a prerequisite for our salvation.

Faith is man’s responsibility and also a prerequisite for our salvation.

Salvation is expressed in a new life of faith, love and hope.

Miracles are called signs, because they point to the spiritual realities of our salvation.

In this programme we will limit ourselves to one Christian doctrine: The teaching about Jesus Christ as God.

The apostle John stresses the fact that Jesus Christ is divine and existed forever with God the Father, that he actually assumed the human nature at his incarnation and that he never laid it aside again. Jesus Christ has now a divine and a human nature forever!

(T) First. Jesus Christ is the Word of God.

When we talk, our words give expression to our thoughts and reveal them to others. Likewise, in John 1:1, Jesus Christ is called “the Word” (G: logos), because he is the expression of the inner thought or mind or soul of the God of the Bible and because he reveals the God of the Bible to us. Without Jesus Christ and the Bible people in other religions cannot know the God of the Bible personally and they cannot please the God of the Bible at all. Jesus Christ is the visible expression of the invisible God (Col 1:15) and thus reveals the almighty and all glorious God to us humans in our limited human words and in our limited human existence. Only Jesus Christ was present with God to read his thoughts, to know his plan and to hear his words. And he revealed to us what we need to know about the one and only God and about his plan for us. The God of the Bible does not want to establish a particular religion on earth. He desires that people know him personally, worship and love him with all their heart and serve him with all their life.

(S) Second. Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God.

In John 1:18, this term in the Greek language does not refer to anything akin to the human world. It does not refer to any beginning somewhere in the past. It is a term that describes Christ’s Trinitarian sonship. John 3:16 proves that Christ was the only begotten Son of the Father *before he took on the human nature!* In the best and oldest manuscripts of the Bible, John 1:18 says “the only begotten God” instead of “the only begotten Son”. And because God is eternal, the term “only begotten” must refer to an eternal relationship between God the Father and God the Son. From all eternity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit existed in this unique relationship to one another.

(T) Third. Jesus Christ has life-in-himself.

In John 5:26, Jesus says, “As the Father has life-in-himself, so he has granted the Son to have life-in-himself. This also describes Christ’s Trinitarian Sonship. While human beings and all other created beings do not possess this “life-in-themselves”, because they are created and derive their life from their Creator, God the Father and Jesus Christ possess this “life-in-himself”. None but God the Father possesses this *life-in-himself* inherently, because only he is *unbegotten and uncreated*. He is in his very being *the living God* and completely self-sufficient. But God the Father has from all eternity imparted his prerogative to have *life-in-himself* to God the Son. This is the meaning of “only-begotten” with respect to the Son. Jesus Christ is *begotten, but not created*. God the Father did not give this *life-in-himself* to God the Son when Jesus Christ took on the human nature or when he was baptised. This is an eternal act and a part of the unique Father-Son relationship that already existed in the beginning. In the eternal order, God the Father imparts this *life-in-himself* to God the Son, and in the temporal order, God the Son reveals this *life* to people on earth. In 1 John 1:2 God the Son is depicted as the embodiment of that eternal life that was with God the Father and was made manifest to us on earth.

(S) Fourth. Jesus Christ is the life and the light.

In John 1:4-9, Jesus Christ is called *the life* because he *expresses God’s attributes*, and he is called *the light* because he *manifests or reveals God’s attributes* to people. The term *life* refers to the fullness of God’s essence, to God’s glorious attributes, like his truth, which is his knowledge, wisdom and truthfulness, and also his almighty power, his presence everywhere, his holiness, his love, his sovereignty in every matter, etc.

When this life is manifested, then it is called *the light!* Thus, Christ is the eternal expression and visible revelation of the one and only God and his glorious attributes. For example, we can only know and experience the invisible God and his love through Jesus Christ.

(T) Fifth. Jesus Christ is one with God the Father.

In John 5:17-23, Jesus made certain claims about himself that were not misunderstood by the Jews:

One. In John 5:17-18, Jesus claimed that he was equal in essence with God the Father.

Jesus called God “his Father”. The Jews immediately understood that Jesus claimed for himself *deity in the highest sense of that term*. They understood that Jesus claimed that he was equal in essence with God the Father. This claim of Jesus Christ was either utter wicked blasphemy, which should be punished with death, or it was the most glorious truth, which should be accepted by faith! God the Father and God the Son have the same divine nature. Moreover, Jesus claimed that he was equal in work with God the Father. Just like God the Father, Jesus Christ is always at work, preserving the created universe and saving people from sin. This claim of Jesus was the real reason why the Jews wanted to kill him.

(S) Two. In John 5:19-22 Jesus claimed that he was equal in works with God the Father.

He says, “The Son can do nothing by himself. He can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does”. *The activity that originates with God the Father is manifested in God the Son*. God the Son sees what God the Father shows him, and then by his word and action he reveals the mind and deeds of God the Father. God the Son perceives the will of God the Father and then puts it into effect. Especially two activities are emphasised: Jesus gives life to the dead and he executes judgement. Jesus Christ claims that he has the same authority as God the Father has to impart *eternal spiritual life* to spiritually dead people now in this life and to impart *immortal physical life* to the physical dead people at the resurrection from the dead in the future. Jesus also claims that God the

Father has given the whole final judgement to God the Son so that God the Son may receive the same honour as is given to God the Father!

(T) Three. In John 5:23 Jesus claimed that he was equal in honour with God the Father.

He says, "That all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him". In Philippians 2:9-11, God the Father rewarded the obedience of Jesus Christ in his human nature. God the Father has given Jesus a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. No prophet or priest or king is greater than Jesus Christ. Every knee of every human being that has ever lived will one day bend before Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 45:22 this same honour belongs only to the God of the Bible. Therefore, when Jesus Christ receives these honours, the glory of the God of the Bible is not diminished or given to another. Instead, the glory of the God of the Bible is rather enhanced, because Jesus Christ receives these honours "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11). Whenever God the Son is exalted, God the Father is glorified!

(S) Four. In John 10:30-33, Jesus Christ claimed that he was one with God the Father.

He says, "I and the Father are one." Jesus does not simply refer to the fact that God the Father and God the Son are outwardly one, that is, one in the works that they do. He definitely refers to the fact that they are one in their inner essence. When he says "we are", he is speaking of *two distinguishable Persons*. But when he says "one", he is speaking of *one substance*. Jesus teaches that God the Father and God the Son are two Persons, but form one substance. Although the Bible does not use the word *Trinity*, it very clearly teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, namely that the God of the Bible revealed himself as *one God in substance*, distinguishable as *one God in three Persons*.

This verse is very important, because it rejects the false doctrine that denies the *unity of essence* of God (Arminians), and it also rejects the false doctrine that denies the *diversity of three Persons* in God (Sabellians). In John 10:33, the Jews understood very well that Jesus affirmed his absolute equality with God, because they again regarded his statement as blasphemy. Therefore, in John 8:24, Jesus warns the Jews, "If you do not believe that *I am the one I claim to be*, you will indeed die in your sins!" It is not enough to believe that Jesus Christ was just a good man or one of the prophets. No, *unless you believe that Jesus Christ is everything he claimed to be*, you will certainly die in your sins. That is, you will certainly not go to Paradise, but to hell (unbelievers, Rev 21:8)! It is absolutely essential to believe that Jesus Christ is the exact representation of the being of the one and only God, that he is the visible radiance of the God's glory (Heb 1:3) and the visible image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). Jesus Christ is the visible revelation of the God of the Bible!

(T) Sixth. Jesus Christ has two natures: he is truly God and truly man.

In John 14:28-29, Jesus says, "If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for *the Father is greater than I*. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe". Only when this verse is interpreted apart from the rest of the Bible, some people conclude that Jesus Christ is not God or not one with the Almighty God. That conclusion is wrong, because when this verse is interpreted in the context of the Gospel of John, it is clear that Jesus is here *referring not to his divine nature, but especially to his human nature*.

One. In what way is God the Father greater than Jesus Christ?

Only with respect to the human nature of Jesus Christ is God the Father greater than Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:6 teaches that Jesus Christ was completely equal with God, but emptied himself of this glory and took on the human nature so that people would be able to come to God the Father. And 1 Corinthians 15:28 teaches that at his second coming, after he has brought the whole universe under his powerful rule, Jesus Christ in his human nature will be made subject to God the Father, so that God the Father will be all in all. Thus, as the Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ is himself a man and therefore inferior to God the Father, because God is far greater than man.

Two. In what way is God the Son equal with God the Father?

With respect to his divine nature Jesus Christ is completely equal with God the Father. Philippians 1:6 said that Jesus Christ was completely equal with God before he took on the human nature. And Colossians 2:9 teaches that the absolute fullness of the divine nature dwells bodily in Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ has two natures: as God he is fully equal to God the Father and as man he is inferior to God the Father. But because the two natures of Christ are never separated and because he is never separated from God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Christians must view Jesus Christ as the visible manifestation of the invisible Almighty God.

(S) POINT 4. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

There are many practical lessons to learn from the Gospel of John. One important lesson is that the gospel consists of five truths:

One. The truth about God.

John 6:35-46 teaches that God the Father *sovereignly* gives people to Jesus Christ and *irresistibly* draws them to Jesus Christ.

Two. The truth about man.

John 3:3-8 teaches that *natural man* is lost and cannot enter the kingdom of God. A man must be born again in order to be saved. John 3:16-18 teaches that *all unbelievers* are lost. They already stand condemned and remain under the wrath of God. A man must believe in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. John 8:21-24 teaches that whoever does not believe, will only see death. John 9:39-41 teaches that whoever refuses to acknowledge his sin, is spiritually blind and lost.

Three. The truth about Jesus Christ.

John 3:14-15 and 12:23-24 teach that Jesus Christ must die on the cross. Without his sacrificial atonement of sins, no man can be saved. John 14:6 teaches that Jesus Christ is the only Way to God the Father, the only Revelation of who God the Father is, and the only Giver of eternal life. John 10:7-10 teaches that Jesus Christ is the only door and whoever enters through him will be saved.

(T) Four. The truth about salvation.

John 3:16 teaches that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will be saved. John 8:51 teaches that whoever believes will never see eternal death, that is, hell. John 12:37-46 teaches that God holds man responsible for his faith or his unbelief.

Five. The truth about the new life in Christ.

John 5:24 teaches that whoever believes in Jesus Christ, has eternal life, will never be condemned and has already crossed over from the state of eternal death to the state of eternal life. John 10:26-29 teaches that whoever believes in Jesus Christ, will never perish and the Almighty God will hold him fast in his hand. John 15:1-17 teaches that the new life in Christ is expressed in a continuing personal relationship with Christ, in bearing fruit for Christ and in witnessing for Christ. John 11:25-26 teaches that the new life has absolute assurance of the resurrection from the dead at Christ's Second Coming.

Six. The truth about evangelism.

John 1:39,46 teaches that you should invite people to *come and see* what Christians do together. John 9 teaches that you should be concerned with the whole man, with his body and his spirit. John 4 teaches that you should never force people, but win them to Christ. And John 4:35-38 teaches that God needs many different kinds of evangelists: those who sow the seed of the gospel and those who reap the harvest.

(S) **POINT 5. THE RELEVANCE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.**

The Gospel of John is very important and relevant for today. It especially explains who Jesus is, what he has done and how people can come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It teaches the work of the Holy Spirit and how a Christian should live. It also teaches many good principles for evangelism.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Continue your commitment to do Bible study every week. Study a chapter or part of a chapter from your Bible every week and make use of "the five steps" method.

Second. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".