

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn to know the Bible. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today we continue to introduce the Gospel of JOHN. We will learn the division, the characteristics, the purpose and the theme of the Gospel of John.

POINT 4. THE DIVISION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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

Part one. The public ministry of Jesus.

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

First section. John chapters 1-6. Before the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus Christ, who is called the Word, reveals himself in ever widening circles and is also rejected. John 1:1-14 describes the glory of Jesus Christ in the beginning, at the creation, after the fall and at the incarnation. John 1:15 to 2:12 describes Jesus Christ, revealing himself to John the Baptist and to his early disciples. This is part of the period called "*the Inauguration of Jesus Christ*". It consists of the four months from December A.D. 26 to April A.D. 27. John 2:13 to 4:42 describes Jesus Christ revealing himself to the crowds at Jerusalem including Nicodemus and to the Samaritans. This is part of the period called "*the Early Judean Ministry of Jesus*". It consists of the eight months from April to December A.D. 27. Finally, John 4:43-54 describes Jesus Christ revealing himself to the Galileans. John 5 describes Jesus Christ, rejected in Judea after the miracle at Bethesda. John 6 describes Jesus Christ, rejected in Galilee, after feeding the five thousand. This is part of the period called "*the Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus*". It consists of the sixteen months from December A.D. 27 to April A.D. 29.

Second Section. John chapters 7-10. After the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus Christ makes his tender appeal to sinners. John 7:1-9 is part of period called "*the Retirement Ministry of Jesus*". It consists of the six months from April to October A.D. 29. John chapter 7 describes his appeal 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" (37-38). John chapter 8 describes his appeal to the woman caught in adultery, "Go now and leave your life of sin" (11). Also 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" (12). John chapter 9 describes his appeal 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" (35,37) John chapter 10 describes his appeal 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" (11,27). John 7:10 to 10:39 is part of the period called *the Later Judean Ministry of Jesus*. It consists of the two months from October to December A.D. 29.

Third section: John chapters 10:40 to 12:50. After the Feast of Dedication. Jesus Christ reveals himself clearly as the Messiah by two mighty miracles: the raising of Lazarus and the triumphant entry into Jerusalem. John 10:40 to 11:57 is a part of the period called "*the Perea Ministry of Jesus*". It consists of the four months from December A.D. 29 to April A.D. 30. He makes a journey to Bethany close to Jerusalem to raise Lazarus from the dead. After that a meeting of the Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin plotted to kill him. John 12:1-50 describes the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

Part two: The private ministry of Jesus Christ.

This 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 as follows:

First section. John chapters 13. The Last Supper. Jesus gives a new commandment to love one another and illustrates it by washing the feet of his disciples.

Second section. 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 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 (1-5), his disciples (6-19) and for the church in the world (20-26).

Third section. John chapter 18-19. 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 tried before Pilate. In John chapter 19, Jesus is persecuted by the Roman soldiers, rejected to be crucified by the Jews, crucified at “the place of the skull”, called “Golgotha”, and after his death, buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus in a new garden tomb.

Fourth section. John chapter 20-21. 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 Peter. 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.

POINT 5. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

First. The Gospel of John mainly describes the words and works of Jesus in Judea.

On the one hand, John describes very little about Jesus’ ministry in Galilee and almost nothing of his Retirement ministry. On the other hand, he describes very much about his ministry in Jerusalem and its surroundings. Certain events and discourses in “the Early Judean Ministry” and in “the Later Judean Ministry” receive a great deal of attention.

Second. The Gospel of John indicates places and time more specifically than the other three Gospels.

He records the four “Passover festivals” during the ministry of Jesus: in April A.D. 27 in John 2:13,23, in April A.D. 28 probably in John 5:1, in April A.D. 29 in John 6:4 and in April A.D. 30 in John 12:1, 13:1, 19:14. He also records “the feast of Tabernacles” which took place in October A.D. 28 and “the Feast of Dedication” in December A.D. 28. On the basis of this characteristic we can determine the length of Jesus’ ministry on earth.

Third. The Gospel of John omits very much material found in the other three Gospels.

It is clear that John takes it for granted that his readers know the other three Gospels, which mainly record “the Great Galilean Ministry”, “the Retirement Ministry” and “the Perea Ministry” of Jesus. However, the Gospel of John follows the same general framework of the story as it is found in the other three Gospels. The material, which the apostle John chooses, is in harmony with his purpose.

Fourth. The Gospel of John is dominated by the teaching of Jesus in the form of discourses (speeches, sermons).

In the other three Gospels, the teaching of Jesus is often in the form of parables. This is because he was often addressing the religious leaders of Israel. However, in the Gospel of John there are no parables, but in stead elaborate discourses. This is because the purpose of John is to show that Jesus very clearly taught that he is the Messiah and that he is the Son of God to both the religious leaders as well as his disciples. Very much of the Gospel of John dwells on the events and discourses of Jesus during the one day before he was crucified (chapters 13-19).

Fifth. The main topic in the Gospel of John is not the kingdom of God, but the King himself.

Jesus Christ is the Messiah and he is divine. In the Gospel of John we find seven times the words “I am”. Jesus clearly reveals who he is: “I am the bread of life” (6:35), “I am the light of the world” (8:12), “I am the gate for the sheep” (10:7), “I am the good shepherd” (10:11), “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25), “I am the way, the truth and the life” (14:6) and “I am the true vine” (15:1). However, there is no conflict between the Gospel of John and the other three Gospels. In the Gospel of John, Jesus clearly teaches that a person must be born again if he wants to enter the kingdom of God (3:5) and in the other Gospels he also clearly teaches that he is the Messiah and divine.

Sixth. The Gospel of John teaches very much about the coming Holy Spirit.

Jesus promises that when he returns to his heavenly Father, he would not leave his disciples alone, but send them his Spirit. The Holy Spirit will be “the Advocate or Representative”, not of the disciples, but first of all of Jesus. He will represent Jesus with the disciples and be with them forever (14:16). He will remind the disciples, not of his own words, but of the words of Jesus (14:26). He will testify, not about himself, but about Jesus (15:26). He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, because they do not believe in Jesus (16:8). He will not speak his own words, but will only speak the words he hears from Jesus (16:13). He will not glorify himself or draw attention to himself, but he will glorify Jesus and cause people to glorify Jesus (16:14)! Therefore, Christians should not expect separate and subjective revelations from the Holy Spirit, but expect that the Holy Spirit will remind them powerfully of the words of Jesus and guide them into all the truth which Jesus revealed to them. Therefore also, Christians should not pray directly to the Holy Spirit, but, as the Bible clearly teaches, they should pray to God the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Seventh. The Gospel of John has much in common with the book of Revelation.

Although the style of the Gospel of John differs from that of Revelation, the two books have much in common. Both speak of “the water of life for the thirsty” (Jn 7:37; Rev 22:17) and “the manna” for the hungry (Jn 6:49-51; Rev 2:17). Both speak of “the authority Jesus received from the Father” (Jn 10:18; Rev 2:27). Both speak of Christ as “the Word of

God” (Jn 1:1; Rev 19:13), “the light of the world” (Jn 8:12; Rev 22:5) and “the Bridegroom” (Jn 3:29; Rev 19:7). Both speak of Christ as “the Lamb of God” (Jn 1:29; Rev 5:6) and that he “redeemed us with his blood” (Jn 6:35-56; Rev 5:9). And both speak of the Church as “the bride” of Jesus (Jn 3:29; Rev 21:9).

Both the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation may be divided into two parts of three sections and four sections respectively. See the seven sections of the Gospel of John above. The seven sections of the book of Revelation are as follows: Revelation 1-3 describes the Christ-indwelt Church in the world. Revelation 4-7 describes the Church suffering trial and persecution. Revelation 8-11 describes the church avenged, protected and victorious. Revelation 12-14 describes Christ opposed by the Dragon and his helpers. Revelation 15-16 describes God’s final wrath on the impenitent. Revelation 17-19 describes the fall of Babylon and the Beast. And Revelation 20-22 describes the doom of the Dragon and the victory of Christ and his Church.

Eighth. The Gospel of John uses many characteristic words and contrasts.

The characteristic contrasts are: darkness and light, flesh and spirit, earthly and heavenly, death and life, to hate and to love, to lament and to rejoice, to be troubled and to trust, to become blind and to see. And some characteristic words are: the Father, the Son, the Word, and the Jews. Other characteristic words are: eternal, glory, judgement, sign, sin, truth, the world, to believe, to give, to know, to love, to see, and to witness.

POINT 6. THE PURPOSE AND THEME OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

First. The main purpose is faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and as the Son of God.

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 and that he is divine, and that by believing they may have life through Jesus as the Mediator between God and man.

The very distinct accounts in the Gospel of John are the following:

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

In chapter 2, at the wedding at Cana, Jesus reveals his glory to his immediate disciples.

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 4, to the Samaritan woman, he reveals himself as the long expected Messiah.

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

In chapter 6, to the crowds in Galilee, Jesus reveals that the will of God and the work God requires of people that they believe in him and thus receive eternal life (6:28-29,40).

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

In chapter 8, to the religious leaders of Israel, Jesus reveals 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 9, to the man who was healed of his blindness, Jesus reveals himself as ‘the Son of Man’ of whom the prophet Daniel spoke and whom he worshipped (9:38).

In chapter 10, to the Jews, Jesus reveals that he and God the Father are one (10:30).

In chapter 11, to his disciples and to the Jews, he reveals his glory by raising Lazarus from the dead (11:40).

In chapter 12, to the crowd, Jesus reveals himself as the King who would draw all the people in the world to himself (12:13,32).

In chapter 13, God the Father put all things under the power of Jesus (13:3) and Jesus teaches clearly that whoever accepts him, accepts God the Father who sent him (13:20).

In chapter 14, Jesus reveals that he is the only Way to God the Father and that he is the visible revelation of the invisible God (14:6,9).

In chapter 15, Jesus reveals that whoever hates him, also hates God the Father (15:23).

In chapter 16, he reveals that he came from God the Father and that he will return to God the Father (16:28).

In chapter 17, he reveals that God the Father has given him authority over all people on earth and that everything that belongs to God the Father also belongs to him (17:2,10).

In chapter 18, Jesus reveals clearly that his kingdom is not from this earth (18:36).

In chapter 19, he reveals that he is the Son of God (19:7).

In chapter 20, he is addressed as “Lord and God” without objecting (20:28).

Thus, we conclude that the main purpose and theme of the Gospel of John is that his readers may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that he is the Son of God. If people believe in Jesus Christ they will have the new and eternal life, which only Jesus Christ can give,

Second. The supplements to the other three Gospels only serves this purpose.

John presupposes that his readers have read the other three Gospels. For example, in John 3:24, he says, “This was before John was put in prison”. But he does not describe the story of John’s imprisonment as in Mark 6. In John 11:2 he describes Mary as the one who anointed the feet of Jesus. This is not described in John, but in Mark 14 and again later

in John 12. In John 18:13, he refers to the fact that Jesus was *first* tried in front of Annas, before he was tried before Caiaphas, as described in the other three Gospels. Nevertheless, all the new material, especially about the words and works of Jesus in Judea, serves to encourage people to continue to believe in Jesus as being the Messiah and the Son of God.

Third. The emphasis on Jesus Christ as the Son of God is to combat the false teachings of Cerinthus.

This Cerinthus was a false teacher who lived at the same time as the apostle John in Ephesus. He taught that Jesus was only a ordinary human being, the son of Joseph and Mary by natural generation. He taught that Jesus was only a more just and wise person than other people. Finally he taught that “the Christ” only descended on Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism and then left him again on the night before he was crucified. He therefore teaches the false teaching that not “Christ” suffered and died, but only “Jesus”. The apostle John calls Cerinthus and his false teachers “antichrists” in his letters. 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!

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. During the next week, read Acts 1-14. Next week we will introduce the book of Acts.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and preach God’s Kingdom” and Internet on www.dota.net

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