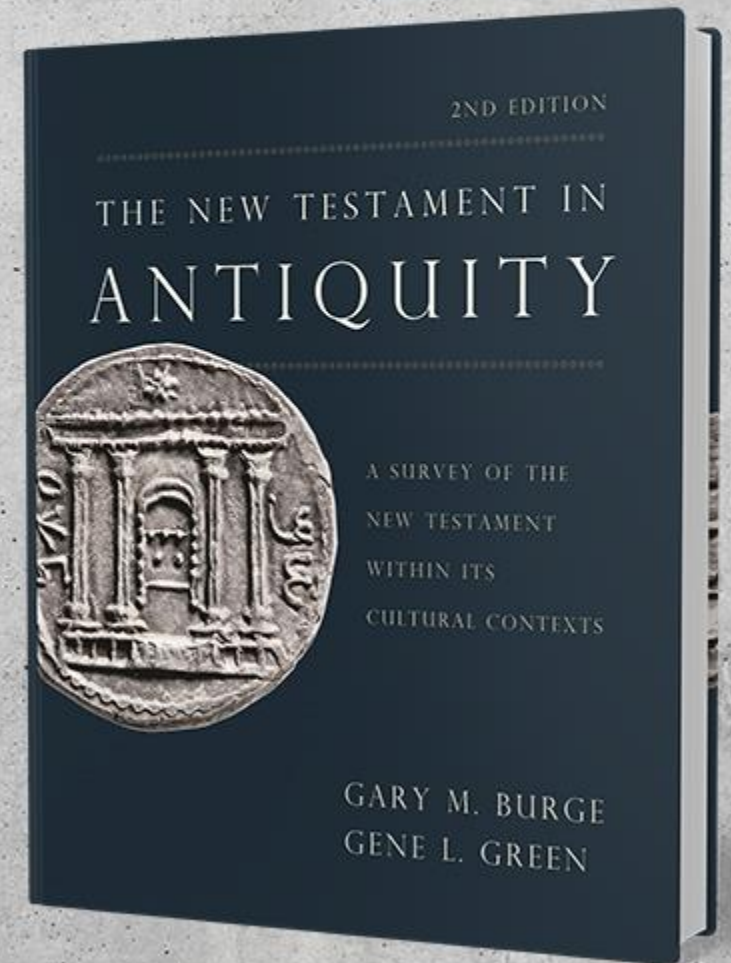


Chapter 11

The Gospel According to John



THE SETTING OF JOHN'S GOSPEL



- Church tradition places John's ministry in Ephesus.
 - John became a leader in this region of Asia Minor.
 - John was the historian and theologian who brought to them the story of Jesus.
 - He was a valued eyewitness of the life of Jesus (Jn 19:35).
- John and the Ephesians experienced persecution and conflict both internally and externally.

THE LITERARY FORM OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

- There are two natural literary divisions to John's gospel.
- The Book of Signs (Chs 1–12)
 - Named after Jesus's revelatory miracles or signs, which accompanied his teaching diverse audiences and public work.
- The Book of Glory (Chs 13–21)
 - Jesus's private talks with his disciples prepare them for the cross, which is the place of his glorification.

The Book of Signs (John 1–12)

The Prologue (1:1–8)

- In lieu of a traditional genealogy, John writes that Jesus is the eternal Word of God from the beginning who became flesh (1:14).

Jesus and the Baptist (1:19–51)

- John the Baptist identifies Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (1:29), and his disciples follow Jesus.

Jesus and Jewish institutions (2:1–4:54)

- He talks with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews (3:1), about being born again, has more exchanges with the Baptist’s community, and travels through Samaria and Galilee.

Jesus and Jewish Festivals (5:1–10:42)

- Jesus abundantly replaces Jewish symbols with himself, such as when he calls himself the true bread that came down from heaven (6:41) or the true vine (15:1, 5).

Foreshadowing Jesus's Death and Resurrection (11:1–12:50)

- Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and is anointed for his own death before entering Jerusalem.



- Internal markers subdivide scenes in each section.
 - For example, in each festival there is a theme Jesus redefines (Sabbath/work, Passover/bread, Tabernacle/water and light, Rededication/Jesus’s consecration).
- Jesus’s awareness of his “hour” drives the whole gospel.
 - Jesus and the narrator frequently refer to this “hour” (1:39; 2:4; 5:25; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23), i.e., Jesus’s glorification on the cross.



- There are also Jesus's "I am" sayings.
 - There are seven of these where Jesus calls himself the "bread of life," "light of the world," "gate for the sheep," "good shepherd," "resurrection and the life," "the way, the truth, and the life," "the true vine" (6:35, 51; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7, 9; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5).
 - "I am" also refers to the name of God in the Old Testament "I am who am" (Ex 3:14) in some cases (8:24, 28, 58; 13:19).
 - Sometimes it is ambiguous, such as "I am, don't be afraid" (6:20; cf. 18:6).



The Book of Glory (John 13–21)

The Passover meal (13:1–30)

- Footwashing and betrayal of Judas

The farewell discourse (13:31–17:26)

- Final teachings and Jesus's priestly prayer

The suffering and death of Jesus (18:1–19:42)

- Arrest, interrogation, crucifixion, and burial

The resurrection (20:1–31)

Epilogue (21:1–25)

- The Book of Glory is more intimate than the Book of Signs.

- While Jesus often spoke with individuals in public, now he speaks with his disciples and accusers in private.

- We are also invited into his prayer to his Father.



- The cross is carefully reinterpreted in John's gospel.

- The anguish of the Synoptics is not found here because Jesus moves confidently toward “the hour.”

- He steps forward and gives orders during his arrest and asks questions during his trial.

- He is robed like a king and “lifted up” on the cross with a sign declaring in the languages of the world that he is “the King of the Jews.”

THEOLOGICAL THEMES

John's Central Affirmation

- God has appeared in human history in the man Jesus Christ.
 - “In him was life and the life was the light of all people” (1:4) and when it shines in the darkness of the world the darkness does not comprehend it (1:5).
 - John writes, “so that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31).
- John's readers are likely Christians who already know the rudiments of Christ's life and wish to go further.
 - John offers mature thoughts and addresses practical problems as questions and problems arose in the church's early development.

THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Circumstances John Must Address

John the Baptist

- This gospel affirms that John is not the Messiah (1:20; 3:28) or the light (1:8–9) and that Jesus is superior (1:30; 3:29–30; 10:41).
- Certain disciples of John became Jesus's first converts (1:35–42).

The Person of Christ

- John affirms the oneness of Jesus and the Father (10:30; 14:9–10), their distinction (14:28; 17:1–5), and unity in purpose (5:17–18; 8:42).
- He is the Word, or *Logos* (1:1), that both Greeks and Jews would recognize as foundational for the creation and order of the world.
- But this divine word became flesh (1:14) and is fully divine and fully human, before time and in time.

The Holy Spirit

- The Spirit is integral to Jesus's experience of God.
 - The Spirit remains with Jesus after his baptism (1:32–33).
 - God has given him the Spirit without measure (3:34).
- John promises the Spirit to believers.
 - He tells Nicodemus to be born of water and Spirit (3:5–8).
 - He said before his death, “Unless I go away, the Advocate/Paraclete will not come to you” (16:7), and he gives it to them on Easter (20:22).

The Sacraments

- The incarnation of the Word and the presence of the Spirit gives worship symbols (baptism, Lord's Supper) the properties they depict.

Our Future Hope: Eschatology

- The longed-for presence of Jesus is given to us *now* in the Spirit in a *realized eschatology*, rather than the Synoptics' apocalyptic hope.

Irony

- John offers a clear picture of Jesus and shows that many people misunderstand Jesus or raced to wrong conclusions (6:15), rejected him outright (7:43–44), or debated among themselves (7:12–13).
- The crucifixion is the peak of irony as Jesus is called “the King of the Jews” by Pilate while the Jewish leaders deny it (19:19–22).
- Irony plays into John’s dualism as the darkness cannot comprehend the light (1:5) and the world cannot comprehend divine revelation.



The World

- One of John's most frequently used words is "world" (*kosmos*).
 - “Though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him” (1:10): it means both the universe and humanity.
- The world is good, but dead (6:33, 51) and under Satan (12:31).
 - Jesus dies to take away the sins of the world (1:29).
 - “The world” and “the Jews” have similar connotations in John.



AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

- The author is the enigmatic “disciple whom Jesus loved.”
 - The title appears six times (13:23; 19:26–27; 20:2–10; 21:7, 23, 24) and he is the one “who testifies these things and who wrote them down.”
 - Several people have been suggested such as an idealized literary figure, Lazarus, John Mark, and Thomas.
- John of Zebedee (Mk 3:17; Acts 1:13) is both the traditional and the best solution.
 - He was one of the Twelve and formed an inner circle with James and Peter around Jesus, which explains his eyewitness testimony and penetrating insight.
 - The Synoptics mention John more often with Peter than any other, and in Acts they are companions in Jerusalem (3–4) and Samaria (8:14).

- John and Jesus may have been cousins.
 - Jesus entrusts his mother, Mary, to John (19:25–27) and John is known by the high priest through her priestly relatives (Lk 1:5, 36).
- Many church fathers point to the apostle John.
 - Irenaeus, Polycarp, Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, and the Muratorian Canon
- The latest possible date for this gospel is approximately AD 110.
 - John is an apostle and is rooted in first-generation Christianity.
- The earliest date is more difficult.
 - Rabbis expelled Jewish believers in Christ from synagogues in AD 85 (9:22; 12:42; 16:2).
 - If John used the Synoptics, AD 70 or 80 is appropriate.
 - John may be pre-Synoptic, as his knowledge of Judaism and cultural divisions reflects a time before the war of AD 70.