

Outline of the Gospel of John

Michael Hardt

Outline of the Gospel of John

Introduction

From the top of a high-rise building you cannot see all the details of a city's sights, but you can see the main landmarks and you get a good idea of where they are positioned in relation to each other. No doubt there is great value in the occupation with the detail of the Scriptural text. On the other hand, there are beauties which we will only see from a distance, only when we look at the bigger picture and when we see how the Spirit of God has grouped different events and blocks of teaching.

A brief overview of John's Gospel may allow us to consider some of the glories of Christ presented in this book, and the relationship of the main doctrinal points to one another. In this context we cannot comment on much detail but need to confine ourselves to looking, as briefly as possible, at the following questions:

- what is the main point of each chapter, and
- how does this build on the truth developed in previous chapters?

For each chapter, we suggest some key verses which underline what we believe is the chapter's main message.

John's Gospel

John's Gospel, evidently, is very different from the synoptic Gospels. In fact, it is so different that it must be hard not to notice it, even at a first reading. But why is it so different?

The reason is that John's Gospel is not so much occupied with man coming to God, but God coming to man. It is not so much about man's needs, but about God's love, and His desire to share with man that which He Himself enjoys.

Chapters 1-12

The first two chapters are introductory. Chapters 3-7 show various glories of Christ, which are rejected in chapters 8 and 9. But Christ calls His sheep anyway (chapter 10), God provides a demonstration that He really is the Son of God (chapter 11) and there is universal recognition as a result (chapter 12).

Summary table

Chapter Incident

Truth illustrated

| | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| 1 | N/a (introductory) | <p>The Son of God is presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as God (v.1-2) • as Man (v.14) • as Light (v.9.10), rejected • as Eternal Son (v.18) • as Lamb of God (v.29.36) <p>God became Man to reveal as Light the condition of Man and the Father 's heart, and to glorify God in respect of sin and to every aspect as Lamb of God .</p> |
| 2 | Wedding at Cana Cleansing of the temple | <p>The Son of God as bringing lasting joy. The Son of God defends the glory of God.</p> |
| 3 | Nicodemus | Necessity of new birth - and Christ as Giver of eternal life (as Son of Man and Son of God) |
| 4 | The Samaritan Woman | Christ, the Saviour of the World, as Giver of the living water that satisfies all desires, making sinners into worshippers |
| 5 | The lame man at Bethesda | Lack of strength, even to profit from the power that was there (condition of Israel). Christ as the Son of God giving life (not only strength) |
| 6 | The manna | Christ, the heavenly man as lowly man: on earth but come from heaven, the true bread of life. Eating and drinking as appropriation of his life and death, once for all, and as communion and enjoyment (continually). |
| 7 | The feast of tabernacles | There was thirst instead of joy. Christ glorified would give the Spirit who would become a source of refreshment and blessing in those who are His. |
| 8 | Woman caught in adultery | Christ as the light of the world: exposing men as they are and revealing the truth. But His word is rejected. |
| 9 | The man born blind | Christ's presence among the blinded people would only increase their blindness, unless they recognised Him as the one 'sent' ('Siloam') of God. Christ gives sight but His work is rejected. |
| 10 | The man born blind (from ch.9, illustrates truth presented in ch.10) | The Good Shepherd: calling out His sheep from the (Jewish) fold and leading them into Christian liberty (like the blind man of chapter 9), together with 'other' sheep (i.e. Gentiles, v. 16). |
| 11 | Lazarus raised | The Son of God revealed as such in power, being the resurrection and the life. |
| 12 | Bethany , Jerusalem , and the Greeks | <p>Christ honoured universally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the church: as Son of God • in Israel : as King of Israel , and • among the Gentiles: as Son of Man! |

Chapter 1

- **Key verses: v.1-5. 14.29**

The first chapter sets the scene. The focus is on the glory of the Person of Christ. We learn what He is in Himself, and what the extent of his work will be (v.29).

His divine glory is the focus even of the very first verses of the Gospel. Christ is presented as "the Word", the expression of all God had to say, the full revelation. This Word has always existed, eternally ('in the beginning'). The Word is a person, distinct from God ('the word was with God') and yet the Word 'was God', the creator of the universe. Verse 14 shows us the mystery of the incarnation of this divine Word, God come in manhood.

He also was the light, coming into and shining in this dark world. But there was two-fold rejection: 'the world knew him not' and Israel, His own people, 'received him not' (verses 10.11).

Whilst most people were blind in respect of His glory, the eyes of some were opened. They could say: 'we beheld his glory, the glory of the [only-begotten](#) with the father, full of grace and truth'.

While the term 'first-born' shows the Lord as the one who takes the first place within a group (e.g. first-born of many brethren), the term '[only-begotten](#)' shows His uniqueness. He, and only He, had the place in the Father's bosom (v.18), had enjoyed the Father's love throughout the past eternity, and became the proof of God's love (3:16). He had first - hand knowledge of the Father and His love. He was uniquely qualified to come and 'make him known' (v.18). This truth of the eternal Son of God is the heart of Christianity - as [J N Darby](#) put it: "I lose all the Son is, if He is only so as incarnate".

Verse 29 speaks of Him as **the Lamb of God**. No wonder the Lamb is needed. The Word reveals who God is. The light demonstrates what man is. The Lamb appears on the scene to glorify God despite of man's condition, He glorifies God in respect of sin: He takes away the sin of the world. This will be fulfilled in the eternal state.

Chapter 2

- **Key verse: v.10**

On the occasion of the wedding in Cana, the Lord turns water into wine, picture of the joy He will give in the Millennium. But the principle applies already: the joy that the world gives diminishes: the good wine is served first. But the joy that the Lord gives increases: the good wine is served last. On a practical note: which joy do you / we seek?

When He cleanses the temple He acts for the glory of the Father: 'the zeal for thine house hath eaten me up' (v.17).

When asked to justify His intervention in the temple, Christ announces His death and resurrection. In doing so He refers to His body as 'this temple' (verse 19). The reason for this is plain: Christ emphasises that, in fact, the One whom they challenge is none other but God dwelling among them as man.

Chapter 3

- **Key verses 1-3; 14-16**

In Chapters 3-12, each chapter contains an incident, which illustrates the doctrine of the chapter (except

ch.10 which is illustrated by incident in ch.9).

The doctrinal point in chapter 3 is the necessity of new birth. The problem that requires it is not so much the problem of sinful deeds, but rather the lost condition of man. As a matter of fact, man - any and every man - is hopelessly lost. There is only one solution: not reform, nor education, nor cultivation, but a completely new life.

To illustrate this point, the Lord chooses the meeting with Nicodemus, the very best man around, a renowned teacher and Pharisee. But the Lord is not blinded by natural advantage or refinement. He refuses to 'teach flesh'. His message is plain and clear: 'you must be born again' (see 3:7). What is needed, even for the best of natural men, is not refinement, education or cultivation but a radical new beginning: new birth.

This narrative brings out the Lord's glory in this context. He is the answer to the problem. This new (eternal) life comes through Him. He is presented in two aspects: He comes on man's behalf, as Son of Man, to be lifted up and to die on the cross, as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness (v.14.15). On God's part, He is God's gift of love (v.16), the [only-begotten](#) Son. It is by faith in Him that this life can be obtained.

He is the way to obtain this new, eternal life - and, in fact, He is the only way (v.36).

Chapter 4

• Key verses: v.13.14.42

Whilst chapter 3 primarily concerns the Lord's testimony to Israel, we find His testimony to the Gentiles in chapter 4.

Here the Lord meets a person from the opposite end of the spectrum of society: a woman who is tired of life. She is thirsty. She had had five husbands, and the one she had then was not her husband. Clearly, she is tired of searching. When she asks for the water the Lord can offer, she says 'that I may no more come hither to draw'. Her search for satisfaction had had never brought her the fulfilment she longed for. But the Lord delivers her fully of her care: "The woman left her waterpot" (verse 28).

Christ offers satisfaction, which is universally available ('whosoever'). He provides a source of constant refreshment to the believer, namely the Holy Spirit: "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (v.14). The Lord then introduces spiritual worship, setting aside the systems of earthly worship in Jerusalem and Samaria. The woman tells the good news to others who come and meet Him as the 'Saviour of the world', not of Israel only (verse 42).

When the Lord wants to show the joy and satisfaction which He can give, the refreshment available through the Spirit, and the privilege of worshipping the Father 'in spirit and in truth', He chooses the conscience stricken Samaritan.

If chapter 3 shows that no-one is sufficiently good to do without new birth, chapter 4 demonstrates that no-one is too bad to be brought to enjoy the Christian blessings and privileges the Son of God has come to bring. Christ is the Saviour of the world (v. 42).

Chapter 5

- **Key verses: 5-9; 24-26**

Here, the doctrine goes beyond the illustration. The scene at Pool of Bethesda shows that God was still present and active in blessing. There was occasional healing. But the poor lame man lacked the power to reach the pool on time when the water was being moved and when there was a prospect of healing. He was weak, in fact, he was so weak that he could not even profit from the power of God that was still there. In this, the poor man was a striking picture of the people of Israel: they still enjoyed outward nearness of God but lacked power to profit from it.

In the doctrine that follows, Christ goes beyond the illustration: He does not take up mere weakness but he goes on to death. But this opens the door for Him to present Himself in new glory, namely as the Son who gives life.

We learn that the Father loves the Son and God insists that the Son is honoured (i) as the one who gives life, and (ii) as the one will execute the judgement.

Chapter 6

- **Key verses: v.51-55**

Here the event is the feeding of five thousand. The incident is related in each Gospel, but the meaning is given only here: the Son of Man is the bread from heaven.

Multitudes had come, the Lord had graciously provided, all had been satisfied. But they fail to see His glory. They ask for a sign: "What doest thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert...". Implicitly, they suggested that the feeding of the 5,000 was a small thing by comparison. The Lord uses the opportunity to show that He is the 'bread from heaven', bread of a far higher quality. It is not merely natural bread that *sustains* life, but heavenly bread that *gives* life.

Remarkably, the events of this chapter occur when 'the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh' (verse 4). It is therefore fitting that the chapter introduces the thought of death. He was going to die as the true Passover Lamb.

Therefore, whereas chapter 5 shows the Son of God who gives life, in chapter 6 we see the Son of Man who has to go into death. It is not sufficient to know Him as the man from heaven who lived down here.

Only if you feed on Him and appropriate Him as the one who became man ('eat my flesh') and died ('drink my blood') can you obtain this life. In this sense, you have to 'eat' and 'drink' once for all (verses 51.53). Secondly, believers become habitual 'eaters' and 'drinkers', finding nourishment in the One who, in His grace, not only became man but who also went into death (verses 54.56).

Chapter 7

- **Key verses: v.37-39**

Another incident follows, and a further glory of Christ is revealed in this chapter.

The occasion was the feast of tabernacles, the harvest feast. It was meant to be an occasion of joy before God for the whole people. Who would have dared to speak about lack or thirst on such a day as this?

But, with all their focus on the blessing, they had forgotten the blesser who was right among them. Christ sees through the facade of the pomp and celebrations. On the last and great day of the feast, Christ stands up and cries 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink' (verse 37). Only He would be able to quench the thirst for a deeper communion with God.

Again, as in chapter 4, He speaks of the Holy Spirit, but here His offer to quench thirst goes beyond the one in chapter 4: here it is not merely satisfaction of one's own soul ('a well of water springing up into everlasting life', 4:14) but refreshment flowing out to others - rivers (not drops only!) of living water - so that the believer becomes a source of refreshment for those around him.

At the time, it was still future 'for the Holy Ghost was not yet given'. And why? 'Because that Jesus was not yet glorified'. Here is the fresh glory of Christ which is revealed in this chapter: not only is He the Son of God who gives life (ch. 5) and the Son of man who goes into death (chapter 6), but He is also the Son of Man who will be glorified. Once glorified, He will send this Spirit to bring these things about. In fact, the Spirit will then replace His testimony on the earth.

This fresh revelation of Christ as glorified Son of Man only leads to further hatred (v.44).

Chapter 8

- **Key verse: v. 12**

In chapters 5-7, the Lord had shown His glories as Son of God, Son of Man in death, and Son of Man glorified. Chapters 8-10 show the rejection of these glories.

The starting point is the occasion where a woman is caught in adultery. The provocative question 'Moses commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?' (v.5) had been designed as a trap. Should He advocate anything other than the death penalty, they would immediately accuse Him of encouraging others to break the law of Moses. Otherwise, if He simply consented to the deadly requirements of the law, they would ask 'but how does your doctrine differ, how about this grace you were going to bring?' It was a trap that left no way of escape..., or so they thought.

But the Lord only says one word, 'He who is without sin cast the first stone', and they all leave. This is what light does. It shows things as they are, whether good or bad. This event was designed as a perfect and admirable illustration of our key verse: "I am the Light of the world". For those who follow Him, He is the 'light of life' (verse 12), others will flee from the light because it exposes.

The rest of the chapter shows that the Lord's word is rejected. He was the light, and He brought the truth. When asked 'Who art thou?' He could reply 'Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning' (verse 25). What He offered was the full truth - of which He could say 'the truth shall make you free' (verse 32). And yet, they did not accept it. Christ had to say to them 'my word hath no place in you' (verse 37).

So it was not only the words He spoke that were rejected, but His 'word', the truth, His person.

Chapter 9

- **Key verses: v. 6.7**

The occasion of the man born blind gives another fitting illustration. The Lord prepares a clay, but the

application does not seem to have any effect. Only when the man goes to the Pool of Siloam and washes he comes seeing.

The clay was made of two elements, earth and spittle. The earth speaks of manhood (Genesis 2:7). The spittle, obviously, was something that came from the Lord Himself. Hence, as these two elements, the earth and the spittle, are combined in the clay, we are reminded of the Lord's incarnation. It therefore speaks of Christ's presence, as man, among them.

No doubt, Christ was there, but did His presence as such help them? To see the answer, we need to consider what clay does to the eyes of a blind man. If anything, clay would only make the blind man even blinder, or would make it even more impossible for him to become seeing. The man was already blind, and so were the Jews. Only if he went to the Pool (the word) of Siloam ('sent one') and recognised Christ as the one sent of the Father, he (they) would see.

This chapter, then, shows the work of Christ:

- (i) He reveals Himself to those who believe
- (ii) He makes them grow in the light
- (iii) He leads them out of the Jewish system, and
- (iv) He brings them to worship Him as Son of God.

But also in His work, Christ is rejected (as was His word, ch. 8). Anyone who confessed Him would be cast out of the synagogue. This happens to the healed man, but Christ finds him and leads him to worship Him as the Son of God.

Chapter 10

• Key verses: v.3.9.11.16.17

In chapter 9, Christ had found a sheep (the blind man). And He went before and led him out of the Jewish fold (v.3.16). The Jews might think that they cast him out of the synagogue, but in reality they were fulfilling Christ's plan for His followers, namely that they might leave the Jewish fold and might be led into the full Christian liberty 'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture' (verse 9).

As the good shepherd, He lays down His life for the sheep (v. 11). The reason given here for His death is not the sins of the sheep, but the devotion of the shepherd to them, and to His Father. He lays it down that He might take it again (v.17), and additional reason why the Father loves Him.

But not only from this fold (Israel) would His sheep come. Other sheep would be added as well (v.16). Both, Jews and Gentiles would be united into one flock. This can only be done because of the abundant life offered by the Shepherd.

In a way, the story finishes here: the glories of Christ have been revealed (ch. 3-7) - and rejected (ch. 8-9). Yet, He finds individuals (His sheep) and leads them out. But God does not allow the story to finish as yet. He first ensures that a public and undisputable testimony be given to Christ as Son of God. This is exactly what we find in the next chapter.

Chapter 11

- **Key verses: v.4.25.42**

This chapter reports the incident of Lazarus. Christ, whilst fully dependent on the Father, calls Lazarus out of the grave and is demonstrated to be Son of God, the resurrection and the life, having power over death.

It is interesting that it is at this stage in the Gospel, namely when Christ has been rejected, that we find a report that has to do with death. Now, death is allowed to come in. But in this situation, He is shown to be the Son of God who has power over all that Satan can do. This was the deeper reason behind the sickness, and death, of Lazarus: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (verse 4).

This power of the Son of God, Lord over life and death, is demonstrated beyond doubt, so much so that 'many of the Jews believed on him' (verse 45), and the Pharisees gave commandment that He might be 'taken' (v.57). Later they even seek to kill Lazarus (12:10) because his resurrection was too powerful a proof that Jesus was indeed 'the resurrection and the life'.

It is beautiful to see that, even in this public display of the power of the Son of God, He remains the obedient and dependent servant, and even the one who is proved to be Lord over life and death is able to shed tears in compassion.

Chapter 12

- **Key verses: v.3.13.21**

Abundant proof has been provided of who He is: the Son of God (chapter 11). Many keep rejecting Him. But it is beautiful to see, in chapter 12, that there will be a full response to Him in praise.

The three incidents reported in this chapter demonstrate this response to the glory of the Son of God:

1. The scene in Bethany illustrates intelligent worship during the time of the church: there is Lazarus, the one who was dead, speaking of believers who were dead but have been given life. There is Martha, engaged in service. And there is Mary, pouring out the ointment, speaking of the fragrance of worship.
2. The entry in Jerusalem gives a picture of His future recognition by His earthly people, Israel: "Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (verse 13).
3. Finally, the Gentiles (the Greeks) will pay their respects to Him (verses 20 ff.).

Christ will be recognised in these three spheres - which answers perfectly to the three names under which He was presented in the end of the first chapter: 'Son of God', the 'King of Israel', and the 'Son of Man' (1:49.51).

God will make sure that there will be a worldwide response to the glory of His Son, in this age and in the age to come.

John's Gospel - Chapter 13 - 17

Chapter 12 closes with the last words addressed to the people. His glory had been shown. He would be glorified, and this would happen through death. But many would not believe (V.42.43). He now turns to His own. He speaks to them because He is going to leave them, He is going to die or, as He puts it here (as often in this Gospel, showing the divine side), He is going to 'go to his Father'.

Having dealt with 'life' (ch. 1; 3; 5; etc.) and 'light' (ch. 8) in the first part of the Gospel, the Lord now leads us into the sphere of love.

A continued theme in chapters 13 to 17 is communion (fellowship):

- chapter 13: the prerequisites for communion (washing the disciples' feet)
- chapter 14: the place of communion (in future in the Father's house, and now in our hearts)
- chapter 15: the consequences of communion (bearing fruit, and the world's hatred)
- chapter 16: the power of communion (the Holy Spirit), and
- chapter 17: the content and character of communion: the Father and the Son

Summary table

Chapters 13 to 17 can be summarised and compared under different headings. This is shown in the table below.

| Ch. | Subject | Christ | The disciples | Their relationship | Communion |
|-----|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| 13 | Preparation for Communion | Washes their feet | Their feet washed | .to one another (love and washing of feet) | Its prerequisites |
| 14 | Communion with Divine Persons | Prepares them a place | Their hearts comforted | . to Divine Persons | Its place |
| 15 | Testimony in the world | Is the source of their witness | Their mouths opened for witness | . to the Christian profession | Its results |
| 16 | Opposition from the world | Sends a comforter | Their minds instructed | . to the hostile world | Its power |
| 17 | The Father's protection in the world, and the Son's desire to have His own with Himself | Commits them into the Father's care | They are committed into the Father's care | Loved by the Father as He loves the Son | Its content and character |

Chapter 13

Chapter 12 ends with Christ practically rejected, and lifted up. You had to decide one way or another, for or against Him. In chapter 13 we come to His going out of the world completely. But before going He addresses His farewell words to his disciples. Verse 1 summarises chapters 13-16: His hour has come, He goes to the Father, they remain in the world, but He loves them, unto the end or utmost ('through and

through').

Again, chapter 13 provides us with an incident that illustrates a point of doctrine. The Lord girds Himself and washes the disciples' feet. All things had been given into His hands (v.3) - but love likes to serve! This service illustrates that - in all the glory to which He was going - He would ever remain a servant for them, with one objective: namely that they might be able to have a 'part with Him', that they might enjoy full communion with Him. What a comfort that as He ceases to be physically present He would still actively further their fellowship with Him who would be in the glory, namely by purifying and refreshing them through His word.

Even the scene of the betrayer being unmasked is given here as an element of comfort and strengthening for the disciples. Had it not been foretold, the presence of Judas, unrecognised for what he was, might have raised serious doubts in their minds. But the Lord told them (i) what would happen and (ii) who would do it, in advance, to strengthen their faith: "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he" (v.19).

Judas having left, the Lord can embark on deeper things:

- The Son of Man is glorified (on the cross where his moral beauty was displayed in all its brightness), and
- God is glorified in him (on the cross, through the work of Christ)
- God will glorify him (2000 years later, before the Greeks, when Christ will come and reign in glory), and
- God will glorify him straightaway (resurrected, glorified man in heaven). An immediate response to the work of Christ was required, not only a future millennial glory.

But His glorification would imply physical separation. In His absence, His family is left here, marked by love for one another, to continue His features in the world He has left. But they still have the flesh in them and the chapter has to close with a note of warning to Peter.

Chapter 14

The next part of the Lord's farewell address further prepares His disciples for the time of His absence. In chapter 13, He had assured them that, although He would leave them - as far as physical presence is concerned - and go to His Father, He would never cease to love them. In fact, He would always remain active on their behalf so that they could enjoy full communion with Him. Now, the Lord unveils further sources of comfort for the disciples who were going to be left behind:

- The Father's house

Yes, He would go away but He prepares a place for them in the Father's house, a 'home', a place to 'dwell', permanently, with space for each of them, and - the best of all - it was the place where He Himself would be. They will not be separate from Him for ever. If He could not stay with them where they were - He would prepare a place for them where He was to go. It is interesting that the Lord starts with this point. Before saying a word about the way they would have to go and its troubles He presents the glorious destiny to them in order to strengthen them - and the certainty coming again to take us in

order for us to be 'with Him'.

- Resources for the interim

In the interim, while the Lord would be away and they would still be here, they would not be left without resources. The first point is that, in fact, they knew the Father - although they hardly realised it. The Lord had revealed the Father to them. Therefore, (i) He was not going to an unknown place, and (ii) they knew the way there because they knew the Lord (and He, personally, is this way).

The second resource that was a source of comfort for them was the Holy Spirit, the other comforter who would be sent to them (v.16). The first comforter, the Lord, had been 'with them', 'for a while', the new comforter would be 'with' and 'in' them 'for ever'.

However, the new comforter was not going to be a 'replacement' for the Lord and His presence. Rather, He was going to maintain and deepen their relationship with Him. So a third resource was their relationship with a glorified man in heaven. And the Father and the Son would dwell with those who love the Lord and demonstrate this by keeping His commandments (v.23) and the Spirit would teach them 'all things' including truth the Lord could not now speak of and He would remind them of the words the Lord had spoken to them (v.26).

The Lord's going away does not make us worse off but better off (He leaves us His peace, prays the Father to send us a permanent comforter to teach us, He dwells with us and prepares the place for us). Surely, they should not be troubled (v.1.27) and He prepared them for what was to come to strengthen their faith (v.29, cf.13:19).

Chapter 15

Some have wondered how chapter 15 fits into the Lord's farewell address because it is so 'down to earth', speaks of branches burnt and of persecution. However, it fits in perfectly well. The Lord had established that He would ever remain active for His own in love (ch.13) and that they had a glorious future in the Father's house and, in the mean time, the support of the Holy Spirit. This paves the way for a new subject, namely that of being a testimony down here in His absence.

The words 'I am the true vine' would have struck every Jew, used to the idea that Israel was the vine (Is.5). But Israel had failed and their testimony had been replaced by the Lord's (Is. 49:5.6). The Lord replaced Israel as perfect testimony. How? By doing His Father's will, keeping His commandments (v. 10). Now that the Lord is gone His disciples should be a testimony in His place. How? By keeping His commandments and abiding in His love (v.10). So they are entrusted with a very dignified role: As the Father was revealed on earth by the Son, so the disciples should represent the son in his absence, by revealing His features on earth.

The vine and the branches are not a picture of the church (which did not even exist when the Lord spoke these words). Disciples, those who profess to follow Christ, are branches and, as such, expected to bring fruit. If 'a man' does not remain in Christ he will end up in the fire (v.6). How then can a true disciple bring fruit? This can only occur through dependence and obedience (abiding in Him, and keeping His commandments).

Faithful testimony for the Lord during His absence would have consequences: on the one hand, they would suffer (v.20) and on the other hand they would be His witnesses (v.26).

In fact, there is a twofold testimony: the Spirit would come and testify of the heavenly glorified man, and the disciples would (by the Spirit's power) testify of Him as man on earth (life, death, resurrection) v.26.27.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 continues to speak of the Lord's going to the Father and of the Spirit's coming - as did chapter 14. So how is it different? The emphasis in chapter 16 seems to be on the content of the Spirit's testimony, the kind of teaching the Spirit would give. The Lord devotes a substantial part of His farewell address to the Spirit's teaching because He wants His disciples to have an understanding of the environment in which they were going to move. This was so much the more necessary as the Lord's absence from them would herald a number of changes including the fact that persecution would have to be expected (v.1-4) and that there was now no promise of earthly blessings, such as goods and a peaceful life.

It is emphasized that it was good for the disciples that the Lord should leave them, because then, and only then, could He send the paraclete (intercessor or comforter). The Spirit would give clear testimony in relation to the world in which the disciples were to move, but also in relation to Christ Himself and the Father.

In relation to the world (v.8-12), the Spirit would convict it

- of **sin** : the Lord's absence from this world is the proof that it tragically missed the mark ('because they do not believe in Him')
- of **righteousness** : the Lord is not only absent in the world but also present with the Father as glorified Man, hence righteousness is vindicated ('because I go to the Father')
- of **judgement** : again the Lord's absence from this world proves that its prince is already judged. The execution of the judgement will follow at a later stage ('because the prince of this world is judged').

In other words, the world in which the disciples were to be left was one that had proved its utmost guilt by casting out the Lord, as had been proved by His very exaltation; and it was a world whose leader was already judged. How important it was for the disciples to realise this!

In relation to Christ, the Spirit would

- guide them into the whole truth (v.13)
- speak that which comes from God ('whatever He will hear', v.13)
- speak to them of all the glories of Christ glorified (v.14).

Finally, they would be brought into a direct relationship with the Father. How? The Spirit would show them Christ and His glories, and Christ 'has' all that is the Father's (v.15). In this way they would be brought into a direct relationship with the Father. They would ask of Him directly, without Christ's mediation (v.17).

The Lord further prepares the disciples (v.15-22) by telling them that a time would come which was going to be a time of sadness to them but of joy to the world, alluding to his sufferings and absence. But this would be followed by a time of joy for them because they would see Him (first in resurrection and

until today with spiritual eyes (Heb. 2:9).

They would also have tribulation. But this would be turned into joy. As in child birth, they would have tribulation in this world. But they knew that (i) this world is already judged, and (ii) that Christ would leave them His peace (which He had enjoyed in His walk), and (iii) that Christ had overcome: truly reason to be of 'good cheer' (v.33).

Chapter 17

On this chapter which undoubtedly is unique not only in John's Gospel but in the entire Scriptures - because of the insight it gives into the communion between the Son and the Father - many good things have been written. The purpose of the present outline is not so much to add to what has been said to simply to show how the chapter fits into this place in John's Gospel and how it is related to the Lord's farewell address in chapters 13-16.

In verses 1-5 the Son speaks to the Father, pointing out that He has glorified the Father on the cross through a work fully completed. He asks for glorification as Man so that He can share with others, communicate eternal life to others. He was now going to leave the world and His disciples, essentially, would take His place on earth while He was going to be away. He commits the disciples to the Father's care, praying for their protection and sanctification (set apart by the Word and by Christ Himself above as the object for their affections), and for their unity, extending this request from the circle of the disciples to all those who would believe through their name.

This prayer fits in wonderfully with the Lord's farewell address:

- Chapter 13 had left no doubt that, despite of His absence, the Lord would continue to love and serve His own so that they might be practically able to have communion with Him and with each other.
- Chapter 14 then showed that He would prepare a place for them (i.e. they would follow Him) and, in the mean time they had a relationship with the Father ('the way ye know') and the support of the Holy Spirit.
- They were instructed as to the expected testimony they were to give as the Lord's disciples (ch. 15) and the opposition that would result.
- Finally, chapter 16 had instructed them as to the content of the Spirit's teaching so that they would have discernment as to the world they passed through and to the spiritual things they were to enjoy.
- The farewell address is crowned by the Lord's prayer in chapter 17 in which He shows how close the disciples are to His heart, that He would commit them to the Father's love and care and that, ultimately, He wanted them to be with Him so that they might see His glory.

The prayer in chapter 17 also paves the way for the story of the Son of God going to the cross following on in chapters 18 and 19: it would only be for the Father's glory and for the blessing of His own!

Chapters 18

The last four chapters of John's Gospel show us the capture, trial, death and resurrection of the Son of God. The focus is not on the victim (as in Matthew and Mark), nor on the perfect obedient Man who suffered (as in Luke) although the Lord of course was all of this. The focus is on the Son of God who

came to do the Father's will and to carry out the work given Him to do, in order to then go back to the Father.

Verse 1-11: The Scene in the garden

The opening statement of chapter 18 is remarkable: "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron" (v.1). All of the synoptic gospels report (Mt.22; Mk.12 and Lk 20) how the Lord was confronted with the animosity of various groups (Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Scribes) when He approached Jerusalem. John's Gospel does not mention this opposition. The rejection of the Son of God had already been demonstrated (John 8 and 9). Instead, John's Gospel gives us the Lord's wonderful farewell teaching to His disciples (ch.13-17). It was only when His testimony was completed, when He 'had spoken these words' that He went to the garden to encounter those who thought they could apprehend Him. He had completed His testimony about the Father. All that was now left was to glorify Him in His death. He would now fulfil His divine predictions about this own death, by becoming the Lamb of God (1:29), the serpent lifted up (ch.3:14), the good shepherd (10:11) and the grain of wheat that was to fall into the ground and die (ch.12:24). This is the starting point for chapters 18 and 19 - showing us the Son of God carrying out the great work.

Matthew and Mark record the agony in the garden and the agony on the cross, mentioning the cry 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Mt.27:46; Mk 15:34). Luke records the agony in the garden only (Lk 22:39ff). But John neither records neither, but only the proofs of His deity:

- His omniscience: "knowing all things that should come upon him" (v. 4, cf. 6:6; 13:3). Christ had full foreknowledge of what was going to happen to Him from man and God, and yet He does not flee but goes to meet those who want to apprehend Him. He was never taken by surprise. He is not presented as the victim here but as the divine 'Boas' who does not rest until the work is done (Ruth 3:18).
- His omnipotence: "he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (v.6). His adversaries fall to the ground when the Divine 'I AM' is pronounced (Ex.3:14 and John 8:58). It is not the kiss of Judas here by which He is identified and betrayed, but He comes forward and identifies Himself.

He stands between His own and the enemies - that none might be lost whom the Father had entrusted to Him. Peter, perhaps encouraged by the fact that the foes fell to the ground, wants to fight for the Lord. But for Christ it was a matter of taking the cup without question because it was the Father who gave it to Him). In contrast to Peter, the Son is in full harmony with the Father's mind (his kingdom is not now from here).

Verse 12-27: The Trial before the High Priest

The Lord allows them (who had just fallen to the ground before Him) to bind Him (v.12). What a scene! The Lord underwent six trials in one night (three religious trials and three civil trials):

- in the house of Annas, the father in law of the High Priest Caiaphas
- Caiaphas (18:24)
- before the Sanhedrim (reconvened when it was day)
- before Pilate
- before Herod (Luke 23:7-12), and
- before Pilate again.

The authority of the High Priest which is shown by Matthew (26:63) disappears in John's account, as does the Lord's testimony given before the High Priest. The Jews had already rejected Him and the Lord simply refers them to what He had been teaching publicly (v.20.21). Then one of those standing there

(v.22) 'struck Jesus with the palm of his hand' or 'gave a blow on the face to Jesus'. Jesus responds in humility and yet with moral superiority and calm dignity. John does follow the Lord, but unintentionally puts a fellow-disciple into great danger by giving him access to the court. And Peter, standing with at the world's coal fire, denies Him. All fail - only the Son of God goes forward in perfect obedience and dependence.

18:28 - 19:16 : in the Praetorium (the HQ of the Roman governor).

In John's Gospel the emphasis is on the trial before Pilate because

- the matter of the Jews is treated as settled (their rejection is shown in chapters 8 and 9);
- He came as the Saviour of the world and therefore is judged by the world power;
- At the time of writing the Gospel Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jewish people judged. What mattered now was Rome.
- It is emphasised that the Roman method of capital punishment served to fulfil the predictions of Christ about His mode of death, i.e. being 'lifted up' (3:15; 8:28; 12: 31).

Interestingly, it is also John also tells us how Jesus will try Rome or, shall we say, judge Rome (Rev. 19)! The Jews had no conscience about killing the One who was innocent, but they have scruples about ceremonial defilement (v.28). In their view, they would be defiled by entering the premises of a heathen. And they did not want to forego their privilege of celebrating the Passover. What hypocrisy!

Pilate wants rid himself of this uncomfortable case and tries to hand Christ over to the Jews but they insist that the Roman governor should deal with Him as they could not administer capital punishment. Under God's control it only serves to fulfil his counsels and the predictions of prophecy (Ps.22:16). Pilate's interview mainly consists of three questions:

- V. 33 - art thou the king of the Jews? (political accusation made by the Jews (shifting their battle grounds): V.34 and 19:12)
- V. 35 - What hast thou done?
- V. 37 - Art thou a king then?

The Lord's response to the first question is interesting: "Of thyself sayest thou this; or did others say it to thee about Me? (verses 33, 34)". If this was Pilate's own concern then the Lord could have explained how, for instance, when He had fed the 5,000 people wanted to make Him king but He went away (John 6:15). But if it was a matter of a third party accusation then He would simply testify the truth. In response to the second question ('what hast thou done') the Lord points out that His kingdom is not of this world, which is why His disciples did not fight. When Pilate says 'art thou a king then?' the Lord could only confess the truth - knowing well that affirming this before the Roman authorities could well mean the death sentence. The Son of God, even when accused before the representative of the world power, gave the good confession (1 Tim. 6:13):

- He is indeed a king
- His kingdom is not of this world
- He has come to testify the truth
- He is the test for every man ('Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice [\[1\]](#)' (v.37))
- He calmly pointed Pilate to the authority that was higher than Caesar (19: 11)

The Lord had indeed come to testify to the truth: truth about His father (4:23; 17:17), about His own person (1:14 and 14:6), the truth which sets man free (8:32) and gives eternal life to those who believe (3:14-21). He could say: "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth" (8:40). He was 'born' (pointing to His manhood) and 'come into the world' (pointing to His deity) to give testimony to

the truth. The emphasis in John's Gospel is not on the guilt of the Jews (as in Matthew) but on the Son of God giving testimony to the truth. "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." The Jews were zealous for the law, not because it was of God, but because it was theirs; the Romans sought this world and its power. Both were blind to the eternal and unseen. Jesus was the Truth, as well as the Faithful and True Witness to it. Pilate asks 'what is truth?' (v.38) but did not wait for an answer. Whether jesting or alluding to philosophical disputes about the concept of truth, he was not an honest seeker of the truth but a frivolous sceptic.

The final two verses of this chapter show us another attempt of Pilate's to get out, and a fateful choice of the people: Barrabas - Satan's counterfeit 'son of the father'. The people's guilt is confirmed by their choice - but the other side is that God watches over the scene, making sure that His Son is not released as a guilty but pardoned criminal, but rather condemned innocent.

Chapter 19

V. 1-16

The closer we come to the cross the more the true character of every person comes to light: Pilate subjects the Son of God to the torture of scourging (19:1); and he does so 'therefore', i.e. to satisfy the demands of those who had cried 'Not this man, but Barabbas'. The Roman soldiers mock the royal claims of Christ, and not without cruelty. In his attempt to appease the Jewish leaders Pilate repeatedly confirms the Lord's innocence - to his own condemnation. And the Jews claim that on the basis of 'their law' Christ - the Giver of the law and the only innocent man - has to die. But as the whole depravity of man fully comes to light at the cross so does the perfection of the Son of God. He is silent in the face of curiosity (v.9) but gives testimony to the true source of the power Pilate had (v.11). The chief priests also pronounce their own condemnation: "We have no king but Caesar." (v. 15).

It is remarkable that the ultimate grounds of condemnation is not a political one (to do with taxes, and Caesar) but the Lord's testimony to the fact that He is the Son of God: "The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." (v. 7).

The crucifixion (v. 17-42)

In the 'place of the skull', we come to learn the emptiness of man's mind and the complete end of the first man. But in this very place - and this characterises John's report of the crucifixion - God is glorified by His Son. God watches and makes sure that even the title at the cross is testimony to the dignity of the one crucified: the king of the Jews (not just one who claimed to have this office). The emphasis is not so much on the guilt of the people (as in Matthew) or the suffering for sin (as in Mark) or the Lord's work in its peace offering aspect (as in Luke) but on the burnt offering aspect: God glorified by His Son on the cross. Hence there is no mention of the three hours of darkness or Christ's being forsaken on the cross. The three sayings recorded in this Gospel give a marvellous display of the perfection of the Son of God:

- "Behold thy mother - Behold thy son": showing marvellous compassion with His mother, and care in making arrangements for her while He Himself was on the cross
- "I thirst" - He had refused the vinegar before (refusing alleviation of pain through an intoxicating drink) but now requests it because one last prophecy had to be fulfilled before He was to go into death.
- "It is finished" - the victorious exclamation stating that all was fulfilled: all that was prophesied, all that was necessary for the salvation of man, but first and foremost all that was necessary to glorify the Father, to glorify God and to glorify the Son of Man (cf. Jn 12:27; 13:31; 17:4).

Even after His death the focus remains on the divine side. John emphasises the sovereignty of God rather than the responsibility of man in crucifying Christ (without, of course, ignoring the latter). Two

more Scriptures are explicitly stated to have been fulfilled: the Roman soldiers do not break His legs (the sinless One had gone into death first; He had the power to lay down His life (10:17) and one of them pierced His side with a spear (v. 36.37). In response to this most audacious of crimes God provides a 'record' or 'witness': blood and and water flowing from the pierced side of Christ - showing that atonement and purification both flow from the death of Christ (see 1 John 5).

Chapter 20

The final two chapters of John's Gospel present to us four incidents with a prophetic / symbolical bearing before closing with an instructive passage on service:

- Mary Magdalene: picture of the Jewish remnant at the time (20:1-18)
- The Eleven and those with them in the upper room: picture of the church (20:19-25)
- Thomas: picture of the believing remnant of Israel in the future (20:26-31)
- the draught of 153 fishes: fruit for God in the Millennium (21:1-14).

The last three of these present consequences of the death of Christ. This is followed by the account of Peter's public restoration and instructions for service.

The account of the Lord's resurrection is beautifully in line with the character and scope of this Gospel: the focus is on Mary Magdalene, no doubt because she was the one who received the commission to transmit the wonderful message to the disciples, indicating the dawn of a new dispensation and order of things, characterised by the conscious knowledge of the Father: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."(v. 17).

Mary is marked by love (more than understanding) and it is to love that the Lord responds with this tremendous revelation. Her lover keeps her by the grave when the disciples "went away again unto their own home" (v.10). In her love she weeps. For her, without Christ, the world is empty.

Mary stands for the Jewish remnant at that time: they loved the Lord but had not yet come to an appreciation of His resurrection power. Their desire was to have Christ with them, on earth, as Messiah. They were not yet cognisant of the of the new order of things. Hence the Lord's words 'touch me not', the reason being 'for I am not yet ascended to my Father'. In other words, the physical presence of Messiah with them on earth was, for now, going to be replaced by a relationship with the ascended Christ in heaven! They would know His Father as their Father and His God as their God! This is characteristic of Christianity.

This is followed by the beautiful account of the Lord's appearing in the evening of the resurrection day - a scene which - although the church did not exist until Pentecost, was beautifully emblematic of the church. The eleven, 'those with them' (Lk. 24:33) and the disciples who had gone to Emmaus are all together. The Lord had already appeared to Mary and to Simon Peter (Lk. 24:34). The doors are close, they are surrounded by a hostile world, but they have one common theme of interest: Christ. They speak about Him (Lk. 24:34). And then Christ stands in their midst - a place that was not taken and that was gladly accorded to Him. Who could think of a better illustration of Mt. 18:20? The Lord utters no reproach but speaks 'peace' to them, in a twofold way: peace with God, based on Christ's work (pointing to His hands and side), and 'peace for their pathway' as sent into the world. He breathes into them (comp. Gen. 2:7), saying "Receive Holy Spirit" (v.22), communicating resurrection life to them, a life which had passed through death and would enable them to enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son (17:3). Now they had 'life more abundantly' (10:10). So the Lord can now entrust them with the difficult task of administering forgiveness: by preaching Christianity and by forgiving, administrationally, where there was repentance.

But Thomas had missed out. The others say to him the best thing they possibly could: 'we have seen the Lord' (John 20:25). The next week, Thomas is there. He is characterised by the desire to see before he believes (v. 25). The Lord graciously condescends to this request: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands" (v. 27) and Thomas is led to confess: "My Lord and my God". This is a clear acceptance of Christ's authority and statement of His deity. And yet it remains below the level of Christian revelation of the Father (v. 17). Thomas stands for the future remnant. They will see the One they have pierced (Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7), make confession, and receive Christ.

Chapter 21

Verses 1-14

The Lord 'shows himself again to the disciples' (v.1) in the incident of the draught of 153 fishes. Verse 14 states: "now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead". This links the three appearances together, no doubt to emphasise the prophetic view of the consequences of the death of Christ:

- for the church (20:19-25)
- for the future remnant (20:26-31)
- for the believing Gentiles (21:1- 14).

Peter says 'I go fishing'. He must have assumed that although the Lord had appeared to him (Lk 24:34) the opportunity for service, his career as 'fisher of men' must have been missed and the obvious course of action is to go back to fishing. The truth is that the Lord has a great commission for him, as we will see in the latter part of the chapter.

Other disciples follow Peter's example. They catch nothing. The Lord asks them to "cast the net on the right side of the ship" (v.6). The disciples obey and discover that the Lord works miraculously and they "were not able to draw [the net] for the multitude of fishes". In contrast to the miracle worked by the Lord in Luke 5, the net does not break. And in contrast to the parable of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 13:47) where they catch 'of every kind' and have to gather the good ones into vessels and throw the bad ones away (v.48) in this incident here there is no failure and everything is marked by perfection. So it will be when a great multitude is brought in (see Rev. 7) from the nations (illustrated in the sea, Rev. 17:15). They will respond to the gospel [\[2\]](#) call and enter the Millennium. This also will be a consequence of the death of the Son of God.

Verses 15-25

Having given this beautiful panorama of the extent of the fruit of Christ's work John comes back to what is very personal. He concludes his gospel with the account of Peter's public restoration. The Lord asks three questions:

- Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?
- Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?
- art thou attached to me?

Addressing Peter as Simon, and as 'son of Jonas', points to where Peter came from, what he was naturally. He had acted as natural man. He loved the Lord but had thought he could follow Him in his own strength. This is the principle of the flesh and doomed to fail. The three questions put the finger on this point: Peter's confidence in his own love. The Lord asks these questions because Peter (who had

already judged the fruit, i.e. the denial) has to be brought to the point of judging the roots, i.e. his self confidence. The first question challenges Peter as to whether he would (still) maintain that he loved the Lord more than others; the second one whether he loved the Lord (at all), the third one whether he had any affection for the Lord (*phileo*, a weaker word is used). Peter is grieved but his answers show that a divine work had occurred in his heart. Now the Lord is able to use him again, entrusting to him a threefold service.

So the Lord graciously leads Peter to full restoration and makes it clear that his chance to serve the Lord is not gone (see comments on V.1). But also the opportunity to die for the Lord would not be missed once for all but would be granted to him at a later stage (v.18.19).

There was a special link between Peter and John: their love for the Lord and the Lord's love for them. Each of them had a different ministry but there was mutual interest. Peter takes an interest in John's future ministry as well and the Lord uses the occasion to show the character of John's ministry (v.22): John's ministry was to abide until the Lord's coming. Abiding is one of the key words John uses. The focus of his ministry is on that which abides. He had spoken of eternal life and his ministry deals with fellowship with the Father and the Son. These are things that abide irrespective of decline in testimony.

The Gospel ends with an affirmation of the veracity of this wonderful book (v.24). It's an infinite theme (v. 25) but God has graciously given us a full revelation of the infinite in a finite form: sufficient to believe "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" and sufficient to "have life in his name" (20:31).

[1] This Gospel contains many references to the Lord's voice (3:34; 4:42; 6:68; 10:4, 16,27). The question is only whether people are on the right wave length to listen to Him.

[2] Nobody who has heard the gospel of grace will have a 'second chance'. Those who rejected the gospel will not be able to be saved after the rapture (2 Thess. 2:10.11).