

PREFACE TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

First, John's writing style.

There are two kinds of gospels. One is called synoptic gospels. They are Matthew, Mark and Luke. They are called synoptic gospels because their point of view of Jesus is the same. They saw Jesus as a human being. Matthew saw Jesus as a king. Mark saw Jesus as the servant. Luke saw Jesus as an ordinary man. From there they observed Jesus step by step, and by inductive method came to a conclusion that Jesus is the Son of God. On the other hand, John adopted a deductive method. First John gives the title "Jesus is God." For example, in giving his title "Jesus is God" he mentions in John 1:1-4 that Jesus is God and Jesus is the Creator God. It says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men." John 1:14 might be the best example of John's writing style. It says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father full of grace and truth." When we meditate on this verse, we can understand that Jesus was God. But he renounced his kingdom and his glory and his power and his righteousness as God and came down to this world to save men from their sins. His act of giving up all his glory is full of grace and truth. The principle of the world is to go up the ladder of success step by step. Human aspiration is to be successful or to be richer, and it never ends. And because of this, people can endure their sufferings. When we think about politics, we can say that today we are friends but tomorrow we are enemies. When we think about business, its philosophy is to become richer by destroying others' businesses and innumerable employees in the company which crumbles. Howe

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ver, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but he came down from the kingdom of God. He also took human form and lived among us until his glorious ascension. Why did he come to this world? It was to die on the cross and shed his blood so that man may be forgiven when he believes the efficacy of his blood. We call his coming down and becoming the Word of God "the incarnation of Jesus." This one theme moves our hearts so much that we can accept Jesus as the Son of God.

Next, regarding John's purpose of compiling his gospel, it is well explained in John 20:31. It says, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's gospel also tells us about the work of the Holy Spirit. The other gospels are not direct in explaining the work of the Holy Spirit, but their explanations are somewhat similar to parable or allegory. But John explains step by step. His writing style is philosophical. First he mentions general statements, and then gives examples one by one. Therefore, the other gospels are called synoptic gospels and John's gospel is a special gospel. In fact, John's gospel is a philosophically thought out and written gospel. Usually, philosophical explanation is complicated. But John utilizes the main point of the philosophical way of writing. He makes a general statement and gives explanations one by one, to the theme, and comes to the conclusion that Jesus is the Son of God. In short, John's purpose is to introduce Jesus so that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that we may have eternal life and be members of the kingdom of God. John knew that doubt causes man to be mentally ill. Doubt leads man to Satan's banquet. Finally, such people are victims of Satan and become a member of Satan's kingdom--hell.

Second, John's gospel's three divisions.

When we read John's gospel, it is very clear that John wrote in three d

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visions. First, Jesus began his earthly messianic ministry among people. His method was healing the sick and preaching the gospel to those who came to him. On many occasions Jesus performed miraculous signs, not to surprise them, but to help them come to know that he has divine power which only God has, so that they might believe that he is the Son of God. He spent his time mostly for the crowd of people, to satisfy their demands. Jesus really wanted to preach the gospel to them by healing the sick. On the contrary, people only wanted to be healed but had no intention of listening to his preaching concerning the kingdom of God. When we study Jesus' earthly messianic ministry among people, we can see the picture of a poor father with many sons and daughters. His children's demands are endless. But Jesus had only two hands and one mouth. But he healed the sick out of God's compassion. When he preached the gospel to the crowd of people out of God's compassion, many responded to the gospel he preached. Among so many people, a few people believed. A few people's believing seems to be too small a result to Jesus' life-giving ministry. But it is not. It is because one living person is better than 10,000 dead people. In this world, we see many dead people who do many dead things. Sometimes we envy them and are tempted. But it's sheer foolishness (Ps 73:1-28). Sometimes the absolute minority people who have the life of God through Jesus are lonely and seem to have no fun in this world. But it is not so. They have fun in the world by loving one another. They have fun in the kingdom of God, bearing the likeness of Jesus.

Indeed, Jesus' earthly messianic ministry was hard work. But Jesus chose the twelve disciples and showed them God's compassion when he healed the sick and preached to the crowd. He performed many miraculous signs--he opened the eyes of the blind, restored the paralytic and walked on the sea. Especially, Jesus showed his power and authority without limit and with no fear when he confronted the Jewish religious leaders, who were the power and authority of th

e time. Through his earthly messianic ministry among people, Jesus indirectly taught that he is the Son of God. Finally, his top disciple Peter confessed in John 6:68-69, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

John clearly set apart John 13-17. John 13-16 are Jesus' teaching the basic things concerning his gospel, and chapter 17 is his prayer for himself and for his disciples and for the people of the whole world. We call this part "the upper room dialogue." In chapter 13, Jesus teaches, "Love one another." Love comes from humbleness. For example, in order to teach "Love one another," Jesus himself wrapped a towel around his waist. After that he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. At that time, the distinction between master and servant was always clearly made. Masters are supposed to be served all the time. Servants are supposed to serve their masters all their lifetimes. In case they beget children, their children were considered as the master's property. In that social system, Jesus' washing his disciples' feet was the seed of revolution. His washing his disciples' feet was the seed of the kingdom of God. Ordinary people cannot imagine washing servants' feet. But Jesus did. In order to wash his disciples' feet, Jesus who was God humbled himself to the degree of a servant. Here we learn that proud mind is the root of all evil. Adam wanted to be like God, being tempted by Satan. He only became proud. Because of his proudness he was cursed by God. This is the reason Jesus humbled himself and taught his disciples to love one another so that the kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven.

In chapter 14 Jesus teaches that he is the only way to the kingdom of God. It is because he came from God and went back to God. In history, no one has ever mentioned the origin of the universe (the First Cause). No one has ever mentioned new life after death. No one has ever mentioned

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d the kingdom of God, in which we live forever in the likeness of God. It seems that Jesus taught all the scholarship to his disciples in this short chapter. As we know well, in order to have an elementary knowledge of each kind of all knowledge, each person must study for 120 years. But Jesus taught the cause of beginning and the final result of the end. Especially Jesus taught his disciples eternal life and the kingdom of God through his death on the cross and resurrection.

In chapter 15 Jesus dealt with the relationship problem. Ever since the Fall, the most serious problem has been the relationship problem: The relationship problem between God and man, and the relationship problem between man and man. When men honor God as God and when men love one another, there is universal harmony and happiness. Since Adam became proud, the relationship between God and man has been broken. And man's relationship with man has been broken again and again, until nations and the world have been terribly broken into pieces.

In chapter 16 Jesus teaches the work of the Holy Spirit. When we read the Bible, God is mentioned in plural form. For example, in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth. In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image." We learn here in one God there are three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God the Father is the Sovereign Ruler of the world. God the Son is the Savior of the world. God the Holy Spirit is the God who dwells in our souls. Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit is very important. People perceive the presence of demons and the devil. Even there are so many Satan-worshippers. They say that in Chicago around 10 square blocks are occupied by Satan-worshippers. Those who break the Ten Commandments are all provoking God to anger, and they are enemies of God and Satan-worshippers. Here we learn two very important things. First is in one God there are three persons. Especially, demons creep into our souls one by one u

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until there is no more room in a person. But the Holy Spirit comes upon us and dwells in our souls when we accept Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Fallen people do not want to recognize the existence of the Holy Spirit. If they recognize the existence of the Holy Spirit, they must bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit according to Galatians 5:22-23a. It says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." We must resist the infiltration of the evil spirit into our hearts. We must welcome the Holy Spirit and let him dwell in our souls.

In chapter 17 Jesus' priestly prayer makes us cry many tears. Jesus prayed for himself first. But he prays to God not to save his own life but to die on the cross according to God's will and reveal God's love to the whole world. John 17:1b says, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your son may glorify you." Here "glory" has the meaning of "shining" or "revealing." Jesus prayed that through his death on the cross, shedding his blood, God's love would shine to the people of the whole world. Next, he prayed for his disciples. His prayer was for his disciples to be soldiers of Christ and fight the good fight. But Jesus asked God for his protection on them. Jesus did not want his disciples' human protection; he wanted God's protection. He wanted his disciples to be soldiers of Christ in this world. Most importantly, John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." Jesus wanted his disciples to grow in the truth of God. So he prayed that God would sanctify them by the truth. Actually, they were grown-up people. But they had to grow endlessly in order to lead the people of the whole world. How long did they have to grow? They had to grow until they reached heaven. But these days some people do not grow after the age of three, and many people in their 60's and 70's act like a three-year-old child. Here we must accept Jesus' words with many tears, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." As we know well, we have joy when we grow in the holiness of God and in the image of God. We are happy when our love grows as broad as the summer sea. We are happy when we can be patient until a rebellious child repents and grows

like a saint. We pray that all our sheep around the world may be sanctified by the truth. God's wisdom is immeasurable. God gave us the divine responsibility to grow in God. How miserable one can be when he remains as a baby in diapers when he is 60 years old! How happy one can be when he feels he has matured enough to be happy about himself! Greatness does not come from outward appearance, but when one can recognize himself that he is great. This realization cannot be purchased with money or gained through human popularity. It comes only from God when we grow in maturity in the truth.

Part three, Jesus' death and resurrection. Chapter 18:1-20:31 is the description of Jesus' passion week. After the upper room dialogue Jesus walked toward Jerusalem, where crucifixion awaited him. As we studied, Jesus is the Son of God. But in Jerusalem he was arrested by the temple police and tried. Then he received the death sentence. Finally he died on the cross, shedding his blood. At the time of his death, he said, "It is finished." This one word reveals his whole life. He lived for God's mission. God's mission for him was to give up all his glory and power and his righteousness as God in the kingdom of God and come down to the world and die on the cross to save men from their sins. At the moment of his death on the cross, he said, "It is finished." In order to fulfill his mission, he died and shed his blood. We must know that in order to carry out the mission assigned to us, we must decide to die and shed much blood. Most of all, Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins in obedience to God's will.

Third, the characteristics of John's gospel.

When we study the synoptic gospels, we learn that there are many parables and indirect teachings of eternal life, the kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit. But when we study John's gospel, John was very clearly focused on teaching that Jesus is the Son of God. Next, he focused on teaching that Jesus

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s taught very clearly and repeatedly about eternal life. Jesus also taught the work of the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of God. In short, John tried hard to teach one word, "faith." In other words, John taught us to have faith in the Son, and through him, we have eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance.