



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**COURSE CODE: CRS311**

**COURSE TITLE: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**



# NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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**CRS311**  
**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

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## **Introduction**

The Gospel of John is one of the four Gospels in the New Testament. Others are the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark and Luke. They are also called the Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel of John which is also called the Fourth Gospel is not among the Synoptic Gospels. This Gospel presents Jesus' life and work in a way that is different in most part from the first three.

This course will expose you to issues presented in the Fourth Gospel (the Gospel of John). The Course consists of three modules divided into 14 units. They include course guide, the historical frame work for the Gospel of John, the foundation for John's theology and the Key theological themes in the Gospel of John. The course guide briefly explains to you what the course is all about, what course materials that will be of use as you work your work through the course. The course guide also gives you the amount of time you may spend on each unit of the course in order to help you finish the course successfully and on time too. It also provides some guidance on tutor-marked assignments, which will be made available in the assignment file. Regular tutorial classes that are linked to the course are available. You are therefore, advised to attend these sessions.

## **What you will be learning in this course**

The general purpose of this course is to lead you to in-depth study of the Gospel according to John. It is a course beyond the introduction. During this course you will be learning about the historical framework for the Gospel of John, the foundation for Johannine theology and the key theological themes in the Gospel of John.

## **Course Aims**

This course aims generally at enabling you understand the theology of the Gospel of John. Specifically, the course aims at:

1. introducing you to the introductory matters to the Gospel of John;
2. explaining to you the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics;

3. helping you understand the foundations that the author of John's Gospel has laid for his theology;
4. enabling you understand the major theological themes presented in the Gospel of John.

### **Course Objectives**

For the aims stated above to be achieved, the course sets its overall objectives which are always stated at the beginning of each unit. You are advised to always read these objectives. They will help you to check your progress. As you work through this course, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the author, date, place and purpose of the Gospel of John.
2. Outline the Literary Genre and structure of the Gospel of John
3. Discuss the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and Synoptics.
4. Discuss various signs that Jesus used and their significance for understanding the Johannine theology.
5. Explain the Messiah's Concern for Unity in John and its significance for the Church today.
6. Outline and explain John's use of Symbolism and Dualism as foundations for his theology.
7. Explain Johannine use of Cosmos
8. Discuss the Deity of Christ as outlined in John.
9. Explain the role of the Holy Spirit in the life and work of Jesus and thereafter as well.
10. Examine the use of Old Testament in the Gospel of John.
11. Explain how eternal life is the central theme in John's Gospel.
12. Discuss the theology of Death and Resurrection as portrayed by John.

### **Working through this Course**

For you to complete this course, you are expected to read the study units thoroughly, read recommended textbooks and other materials provided by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Each and every unit has self-assessment exercises and you may be required to submit assignments for assessment purpose. It is assumed that this course should take you about 15 weeks to work

through. In order to help you achieve this, you will find listed all the components of the course, what you have to do and how you should proceed to allocate your time to each unit in order to enable you complete the course on time and successfully too.

## **The Components of the Course Material**

The key components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study units
3. References
4. Assignment file
5. Presentation schedule

## **Study Units**

The study units in this course are as follows:

### **MODULE 1: THE HISTORICAL FRAME WORK FOR JOHANNINE THEOLOGY**

- Unit 1: The Authorship Date and Place of the Gospel of John.....
- Unit 2: The Purpose of the Gospel of John.....
- Unit 3: The Literary Genre and chapter content of the Gospel of John
- Unit 4 Themes and Theology in John's Gospel.....
- Unit 5: The Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels ... ..

### **MODULE 2: FOUNDATION FOR JOHN'S THEOLOGY**

- Unit 1: The Messiah and his signs ... ..
- Unit 2: The Messiah's concern for Unity in John's Gospel.....
- Unit 3: John's use of Symbolism ... ..
- Unit 4: Dualism in John ... ..
- Unit 5: Johannine use of Cosmos.....
- Unit 6: The Pre-Existence of Christ in Johannine Gospel and throughout Scriptures .....

## **MODULE 3: KEY THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN JOHN’S GOSPEL**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Unit 1: The Deity of Christ.....  | ... |
| Unit 2: The Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John.....                      | ... |
| Unit 3: Johannine Use of the Old Testament.....                         | ... |
| Unit 4: Eternal life in John’s Gospel.....                              | ... |
| Unit 5: Johannine Theology of Death and Resurrection.....               | ... |
| Unit 6: Johannine Expression of “Jesus as the Light of the World” ..... | ... |

Each unit contains a list of references and further reading. Do your best to get as many as possible of those textbooks and materials listed. The textbooks and materials are meant to give you in-dept knowledge in the course.

### **Assignment File**

In the assignment file, you will find all the details of the work you are required to submit to your tutor for marking. The grade you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final grade you obtain for the course. Read more information on assignments in the assignment file itself and in the assessment section of this course guide.

### **Presentation Schedule**

Your course materials contain the presentation schedule which gives you the key dates for the completion of your tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Do not forget to submit all your assignments by the due date. However, alternate dates and times for submission of assignments in situations of emergency will be given and at the tutor’s discretion. You should avoid falling behind in your work.

### **Assessment**

There are three aspects to the assessment of the course. In the first place, there are self assessment exercises. In the second place, there is tutormarked assignment and in the third place, a written examination.



You are expected to be sincere and honest in attempting the exercises. It is also expected that you apply information, knowledge and skill that you have gained during the course. All assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the presentation schedule and assessment file. The assignment submitted to your tutor counts for ..... 30% The final examination at the end of the course counts for . 70%

Total.....

.....

100%

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

There are three tutor-marked assignments in this course. Each assignment will count for 20 marks towards your total course work. Assignment questions for this course are contained in the assignment file. You will be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your study units, reading and reference books. You are to read and do further research on your own. When you complete each assignment, send it together with a TMA form to your tutor on assignment file.

### **Final Examination**

The final examination for this course will be of 2 hours 15 minutes duration and will be marked over 70% of the total course grade. The examination will comprise of questions which reflect the type of self-assessment, practice exercises, and tutor-marked assignments you have previously solved. Every area of the course will be assessed. You are advised to do thorough reading of the course material and even revise your tutor-marked assignments and self-assessment exercises to be fully prepared for the final examination. The final examination will cover all aspects of the course.

### **Course Marking Scheme**

The course marking is broken down in the table below:

| Assignment | Marks |
|------------|-------|
|------------|-------|

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Assignment 1-4    | Four assignments, 20 Marks each = 30% of the overall course grade |
| Final Examination | 70% of overall course grade                                       |
| Total             | 100%  |

## Course Overview

Below is the table which brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them and the assignments that follow them.

## Table Organizer

| Unit | Title of work  | Week Activity | Unit Assessment |
|------|--|---------------|-----------------|
| 1.   | The authorship, date and place of the Gospel of John   | 1             | 1               |
| 2.   | The purpose of the Gospel of John                      | 1             | 1               |
| 3.   | The Literary Genre and structure of the Gospel of John | 1             | 1               |
| 4.   | The Gospel of John and the Synoptics                   | 1             | 1               |
| 5.   | The Messiah and his Signs                              | 1             | 1               |
| 6.   | The Messiah's concern for unity                        | 1             | 1               |
| 7.   | John's use of Symbolism                                | 1             | 1               |

|             |  |   |   |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| 8<br>.      | Dualism in the Gospel of John                | 1 | 1 |
| 9<br>.      | Johannine use of the Cosmos                  | 1 | 1 |
| 1<br>0<br>. | The Deity of Christ                          | 2 | 1 |
| 1<br>1<br>. | The Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John        | 1 | 1 |
| 1<br>2<br>. | Johannine use of the Old Testament           | 1 | 1 |
| 1<br>3<br>. | Eternal Life in John's Gospel                | 1 | 1 |
| 1<br>4<br>. | Johannine theology of Death and Resurrection | 1 | 1 |

### How to get the most from this course

One good thing about Distance Learning Programme is that “the Study units” replace the lecturer of the course. The advantage of this programme is that course materials are designed in such a way that you work through the course at your pace, time and place that is convenient for you. The study materials are made such that you read the lecture instead of listening to the lecturer. As a lecturer gives you an exercise to be done in-class, your study units provides exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

There is a common format for each study unit. In this format, the first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit to be treated and how each unit integrates with other units and the course as a whole. Next item is the objectives that make you know what you should be able to do as you complete studying the unit. These objectives are set to enable you use them to guide your study. As such, when you finish studying a particular unit, go back to check if you have achieved the objective. If you make a habit of doing this, you will increase your chances of passing the course well.

The unit content material is embedded in the main body of the unit. Selfassessment exercises are spread throughout the units. Working through these assessments will help you achieve the objectives for the unit and prepares you for the assignments and examination.

The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that your tutor's work is to help you.

1. Read this course guide very well.
2. Organize your own study schedule. Stick to the time you are expected to spend on each unit.
3. After making your study schedule, abide by it faithfully. Do not get behind in your course work because of your failure to adhere to your study schedule. Let your tutor know if you encounter difficulties.
4. Turn to unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials e.g. textbooks as contained in the reference section and the course materials.
6. Work through the unit. As you work through the unit you will know what other sources to consult for further information.
7. Keep in touch with your study centre. Up-to-date information about your course will be available there.
8. Do your assignments as required. They are to help you achieve the set objectives of the course.
9. Review the objectives of every unit to ensure that they are properly met. If there is any doubt, consult your tutor.
10. Start work on the next unit when you are sure that you have met the objectives of the previous unit. Continue in that order until you have worked through the course.
11. When you submit your assignment to your tutor, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. When the assignment is eventually returned pay particular attention to your tutor's comment both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignment.
12. When you finish studying the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Again, you are to cross check to make sure that the unit's objectives are achieved.

#### Facilitators/Tutors and Tutorials

In this 2 credit hour course, there are 28 hours of tutorials (fourteen 2 hour sessions). You will be told of the dates, times and location of these tutorials together with the name and phone number of your tutor as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Each assignment will be marked by your tutor. Pay close attention to the comments your tutor might make on your assignment as these may help you in your progress. Ensure that your assignment gets to your tutor on or before the due date. Your tutorials are very important therefore, try and attend all of them. It is an opportunity to meet your tutor and get help in form of discussion over areas of difficulty encountered in the course of reading.

### Summary

This course introduces you to the study of the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John presents Jesus and his work in a different way from the Synoptic Gospels. His theology helps humankind to put their faith in him for their salvation. The course therefore, undertakes a study of this Gospel. It focuses on historical frame work for John's Gospel, foundational issues for Johannine theology and Key theological themes discussed in the Gospel. This is all done to show how significant the message is for the contemporary Church.



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## **Module 1      Historical Frame Work for the Gospel of John**

Unit 1 The Authorship, Date and Place of the Gospel of John

Unit 2 The Purpose of the Gospel of John

.....

Unit 3 The Literary Genre of the Gospel

.....

Unit 4 Themes and Theology in John's Gospel.....

Unit 5 The Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels.....

## **UNIT 1      The Authorship, Date and Place of the Gospel of John**

### **Content**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Contents
  - 3.1 The Authorship of the Gospel
  - 3.2 Identification of the author
    - 3.2.1 External evidence
    - 3.2.2 Internal evidence
    - 3.2.3 Facts about John the Apostle
  - 3.3 The Date of the Gospel of John
  - 3.4 The place of writing the Gospel of John
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
- 7.0 Reference /Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

The New Testament contains four Gospels which are found in the beginning of the New Testament. As arranged, they are the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

In this course, we shall be discussing the Gospel According to John, which is also known as the Fourth Gospel. It is important to note at this point that we shall not be considering everything about the Gospel, but only some historical frame work for the Gospel of John in Module 1; the foundation for the theology of John in



Module 2 and some key theological themes in the Gospel in Module 3.

In this unit of Module 1, we shall be discussing the authorship, date and place of the Gospel of John.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

In this unit, you will be learning about the authorship, Date and Place of the Gospel according to John. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the person that wrote the Gospel;
- list the reasons that give support to the person considered to be the author;
- identify the date of the writing of the Gospel of John;
- state where the Gospel of John was written.

## **3.0 Main Contents**

### **3.1 The Authorship of the Gospel**

The authenticity of a book depends much on the person that wrote it. The Gospel of John is no exception. Most books published today begin with a title page, which identifies the author. When the Gospel according to John was first published, however, that initial authorial identification was not there. As such, readers have to wait until near the end of the Gospel before finding out who wrote it. Even at that, the identity is not clear to be certain, he is identified simply as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ (21.20) ‘who is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down’ (Jn 21.24; cf. 19.35).

### **3.2 Identification of the Author**

According to the persistent tradition of the Church since early second century, the Fourth Gospel was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee and brother of James. He was of the ‘inner circle’ of Jesus’ twelve disciples, and subsequently a leading apostle in the emergent Church (Mk 1.19-20; 9.2; Acts 4.1f; 8.14f).

There are strong reasons that are put forward in support of this position. We shall consider them under two headings: the External evidence (evidence from other early writers) and two, the internal evidence (evidence within the Gospel itself).

### **3.2.1 External Arguments for the Johannine Authorship**

Most of the Church Fathers agree that John the Apostle wrote this Gospel. Such Church fathers include Irenaeus who asserts, therefore, that John the son of Zebedee wrote the fourth Gospel, and he was the unnamed ‘disciple whom Jesus loved’ who reclined next to Jesus at the last supper (13.23) (John Stott, 68).

This view of the authorship of John was accepted without question by other major second century Church Fathers like Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen and Hippolytus.

The Gospel was widely accepted and distributed. This shows that it must have been authoritative. If a work had not been written by an apostle, it never would have received such a wide acceptance.

### **3.2.2 Internal evidence for Johannine Authorship**

The author’s Jewishness. He understood and quoted the Old Testament. He knew and could explain the various Jewish religious feasts.

The writer must have resided in Palestine. This is seen in his precise description of that area. This is seen in places like John 5.2 where he specifically states that “the pool of Bethesda had five porches.” In John 11.18 he indicated the distance between Bethany and Jerusalem. Hear him, “Bethany was only fifteen furlong from Jerusalem.” John 18.1 the location of the Garden of Gethsemane is laid bare, “the Garden of Gethsemane was on the other side of the Brook Kidron”. In John 19.13 he proved again that he resides in Palestine when he said, “Outside of the Praetorium was paved”.

The writer claimed to be an eye witness of many of the events in the book. This is seen in 1.14 (He beheld Christ’s glory); 19.33-35 (He was at the crucifixion); 2.6 (He knew the size of the water pots at Cana); 2.18 (he knew the distance from the boat to the shore); 21.11 (He knew the exact number of fish caught).

The author shows real knowledge about the various apostles. This is seen in 2.21f, 11.13 (He speaks of the mistakes they later made); 2.11, 17.22, 4.27 (He showed knowledge even of the thoughts of the disciples); 20.25; 21.3, 7 (He recalled the exact words spoken among them).

As Carson rightly observed, seen from these facts, it might be thought that to deny that John is not the author is “rather a desperate expedient that stands against the force of the cumulative internal evidence and the external evidence” (72).

### **3.2.3 What we know about John the Apostle**

We know the following things about the Apostle John in the Scriptures:

- He was a disciple of John the Baptist before.
- He was the youngest of the disciples.
- He was a brother to James, another apostle and the son of Zebedee and Salome.
- His family must have been rich since he was personally known to the high priest and he owned his own house (19.27).
- He was one of the inner three who were almost always with Jesus.
- He was with Peter when the empty tomb was discovered.
- He became a leader of the Church at Ephesus and Asia Minor but was exiled for a time to the Island of Patmos.

### **3.3 Date of the Gospel of John**

In the preceding unit, you have learnt about who wrote this Gospel. This subsection focuses on when he wrote the Gospel of John. As you go through this subsection, you will be able to tell when the author wrote it.

To state exactly when the Gospel of John was written is not an easy work. Both Conservatives and Liberal scholars alike generally hold that the Fourth Gospel was written at a later date in the first century.

Traditional position is that John wrote it at the close of the first century between AD 85 and 95. This conceivably has been at John’s mature years at the time.

Another view is that the John Rylands fragment, a small piece of papyrus which was found in Egypt contains portions of two or three verses from the Gospel according to John. It has been dated by various sources as having been written between AD 125 and 135. This is the oldest piece of the New Testament that is still extant. If the Gospel was written in Ephesus and this piece of the

writing was found in Egypt, hundreds of miles away, there has to be time for it to have gotten there.

Another school of thought concerning the dating of the Gospel sees it to have been written much earlier than traditionally thought, perhaps as early as AD 50 and no later than AD 70. It is seen by those who hold this view that the theology reflected in this Gospel does not appear to be more advanced than the books written in the fifties and sixties. It is also pointed out in support of this position that in John 5.2, John refers to the Pool of Bethesda by 'there is' in the present tense, not 'there was' in the past tense. It would therefore, have been difficult to write of such a thing after the destruction of the temple in AD 70 (Kummel, 243 ff). As earlier on said, it is not easy to state categorically when the Gospel of John was written, but while it cannot be said that a latter date is proven beyond any doubt, the amount of evidence in favour of it seems to be convincing. As McCain rightly observed, "Even with the above arguments for an earlier date, I see no reason to abandon the traditional position." (159).

### **3.4 The Place of Writing the Gospel of John**

This subsection is set to unravel the place where the author was when he wrote this Fourth Gospel. It is hoped that as you study this section you will be able to know where it was written. The important question therefore, is where was the Fourth Gospel written?

The connections between John's tradition and Palestine cannot do more than suggest that the Johannine tradition took root (rather than being finally written) there, since other influences were clearly involved in due course. Syria (Antioch) has been suggested as a place of origin, because of the Gnostic associations in John, and its alleged affinity with the Odes of Solomon and the letters of Ignatius. But all these links are superficial; and even if Syrian influence on the Gospel of John can be established, it is probably secondary. Because of the fact that John's Gospel in its final form was from an early date known and used in Egypt, it is arguable that the work has an Alexandrian provenance. However, even if the finished work was known in Egypt early on, the recognised tendency associated with Alexandria to allegorise and gnostise any gospel suggests that the Egyptian Church was unlikely to have had a hand in constructing the essentially historical and traditional Johannine Gospel for which we have argued.

In the end, there seem to be no reason for disputing the tradition associated with Irenaeus that John's Gospel was finally produced at Ephesus. Since nearly all ancient witnesses state that John lived his last twenty or thirty years in Ephesus and the surrounding areas, Ephesus is the most likely place of writing.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The course CRS311 The Gospel of John is aimed at giving to you the historical frame work for the Gospel of John and all the major theological themes in the Fourth Gospel. The course therefore, cannot be looked upon as general commentary of the Gospel of John. The historical frame work in this unit offers you the person that wrote this Gospel when he wrote it and where he was when he wrote the Gospel. To know the person that wrote a book helps you to understand his theology as we shall be seeing in subsequent modules.

#### **5.0 Summary**

We have seen that the authorship of the Gospel according to John is not an easy thing to come by. The name mentioned in the Gospel is not clear enough to lay the matter to rest at once. As such, many reasons are advanced both external and internal to prove that John the Apostle is the writer of the Gospel. Even with this conclusion, there is no absolute proof that he wrote it. However, one has to consider the points put forward for his authorship seriously. The date when the Gospel of John was written and the place of writing were also discussed in this unit.

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

- ✚ Who wrote the Gospel According to John?
- ✚ What are the key facts about John the writer of the Gospel?
- ✚ When was the Gospel of John Written?
- ✚ What is the probable place of the writing of John's Gospel?

#### **7.0 References/Further Reading**

Carson, D. (2000). *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

- Harris, Stephen L. (1988). *The New Testament A Student's Introduction*. Mountain View, Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Kummel, Wener Georg. (1975). Revised ed. Trans. Howard Clark Kee. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press,
- McCain, Danny. ( 1996). *Notes on New Testament Introduction*. Jos: African Christian Textbooks (ACTS).
- Miline, Bruce. (1993) .*The Message of JOHN*. England: InterVarsity Press.
- Tenney, Merrill C. (1985). *New Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

## **UNIT 2: THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

### **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main contents
  - 3.1 The Purpose the Gospel
  - 3.2 The Apologetic against outsiders
  - 3.3 An Apology against forces within the Church
  - 3.4 Edification for believers
  - 3.5 Theological Purpose
  - 3.6 Supplementation Purpose
  - 3.7 Evangelistic Purpose
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
- 7.0 References/Suggestions for further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

For any writing to be done there must be a reason for it. This Gospel according to John is no exception. The writer must have had a purpose for writing it. This unit tries to unravel the aim(s) of the writer for the writing of this Gospel. This will enable you to understand the content of the Gospel better.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

In this unit you will study to discover the purpose of this Gospel. After going through this unit you should be able to:

- List the different schools of thought as regards the purpose of the Gospel.
- State what John actually said as regards the purpose of the Gospel.

## **3.0 Main Contents**

### **3.1 The Purpose of the Gospel**

There are a wide variety of reasons attributed to the writer for the writing of this Gospel by scholars who have studied it. We shall look at those reasons one after another and at the end you will be able to arrive at the main purpose of the writer of the Gospel of John.

### **3.2 The Apologetic against Outsiders**

It is said that John wrote a polemic against Jewish accusations about Jesus as the Messiah. This is seen in the fact that the unbelieving Jews levelled accusation that Jesus was attempting to usurp God's place. The assertions of Jesus' unity with God were taken to be a blasphemous assault on the oneness of God as you can see in 5.16,18, 37-38, 45; 7.1, 19; 8.22-24, 37-59; 10.31-39; 19.7. They also brought accusations that Jesus' miracles (signs) were the work of a charlatan (7.12; 10.19-21); that Jesus was a Samaritan who was against the temple and wanted it destroyed (8.48). In addition, they brought accusation that anyone who thought Jesus was a prophet or the Messiah showed a deplorable ignorance of Scripture (7.40-52).

John's apology is also directed against Judaism in general. This is seen in his use of the word "your" for Judaism – your law (8.17); your ancestors (6.49); your Father Abraham (8.56). He also showed sarcastic astonishment concerning the Jewish leaders when he talks of Nicodemus as a leader of the people who knows nothing of rebirth (3.10); that the leaders of the Pharisees do not know where Jesus came from yet he opens a blind man's eyes, something unheard of from the beginning of the world (9.30). He criticises them concerning cleanliness rules when he said that the Jewish leaders do not enter Pilate's house to remain clean for the Passover (18.28) but kill an innocent man and so become unclean to eat the real Passover. He asserts that Jews brings the Jewish

feasts and ceremonies to their conclusion (1.1-18; 2.1-25; 3.1-12; 4.4-15 etc).

In light of the above, some say that John wrote to defend Jesus' messiahship against unbelieving Jews.

### **3.3 An Apology against forces within the Church**

Others see the reason for the writing of John's Gospel as combating Gnosticism and Docetic teachings. The Docetists held that the Christ never became incarnate; everything "seemed". The term comes from the Greek word *dokein*, "to seem", which gives the name to the heresy. They point to 1.14; 6.53-54; 19.34 as proof for this understanding for being the purpose of John. Kummel asserts "John lays claim to the language of gnosis in order to show Christians that Jesus is the true revealer" (Kummel, 230).

Another force within the Church that the writer wrote to contend with according to this understanding is the competition between the communities of Ephesus and Rome. John stressed that the beloved disciple is a witness like Peter, even prior to Peter. He states that,

1. The beloved disciple communicates to Peter that Judas is the betrayer (13.23-26);
2. The beloved disciple is the first to enter the courtyard of the high Priest and opens the door for Peter who subsequently betrays the Lord (18.15-16).
3. The beloved disciple is the only disciple to witness Jesus' death (19.35).
4. The beloved disciple and Jesus' mother comprise the first community (19.25-27) whereas in 1 Peter 5.13 Peter is close to Jesus' mother along with his "son", Mark.
5. The beloved disciple is the first to believe in the resurrected Jesus (20.4-5, 8).
6. The first to recognize Jesus when he appears in Galilee and then Peter swims to meet Jesus (21.7).
7. Peter is the pastor but the beloved disciple will outlive him (21.20-23).
8. The beloved disciple is probably the disciple mentioned in 1.37 so that Peter is not the first disciple, but Andrew calls Peter (1.40).

### **3.4 Edification for Believers**



Scholars like Brown, Martyn, and Meeks look at the purpose of the Gospel of John as edification for believers. They assert that the Gospel is written to strengthen those already in the faith. The threat of being thrown out of the synagogue (9.34; 16.1-2) is preventing some from publicly confessing their faith (12.42). They also cite 8.31; 6.67-68; 15. 4 ff where the word “remains” is an important concept. It is also pointed out that the farewell discourses give teaching to those who are already Christians.

It is also noted that the gospel is written to preserve the unity of the Church where imagery of a net not torn (21.11) in the miraculous catch suggests Church unity. In 10.16,30, Jesus emphasizes that there is “one flock, one shepherd.” In chapter 17.11, 21, 23, Jesus prays that his followers will be one as the Son and Father are one.

### **3.5 Theological Purpose**

It is also seen by some that the purpose of John’s Gospel is its concern to move the universal Church to adopt a further confession: Jesus is God. This understanding sees the prologue as being shaped by an inclusion emphasizing Jesus’ divinity (1.1, 18). The call to leave the synagogue (9.35-38; 10.3b), is based upon the inability to profess Jesus’ divinity there which can only be seen clearly when one leaves the synagogue (9.38). In addition, it is noted that the climax of the resurrection narratives and the gospel itself (placed immediately before the purpose statement of 20.31) is Thomas’ confession “my Lord and my God” (20.28).

The “I am” sayings emphasize Jesus’ divinity (6.35, 48, 51; 8.12; 10.7, 9, 11, 14; 11.25; 14.6; 15.1, 5). The “I am” allusions infer Jesus’ divinity at crucial narratives in the story (4.26; 6.20; 8.18, 58; 13.19; 14.9; 18.56). It is seen that Jesus’ sense of divinity is the offense in the gospel rather than his actions as seen in 5.18: calling God his own Father, Jesus makes himself equal to God; they want to stone him because he says, “Before Abraham was, I am” (8.53-59); Claiming to be Messiah (10.24), he blasphemed saying he was God’s son (10.33, 36) and that Jesus must die because he makes himself God’s son (19.7).

### **3.6 Supplementation Purpose**

It has often been held following Clement of Alexandria’s claim that the author of John’s Gospel wrote to supplement the Synoptic

Gospels. According to this view, he had these Gospels before him and was dissatisfied with some aspects, at any rate, of what they contained. Since he had further knowledge himself he decided to make it available to the Christian public.

### **3.7 The Evangelistic Purpose**

In regards to the above set purposes of the Gospel of John, therefore, due consideration ought to be given to what John said himself. He wrote, “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 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.” (20.30-31)

Compared with the purpose of 1 John 5.13, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life,” the Gospel sounds evangelistic.

It is argued that the Gospel is a missionary handbook to convert the Diaspora Jews. This is shown according to this stand point in his denunciation of “the Jews” which could be to drive a wedge between ordinary Jews and some of their leaders to win them over. It is also seen that the book is a medium through which future generations who did not encounter the earthly Jesus like Thomas are challenged to believe.

It is also noted that parenthetical remarks and explanations suggest that it is written not just for the Diaspora Jews but for the Gentiles (unbelievers) too. For instance, the explanations of Hebrew terms (rabbi, messiah) must surely have been familiar to Diaspora Jews (1.38, 41, 42; 9.7; 19.13, 17; 20.16). In 2.6; 4.9; 5.16, 18; 19.31, 39-40, Jewish national and religious customs are explained. There are also up to 50 explanations of localities, times and events suggesting that the evangelist did not think that his readers knew Palestinian geography. Specific references to a mission to the Gentiles are shown as in 7.35; 12.20-21; 10.16; 4.42.

Others argue against this evangelistic point where they made distinction between aorist subjunctive, “that you might come to believe” and the present subjunctive, “that you might continue to believe” does not apply to Johannine literature so 20.31 cannot be evidence for an evangelistic purpose.

However, we have seen in John 10.38 with the aorist and present tenses side by side which implies that John is written so that his

audience continues to believe and those who are yet to be believers are also to believe. As such, the claim that it cannot be evidence for an evangelistic purpose does not hold water. Moreover, the evangelistic purpose is addressed to both the Diaspora Jews and the Gentiles. In addition, different purposes discussed above are all embedded in the stated purpose. The author places emphasis upon three important words: Signs, believe and life which you shall be studying in detail in subsequent modules. This reading of John's purpose agrees with the nature of a Gospel. By definition, a Christian Gospel is a written statement of the 'good news' (*euangelion*) proclaimed about Jesus as the Christ. All who listen to it are to believe in order to have life eternal.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

You learned in this unit that there are many purposes put forward as reasons for the writing of this Gospel. The stated purpose of the Gospel by the author of the Gospel of John in 20.31 covers all the other purposes. In other words, other purposes are embedded in the stated purpose.

#### **5.0 Summary**

This Unit provides the following lessons

There are many purposes associated with the Gospel of John which are all defended using the internal evidence (the content of the Gospel of John).

The author's stated purpose is found in 20.30-31 where he states, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, who are not recorded in this book. 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." This purpose overshadows all others discussed.

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

- ✚ Discuss different schools of thought as regards the purpose of the Gospel
- ✚ What is the stated purpose of the author of the Gospel of John?
- ✚ Which one do you think is the purpose of the Gospel of John?

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### **UNIT 3: LITERARY GENRE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOSPEL**

#### **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main contents
  - 3.1 Definition of the Genre of a Gospel
  - 3.2 The Possible Genres (An Analogical Model)
  - 3.3 Development of the Genre Gospel (A Derivational Model)
  - 3.4 The Anatomy of a Gospel
  - 3.5 The Chapter Content of the Gospel of John

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 4.0 | Conclusion                                  |
| 5.0 | Summary                                     |
| 6.0 | Self-Assessment Exercise                    |
| 7.0 | References/Suggestions for further Readings |

## **1.0 Introduction**

All the books in the New Testament are not of the same family which is called genre. Some books in the New Testament are called Gospels, some letters/epistles and yet we also have apocalypse. In this unit, you will study the genre of a gospel. This unit will discuss the following question: If the Gospel of John is not an epistle or letter and not an apocalypse, but a Gospel, what does it mean? In answering the set question, we shall therefore be looking at what the genre of a Gospel is and possible genres; the development of the genre gospel as well as the anatomy of a Gospel.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Define the term ‘genre’
- state different kinds of genres
- explain the development of ‘genre’
- state the anatomy of a gospel
- list the chapter content of each chapter of the Gospel of John

## **3.0 Main Content 3.1 Definition of the Genre of a Gospel**

Genre has been defined by many people. We shall look at some of these definitions and then make our conclusion as to what is the standard definition. Some defined genre as the “context of expectation” by which the text becomes intelligible. As we see in a newspaper, we read the various parts of the newspaper with different expectations (front page, news, editorials, advertisements, the funnies, horoscopes, crossword, and puzzles), so we must read differently the various genres of scripture (historical narrative, wisdom literature, prophecy, apocalyptic, gospel, and epistle).

Dan Via defines genre as that “hidden or unconscious structure” of the whole that is “beyond the text from which the latter draws its meaning”. In as much as Via’s definition tries to take care of what is involved in a genre, it is not complete. As such, we shall define genre in line with Aune’s understanding, when he said that genre is “a group of texts that exhibit a coherent and recurring

configuration of literary features involving form (including structure and style), content, and function” (Literary environment, 13).

### **3.2 The Possible Genres (An Analogical Model)**

#### **Biography**

Many scholars have seen the gospel as a biography. Biography deals with lives of famous men. Its purpose is to be an example of imitation. They compare the Gospel and Biography and saw some similarities between the two in the following ways:

First, the focus is on one person. The Gospels include the narrative of John the Baptist since Jesus’ baptism serves a function similar to the ancestry, birth, and education in Greco-Roman biography.

Second, Jesus’ story is recited from the beginning of his ministry or his birth through his death and resurrection within a chronological frame work.

Third, the laudatory nature of biography to demonstrate the greatness of a designated figure and to encourage appreciation and imitation fits the Gospel of Jesus.

Laudatory biography is demonstrated in Jesus’ impressive genealogy (Matthew and Luke), miraculous birth, and escape from death. The purpose of this biography is “to dispel a false image of the teacher and to provide a true model to follow” (Charles Talbot, *What is a Gospel*, 94).

The loss of faith in the gospels as biography only came with the rise of form criticism in the 1920s. When we compare the two very well, there are many differences between the two:

In the first place, there is so little about Jesus’ life before his public ministry that no serious minded biographer would want his name to be attached to these books

In the second place, the gospels are not biographies that communicate a portrait of an everyday Jesus with family background, appearance, character qualities, likes and dislikes, education, relationships, cultural involvement, or environment.

In the third place, the gospels are formally anonymous which is rare for biography. Also the gospels do not function primarily as revelations of character as in biography.

In the fourth place, the gospels are not geared toward the past but are proclaiming a living presence.

In the fifth place, biographies are not kerygmatic in shaping a community by being used in preaching and worship services.

In the sixth place, biographies lack theological emphasis and missionary goal.

You can see that Gospel is not biography. Even if the Synoptics are looked upon as biography, the Gospel of John would have not been one because of its theological emphasis from the beginning to the end of it.

### **History**

Some people look at the Gospel as history. For them history writing in general has a broader set of purpose than recording events in the form of a chronicle. They argued that Luke's intention as seen in Luke 1.2 is to write history.

For the differences between the Gospels and historiography, one sees that the gospels are considerably shorter and anonymous. Moreover, the purpose of the narrative is not to tell the past but to preach the saving knowledge of a living person as in John 20.31, "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."

### **Fiction**

Others look at the Gospel as fiction. For them the purpose is for entertainment and the development of symbolic characters that speak to contemporary situations. In favour of this position, literary critics like Reinhartz states that the exaggerated claims about Jesus and the apocryphal deeds demonstrate the gospels are fiction.

Against this understanding, the presence of fiction differentiates the canonical and apocryphal gospels. It is seen in Luke's use of historical prefaces and his mention of sources are not found in novel. When one looks at John's presentation of his version of the gospel, there is far big difference if not completely different from fiction.

### **Gospel based upon Jewish Liturgy**

The purpose of which is to use in churches. In favour of this understanding of the genre of Gospels, it is said that they were meant to be read at worship services (Justin, 1 Apol. 67) 155 AD. In the New Testament they see it in such places like 1 Thess. 5.27; Col. 4.16; Rev. 1.3; 22.8; Cf. 1 Tim 4.13.

Against this portrayal, the use of serial readings is not attested before the fourth century. It is also doubtful that New Testament writings originally were written as equal to Old Testament scriptures used in the worship services.

### **A New Genre – Gospel (*Sui generis*)**

The purpose according to this new genre is for proclamation of the gospel in written form. This view became the majority opinion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Walter Elwell and Robert Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament*, 72).

In favour of this view, it is seen that combination of teaching and action in a preaching – oriented work stands apart from anything else in the ancient world. Secondly, the gospels are evangelistic tracts and not just history or biography: Preaching materials designed to tell the story of God's saving action in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Against these points in favour of the claim, Gospel is a non-literary model with no precedent. Moreover, genre by definition is primarily form, and only the content of Gospel.

## **3.3 Development of the Genre Gospel (A Derivational Model).**

### **Proclaiming Good News (the Hebrew *bsr* and Greek *euangelion*)**

It is seen that gospels began in the Old Testament, even though the noun gospel (*euangelion*) is absent from the LXX. The plural noun: “gospel tidings” is seen in 2 Sam 4.10; 18.20, 22, 25; 2 Kings 7.9. The verb form is also seen in 1 Sam 31.9; 2 Sam 1.20; 4.10; 18.19, 20, 27, 31; 1 Kings 1.42; 1 Chr 10.9; Is. 40.9; 52.7; 60.6; 61.1; Jer. 20.15 etc.

Second, as in the New Testament, the gospel is Jesus' proclamation. Mk 1.14, the good news of God is explained in 1.15 “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.” Furthermore, Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom (Matt 4.23; 9.35; 24.14).



### **Proclamation about Jesus**

In the Pauline Epistles the gospel becomes the proclamation of Jesus' eschatological work (not his earthly life). The noun form is seen 52 times while the verb form is found 19 times.

### **Transformation by the other Gospels**

First, none of the other gospels take over the term *euangelion* at the beginning; both Luke and John omit the noun *euangelion* altogether. Second, Matthew places the kerugma into the format of Old Testament Jewish history like the Pentateuch (a book of the generations *biblos genmeseoos*); with narratives about Jesus (like Moses) and a presentation of the Torah which becomes the focal point. Third, Luke transforms the gospel proclamation into Hellenistic history writing with some features of biography. For instance, Luke calls his work narration (*diegesis* 1.1) and referred to the oral gospel as the word (*logos* 1.2). Luke has historized the kerugma and thus developed the genre of gospel (preached history) to a history of the life of Jesus and the early Church.

- Luke avoids the noun *euangelion* because the book is not a gospel in Mark's sense (the kerugma of Jesus and the disciples is not distinguished in Mark.) or a group of discourses in Matthew's sense, but a life of Jesus.

- John follows the Markan oral kerugma now transformed into Johannine Homilies, which refers to extended dialogues.

### **Gospel refers to the Four written Documents**

First, the first person to use the word for the canonical accounts of Jesus' ministry is Justin Martyr (Apol 1.66; Dial 10.2 15) 125 AD. Second, each gospel is referred to as *kata* (according to) with the accusative implying that they all were added at the same time when placed together as a collection (125 AD). See David Aune, *Literary Environment*, 18 ff.

## **3.4 The Anatomy of a Gospel**

### **The Gospel is not just a life of Christ.**

Papias in his Eus., EH. 3, 39, 15 asserts, when Mark became Peter's interpreter, he wrote down accurately, though by no means in order, as much as he remembered of the words and deeds of the Lord ... Now Peter did not intend to give a complete exposition of the Lord's ministry but delivered his instructions to meet the needs of the moment.

This is also applicable to John's Gospel as well. Again, Gospel is not just a biography. This is seen in the omission of all interest in

the physical appearance, inner motivations, and character development of Jesus.

Furthermore, Gospel is not just history because theological interest is greater than historical interest.

### **Gospel is not like the twentieth century historiography**

Emphasis is placed on salvation history rather than the secular history. The gospels do not intend to preserve for posterity the minutes of Jesus' speeches or the minutiae of his behaviour. Twentieth century historians are diarists who keep a day-by-day chronicle of deeds, movements, and conversations.

Moreover, the marks of real historical writing are missing—completeness of material, exactitude of historical detail, consistent chronology, biographical interest. The primary interest is theological rather than chronological.

It is seen that the author of the Gospel is a person of faith as against a detached neutral observer in case of secular history writers.

Aune asserts that secular historians prefer oral tradition to written tradition. He gives example that Eusebius gave in EH 3, 39, 3-4 as typifying ancient historians from Herodotus (ca. 420 BC) to Ammianus Marcellinus (ca. 330-395 AD) in preferring oral tradition. (Aune 67, 81). Also, in modern historiography oral sources are not trusted.

### **Gospels are not just proclamation or kerugma.**

This is seen in the fact that the authors are telling the historical story of Jesus. Again, the Gospels are structured chronologically and geographically.

### **What then is the Gospel?**

This question is important having examined different aspects of genre of a gospel. Looking at the above discussions, we can define gospel as kerugmatic history or preached history. This enables us to interpret gospel at two levels: History referring back to Jesus and proclamation referring to the preaching of the evangelists to their communities. John's Gospel being a gospel, we shall be discussing its theology at the two levels indicated above.

## **3.5 The Chapter Content of the John's Gospel**

You are going to have a look at the content of the Gospel chapter by chapter. After learning it you should be able to state the chapter content of the Gospel as outlined in this course material.

1. The Word of God becomes flesh, Jesus is baptized by John
2. Wedding at Cana, the cleansing of the Temple
3. Nicodemus
4. Woman at the well
5. Lame man healed on the Sabbath
6. Christ the bread of Life (feeds 5,000 and walks on the water)
7. Teaching at the feast of Tabernacles, rivers of Living Water
8. Christ the Light of the World
9. Healing of man born blind
10. Good Shepherd
11. Raising of Lazarus
12. Mary Anoints Jesus; Triumphal Entry
13. Last Supper, Foot washing; Departure of Judas
14. Comfort and the Comforter
15. Vine and the branches
16. Ministry of the Holy Spirit
17. High Priestly prayer
18. Jesus' Arrest and Trials
19. Roman Trial; Crucifixion
20. Resurrection
21. Catch of Fish, Commissioning of Peter (McCain, 161).





#### **4.0 Conclusion**

This unit is aimed at giving you the general overview of what genre is as pertains the Gospel. The study of literary genre of John and Gospels in general is imperative for your understanding of the teachings that is contained in the Gospel of John.

#### **5.0 Summary**

You have learnt in this unit what a genre is as refers to the gospel. Different possible genres are also discussed as well as the development of the genre Gospel. The anatomy of a gospel; what genre of “gospel” is all about, which is kerugmatic history or preached history, is learnt. This will help you to understand further discussions on the foundations of John’s theology and theological themes in John as outlined in modules 2 and 3 below.

## Self-Assessment Exercise

-  What is a genre?
-  List possible genres of Gospel
-  Discuss the development of the genre of Gospel
-  What is a “Gospel” as a genre?

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## **Unit 4 Themes and Theology in John's Gospel**

### **Content**




- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
- 3.0 Main Contents
  - 3.1 Themes and Theology in John's Gospel
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
- 7.0 Reference /Further Readings

### **1.0 Introduction**

This segment describes the main and selected themes in John's Gospel. Furthermore, it elaborates on the theology highlighted in the Gospel of John. John wrote to convince his readers of Jesus' true identity as the incarnate God-Man whose divine and human natures were impeccably amalgamated onto one person who was the prophesied Christ ("Messiah"), and Savior of the world (e.g., 1:41; 3:16; 4:25-26; 8:58).

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

-  articulate the main and sub themes in the Gospel of John
-  explain the theology in John's Gospel
-  Describe the I am statements of Christ declaring his Godhead

### **3.0 Main Contents**

#### **3.1 Themes and Theology in John's Gospel**

John's Gospel is a stimulated record of the life of Jesus, written by a personal first-hand eyewitness, who is able to personally testify concerning most of the events he designates. The main purpose of his record is to afford evidence that Jesus is the Christ in whom we must believe to be saved (20:30,31; 21:24,25). He constantly cites evidence to support this claim. He frequently uses words such as "witness," "testimony," and related words. He achieves his purpose by stressing Jesus' miracles, as well as many events or insights into events which are not recorded in the other accounts. Consequently, John gives an exceptional record of Jesus' life, of immeasurable value in establishing the gospel claims concerning who Jesus is.

The principal theme of the Gospel of John envisages that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God. Consequently, John records for us those events in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ that obviously divulge and manifest His glory. For instance, the expression "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven," which arises so regularly in the Synoptics, is utterly missing from John's Gospel, excluding in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (3:3, 5) and one other reference (18:36). This is for the reason that the treatises of Jesus center around His divine relationship with the

Father rather than His formation of a heavenly kingdom. The discourses of Jesus, so protruding in the Gospel of John, assert the divine character of Jesus Christ as emanating from the Father, in contrast to the message of the Kingdom of Heaven as perceived in the Gospel of Matthew. John's Gospel was written last of all the Gospels, close the end of the first century, about fifty years after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We realize in John's epistles that a great defense of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ was required so as to overcome rising heresies. John's Gospel discourses the godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ as its overriding theme, hence reflecting the message for this era of the early church. Furthermore, the Gospel of John also places more weight upon the testimony of the God the Father than the Synoptic Gospels (Köstenberger 2004). Jesus makes references to His warm relationship with His heavenly Father throughout the Gospel (Beasley-Murray 1999).

In accordance with John's evangelistic and apologetic purposes, the overall message of the gospel is found in 20:31: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". The book consequently, focuses on the person and work of Christ. Three principal words; "signs", "believe", and "life", in 20:30-31, receive continual reemphasis all over the gospel to implement the theme of salvation in Him, which is first set forth in the preface (1:1-18; compare 1 John 1:1-4), and re-expressed all over the gospel in varying ways (e.g. 6:35, 48; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11-14; 11:25; 14:6; 17:3). Furthermore, John delivers the record of how men replied to Jesus Christ and the salvation that He presented. Summing up, the gospel emphasizes on:

- (1) Jesus as the Word, the Messiah, and Son of God;
- (2) Who brings the gift of salvation to mankind;
- (3) Who either accept or reject the offer.

John similarly presents certain contrastive sub-themes that strengthen his foremost theme. He uses dualism (life and death, light and darkness, love and hate, from above and from below), to convey vivacious data concerning the person and work of Christ and the necessity to believe in Him (e.g. 1:4-5, 12, 13; 3:16-21; 12:44-46; 15:17-20). There are also 7 unequivocal "I AM" statements which identify Jesus as God and Messiah (6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9; 10:11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5). There is such a love exuding from every word in this book. John's Gospel demonstrates a beautiful relationship between Jesus and the Father. In the John's Gospel, Christ speaks of God as the Father over 100 times and we find that Jesus' ministry altogether was approximately 3-1/2 years. There are eight miracles of Christ recorded, and all of them show Jesus' Godhead. Six of these are stated only in the Book of John. John's information is all first-hand knowledge. He was there when it occurred. This is a gospel as well, that shows the opposites of Jesus our Lord to Satan. We perceive light and darkness, good and evil, truth and lies.

Intertwined into the Gospel of John is an assemblage of divine names for the Lord Jesus Christ that pronounce Him as the Son of God. Each of these names discloses a feature of the His divine character and work. Therefore, the author uses the divine names of Jesus Christ to carry the theme that all five witnesses declare His deity. As Origen avows, these names announce the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ:

John presents man as moreover belonging to one of two things: the darkness or the light. There is no in between. The darkness is connected with death, while the light is connected with life. This

theme is established all over the Gospel. In 1:4-9, John depicts Jesus as being the light of men and proves that the darkness does not comprehend the light. John the Baptist came to bear witness of the light in order that men would believe through him. In the third chapter (19-21) Jesus declares that the light has come into the world, but men have loved the darkness in its place of the light because their works were wicked. Sinners hate the light and are frightened to go into the light so that their works will not be exposed. In contrast, the ones who practice the truth come into the light so that it can be perceived that their works were done through God. In 5:35 there is reference to John the Baptist as being a lamp that gives forth light. Jesus is similarly mentioned as the Light of the World (8:12; 9:5) while the devil is called the "prince of this world" (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In 12:35-36 Jesus tells the crowd that it is required to walk in the light because the person that walks in the darkness does not recognize where he is going. He likewise tells the crowd to believe in the Light so as to become sons of the light. Then, in 12:46, he avows that he has come as light into the world so that those who believe in him will not persist in darkness.

The Gospel of John also develops a Christology that is unique from the other Gospels. One of the superseding themes throughout the New Testament is that Jesus is the Messiah. In offering this, John's Gospel also makes it conspicuous that Jesus is God. In the inaugural verse (1:1), John simply declares that in the beginning Jesus (the Logos) was with God and was God. All over the Gospel many references are made to Jesus' deity. Most notable of these are 8:57-58 where Jesus affirms, "Before Abraham was born, I am (egw eimi)" It is often thought here that Jesus is making an allusion to Exod 3:14 (LXX) where God refers to himself as "I am (egw eimi) the one being or existing (o wn)." Another indication of Jesus' deity can be found in 10:30-33. In this instance Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." After this, the Jews picked up stones that they might stone him on grounds of blasphemy because he claimed to be God. At the end of the Gospel (20:28) Thomas makes a climacteric confession of faith by affirming Jesus as his God.

Conceivably the utmost revelations of Jesus' divine character are exposed in the great "I Am" declarations. There are seven dissimilar names divulged in John's Gospel using the phrase "I Am" These plainly declared His Godhead, as John does when he makes Him say, 'I am the light of the world,' 'I am the way and the truth and the life,' 'I am the resurrection,' 'I am the door,' 'I am the good shepherd;' and in the Apocalypse, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.'" (*Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John* 1.6) (Köstenberger 2004). Jesus openly declares His deity when He makes these seven assertions.

The theology of Johannine Gospel is found in the preamble to the Gospel where it begins by saying, "In the beginning was the word (logos), the word (logos) was with God, and the word (logos) was God." As it is translated here, the word logos is usually translated as "word." Logos has a profound philosophical tradition that predates John's Gospel by half of a millennium. Heraclitus (560 BC) first used the word in reference to a fixed principle in a world of change; it was his declaration of God (Guthrie 1981). The Stoics subsequently adapted a similar principle that the Logos was the power that controlled and ordered the world. The Logos would have helped John to present Christianity to Greeks who were conversant with the idea (Barclay 1956).

Nevertheless, this impression of the word in relation to God was not a wholly Greek principle. Philo (a first century Jew from Alexandria), being influenced by the Greeks, correlated the idea of the Logos to Yahweh, the God of Israel. Moreover, the Hebrew Scriptures nearly definitely inspired John to use the Logos. When the 'word of God' is used throughout the Old Testament, it repeatedly refers to God being in action, predominantly in respect to "creation, revelation and deliverance" (Bruce 1986). With the use of Logos John would have been able to divulge Christ's deity to both Jews and Greeks alike. The majority of the incidences of logos in John take place in a "syntactical sequence with Jesus or God" (Johnson 1992). John uses logos in direct reference to the person of Christ (1:1, 14), his message (4:50; 5:24; 15:3, et al.), and inside his message (4:47; 5:38; 17:17, et al.).




#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The Gospel of John is exceptional from the "synoptic Gospels" (Matthew, Mark and Luke), so called due to their parallel content. The synoptics cover many of the same miracles, parables and events of Jesus' life and ministry. There is a lot of overlap, repetition and even some parallel passages that are nearly identical. Generally speaking, the synoptics tell us what Jesus said and did; John tells us who Jesus is. The synoptics focus on the signs and sayings of Christ; John emphasizes the identity of Christ. Early church father Clement of Alexandria called John "the spiritual Gospel" because of its deep insight into Jesus' divinity.

#### **5.0 Summary**

John's Gospel demonstrates a beautiful relationship between Jesus and the Father. The main theme confirmed that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". Numerous important words repeated all over the gospel such as life, light, witness, and glory, appear here. The rest of the gospel develops the theme of the prologue as to how the eternal "Word" of God, Jesus the Messiah and Son of God, became flesh and ministered among men so that all who believe in Him would be saved. John uses logos in direct reference to the person of Christ (1:1, 14). The Gospel of John also develops a Christology that is unique from the other Gospels. It demonstrates that Jesus is the Messiah. John depicts Jesus as being the light of men and proves that the darkness does not comprehend the light.

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

-  Highlight the main and sub themes in the Gospel of John
-  Describe the theology in the Gospel of John
-  Discuss John's expression of *logos*

#### **7.0 Reference /Further Readings**



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## **UNIT 5 JOHN AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS**

### **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
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- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
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## **1.0 Introduction**

The three Gospels in the New Testament that are called Synoptic Gospels are Matthew, Mark and Luke. In this unit we shall very briefly discuss the Synoptic Gospels. We shall also identify the differences between them and the Fourth Gospel.

In studying this unit, we shall concentrate on the following areas:

1. the definition of ‘Synoptic’
2. why the three Gospels are called Synoptic Gospels
3. study the similarities between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels
4. study the differences between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the meaning of the term ‘Synoptic Gospels’
- list the similarities between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel According to John.
- identify the differences between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels.

## **3.0 Main Contents**

### **3.1 The Meaning of “Synoptic Gospels”**

The word “Synoptic” simply means “seeing together”. The three Gospels are called Synoptic Gospels because they basically cover the same material. They are different from the Gospel according to John in that John contains very little material found in the other three Gospels.

### **Self - assessment assignment 1**

Define the term “Synoptic” and indicate why the first three Gospels are called Synoptics?

### 3.3 The Relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels

The relationship between John's Gospel and the Synoptists is a vast and complex topic that can no way be treated here in detail. The relationship has been described in terms of mutual independence or varying degrees of literary interdependence. Despite efforts to demonstrate literary dependence, it seems hard to establish on purely literary grounds that John must have known or used one or more of the Synoptic Gospels. Historically, however, it seems difficult to believe that the Fourth evangelist had not at least heard of the existence of the Synoptic Gospels and read some portions of them. But whether or not the author of the Fourth Gospel knew these other Gospels, clearly he did not make extensive use of them in composing his own narrative.

Let us at this point look at the similarities (not verbatim resemblance) between John and the Synoptic Gospels.

#### 3.3.1 Similarities

##### 1 Narrative material

- \* The feeding of the five thousand. This appears in all the four Gospels (Jn 6.1-15; Mk 6.32-44; Mt 14.13-21; Lk.10-17).
- \* The anointing at Bethany. This appears in John, Mark, and Matthew (Jn 12.1-8; Mk 14.3-9; Mt 26.6-13) Apart from the narrative material, John does not share any larger blocks of material with the Synoptic Gospels as can be seen in the discourse material below.

##### 2. Discourse material

- \* The material concerning John the Baptist in John 1.27 where John clearly echoes the words of the Baptist reported in the synoptic Gospels (Mk 1.7; Mt. 3.11 and Lk 3.16).
- \* At John 1.42 we are given the Fourth Gospel's version of the naming of Peter, which appears in Matthew at the time of the confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16.18). \* the saying in 2.19 is found in the Synoptic Gospels (Mk 14.58; Mt 26.61; Mk 15.29=Mt 27.40)
- \* In John 4.44 the material is found in Mk 6.4; Mt 13.57; Lk 4.24

- \* The passive narrative in John contains a number of words of Jesus which have links with similar *logia* in the Synoptic Gospel. John 13.21 is seen in Mk 14.18; Mt 26.21. You are to read these chapter references.

Conclusively, there are similarities, between John and the synoptic Gospels in their narrative and discourse material. The material concern Jesus of Nazareth, but when the similarities are closely examined, the similarities are not verbatim in all occurrences. Before we can go on to explore the differences that are found between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels, assess yourself.

### **Self assessment assignment 2**

Discuss the similarities that are found between the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John.

### **3.3.2 The Differences between John and the Synoptics**

There are many differences when you compare the Fourth Gospel and the first three Gospels, also known as the Synoptic Gospels. Below are some of the differences:

1. John's Gospel is the only one that records two miracles in Cana (John 2.1-11; 4.46-54).
2. The Gospel of John indicates that Jesus' ministry lasted longer than the way the Synoptic Gospels portrayed. This is seen in the fact that John mentions three Passovers during Jesus' ministry while the Synoptic Gospels mentioned only one Passover.
3. John's Gospel is the only one that talks about the woman of Samaria (John 4.1-2) and of the man born blind.
4. In the Gospel of John, some disciples of Jesus became attached to the Lord in the South before the ministry of Jesus begins while in the Synoptic Gospels the disciples are called and the twelve appointed in the north during his ministry.
5. The Gospel of John talks about the ministry of Jesus in Jerusalem while the Synoptic Gospels centres Jesus' ministry in Galilee and all of Judea.
6. The term, the "world" is extensively used in the Gospel of John. John tells us that "the world" is under the power of its ruler, the devil. It falls under the condemnation of the Holy Spirit. In as much as the disciples of Jesus remain in the world, they are not of

the world. As such, the evil one, Satan does not, or need not have dominion over them. This is for the fact that the evil one, the devil is already stands condemned. The disciples are:

- \* in the world (John 13.1; 17.11)
- \* will remain in the world (John 17.15).
- \* will not be of it (John 17.14).

A little while the world which cannot accepts the Holy Spirit will behold Jesus no more (John 14.17-19). These expressions about the world and their contracts are not found in the Synoptic Gospels. More about the “World” will be treated in Module two, unit 5.

7. Another area of difference between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels is seen in the seven I AM's in John's Gospel. The number seven we are talking about in the Gospel of John indicates completeness. As such John arranges the main teachings of Jesus Christ in sevens. This shows that there is complete revelation of Jesus as you can see in the great “I am” declarations below:

- \* I am the bread of life (John 6.35)
- \* I am the light of the world (John 8.12)
- \* Before Abraham was, I am (John 8.58).
- \* I am the good shepherd (John 10.11)
- \* I am the resurrection and the Life (John 14.6).
- \* I am the way, the truth and the life (John 14.6)
- \* I am the true vine (John 15.1).

Some of these I am sayings will be discussed in detail in module two, unit 3.

8a. The Synoptic Gospels call Jesus' wonder works “miracles”. In the Gospel of John, they are called “signs”. The “signs” are found in the following passages:

- \* 2.1-11: the water turned into wine
- \* 4.46-54: The healing of the son of a nobleman
- \* 5.1-9: The healing of the lame man at  
Bertheatha/Bethesda/Beresaida
- \* 6.1-4: The feeding of the multitude
- \* 9.1-7: The healing of the blind man
- \* 11.28-44: The raising of Lazarus
- \* 6.16-21: The walking on the sea

8b. As we have seen, there are seven signs recorded in the Gospel of John, there are also seven witnesses in the Fourth Gospel.

They are:

- \* John the Baptist: "This is the Son of God" (John 1.34). You should remember that the Evangelist does not call him "the Baptist," rather he only called him "John."
- \* Nathaniel: "Thou art the Son of God" (John 1.49). \* Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the son of the Living God" (John 6.69).
- \* Martha: "Thou art the Christ the son of God" (John 11.27).
- \* Thomas: "My Lord and My God". (John 20.28).
- \* The Evangelist: "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". (John 20.31).
- \* Christ Himself: "I am the Son of God (John 10.36).

The author of the Fourth Gospel, John, brings these seven witnesses to the stand to prove the fact that Jesus Christ is God. As you have seen, the main purpose of his writing is that people might believe that Jesus Christ is God. We shall study this in detail in module three, unit one.

9. The weakness of the multitude is brought to lime light. The following examples are recorded in the Gospel:

- \* the multitudes' rash impulsiveness (John 6.15; 12.12- 13)

- \* the multitudes' low ideals (John 6.26)
- \* the diversity of multitudes' opinions (John 7.12);
- \* the multitudes' shallowness (John 12.9, 17-18).

10. In the Synoptic Gospels hostility to Jesus is expressed by the parties, especially the Pharisees and the Sadducees. In the Synoptic Gospels too, the Jews are mentioned less than ten times. In the Gospel of John however, the main opponents of the Lord Jesus are the Jews. We find Jews being mentioned seventy times whereas; the Pharisees are mentioned only twenty times. The Sadducees who were one of the main parties that were hostile to Jesus are not mentioned at all in the Gospel of John.

- 11 You can see that the ministry of John the Baptist is placed alongside that of Jesus in John's Gospel. You can see this in John 3.22-24. Here, Jesus and the Baptist's work for some time in the south are done concurrently before the Baptist was imprisoned. On the contrary, Mark records that Jesus started his ministry after John was arrested (Mark 1.14).

12. The Synoptic Gospels talk more about the human nature of Jesus than it is in the Fourth Gospel. For instance, Luke presents

Christ as Man, born of a woman, laid in manger. The divinity of Jesus is more conspicuous in the Gospel of John than in the Synoptic Gospels. In John, we see Christ as the only begotten Son, who was in the beginning with God.

13. Other minor differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels are seen in the following:

- \* Because John's concern is on the divinity of Jesus, there is no genealogy recorded- neither his legal lineage through Joseph (as given in Matthew's Gospel), not his personal descent through Mary (as given by Luke's Gospel).
- \* There is no account of his birth because Jesus was in the beginning.
- \* Luke tells us that Jesus grew in stature and increased in favour towards men and God. In John's Gospel, there is nothing about his boyhood.
- \* John's Gospel recorded nothing about Jesus' temptation.
- \* There is no account of Jesus' transfiguration in the Fourth Gospel.
- \* John has no account of the appointment of his disciples
- \* There are no parables in John's Gospel. The author of the fourth Gospel only uses proverbs.
- \* There is no account of Jesus' ascension in the Gospel of John.
- \* John does not contain the account of the Great commission Jesus gave to his disciples after his resurrection and shortly before his ascension.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The Gospel of John is not one of the Synoptic Gospels. This is because the way he presents the good news of Jesus is different from the way the first three Gospels in the New Testament present it. Even though there are some similarities between the two, John's main concern is to present Jesus as a divine being with God. That believing in him will earn you eternal life.

#### **5.0 Summary**

You learnt in this unit that the Synoptic Gospels are Matthew, Mark and Luke. They are so called because they present a similar view point concerning the good news about Jesus Christ. The manner and way of telling their story is not the same with the Gospel of John. While John's concern is to portray Jesus as God, the Synoptic Gospels concentrate on the general sayings of Jesus. The Synoptic Gospels are full of parables; John's Gospel does not have even one.



The Gospel of John is written so that you and I should have faith in Jesus as the Son of God; believing in him attracts eternal life.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

- ✚ Why is John's Gospel not one of the Synoptic Gospels?
- ✚ How does the Fourth Gospel differ from the Synoptic Gospels?
- ✚ What is the central message of the Fourth Gospel?

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## MODULE 2 FOUNDATION FOR JOHN'S THEOLOGY

Unit 1: The Messiah and his signs ... ..  
Unit 2: The Messiah's concern for Unity in John ....  
..... Unit 3: John's use of Symbolism ...

|                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| .....                           | Unit 4: Dualism in John ... |
| .....                           | Unit 5:                     |
| Johannine use of “Cosmos” ..... | ..                          |

## **Unit 1 The Messiah and His “Signs”**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

As we saw in the purpose of the Gospel According to John is to make the reader come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. John does this through the use of certain ‘signs’ which are meant to point at Jesus as the Messiah. What the Synoptic Gospels call, Miracles, John calls ‘signs’. In our daily lives we make use also of ‘signs’ when we interact with people. For instance, tears in our eyes are often signs of sorrow or of joy. The essence of presenting the ‘signs’, John wishes to make us to have faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. identify the meaning of “signs” in the Gospel of John

2. enumerate the various types of Signs in the Gospel of John.
3. indicate the significance of each sign for believers today

### **3.0 Main Contents**

#### **3.1 The definition of the term “Signs”**

As we have already said, signs are those things we can use to represent the presence of something else. In normal day-to-day life we often use ‘signs’ for instance, when we want the person who is talking to stop talking we put our finger across the mouth and look at the person. You can think of others.

In presenting the ‘signs’ John picks out not everything Jesus did, but those ones that should convince his readers that Jesus is actually God himself. The writer of John’s Gospel uses sign to point out the relationship between what is seen and what is not seen, between material and spiritual things.

#### **3.2 Signs in the Gospel**

Signs in John demonstrate the presence of the Messiah and the harvest of all the prophets prophesied about him (Isaiah 9.2-7; 40 ff, 49.8-12). A sign is also interpreted to lead to belief in Jesus as the Messiah the Son of God (Miline, *BST The Message of John* 63). Bruce Mline calls signs works (*ta erga*). The use of works links directly to the ministry of Jesus to the Father. The works of the Son and the Father are the same thereby proving His Deity.

In this section, signs have been stated both for the proof of the divinity of Jesus and for other useful theological import deduced in each sign.

The following events are signs used by John in the Fourth Gospel in order in which they are recorded.

1. Changing water to wine (2.1-11)
2. Healing official’s son (4.46-54)
3. Healing at Bethsaida (5.1-15)
4. Bread Multiplied (6.1-15)
5. Walking on water (6.16.16-21)
6. Blind man healed (9. 1-41)
- 7 Lazarus is raised from the death (11.1-44).

We shall take these signs one by one:

##### **3.2.1 Changing Water to Wine**

There was wedding at Cana of Galilee. Jesus was invited to attend with his disciples while there, the wine got finished. Though Mary

reported the shortage to him, he refused to perform a miracle at the demand of mankind but by his divine appointed time. Within the area, there were positioned six stone water jars used by the Jews for daily cleansing. Jesus ordered and they were filled with water to the top. When they were taken to the master of the ceremony he discovered that it was the best wine ever. Ridderbos considers that the comment of the steward to the bridegroom “you have kept the good wine until now” is not a reprimand but a compliment

The intention of the sign is exposed in verse 11, that (a) it was the first, indicating that there are series of the wonders and signs that men will enjoy through Christ. (b) it revealed the glory of Christ and (c) his disciples believed in him.

The story narrated and the miracles followed have several significant points. Literary, it shows Christ’s joy with man in participating in our social set ups, hence marriages.

Second, Both Mary and the Jews recognised the importance and significance of Jesus in meeting the needs of humankind.

Third, Jesus demonstrates that he came to replace our incompleteness with his abundance.

While men used incomplete water for partial cleansing, he used his blood, symbolized by wine for our total cleansing. When Christ acts in benignant, he intends to cause a strong faith in him like the sign that became a manifestation of his glory as Ridderbos states correctly:

Here at Cana, having seen his self-manifestation, they believed in him ... ‘believing’ means here that more and more they learned to understand the person with whom they had to do, it was faith, therefore that did not stop at astonishment over his power ... It is faith in Jesus as the Christ (Messiah) the Son of God, in the sense in which the Evangelist meant to strengthen the Church he was addressing. Of that Church the disciples as witnesses of Jesus’ glory came to be not only the founders but also the first representatives (113). Jesus has the best to offer. He is the best revelation of God

### **3.2.2 Healing the son of a Government Official (John 4.46-54)**

2.4.1 Jesus left Judea and went to Cana where he performed the first sign. There a government official asked him to go to Capernaum and heal his son who was dying. The man insisted that Jesus should go with him, or else his son would die. Jesus told him to go back home with words of assurance “Your son will live” (vs 50). The man believed Jesus and went back. At arrival he was told

that his son recovered. Further inquiries revealed that the sickness finished at exact time Jesus spoke to him. He and his family believed on the synchronous way it was reached.

Growing faith in Jesus is the point of the narrator here. Here, it was not Jesus' disciples alone who believed, the general public represented by the government official had reliability in him. The Greek verb, "*pesteusete*" is subjunctive mood which means 'to believe' expresses this fact. Bernard notes that the plural of the verb as used indicates that the individual was representative of a whole class (Rienecker, 228).

The faith was that Jesus was not only supernatural in power over human needs and inanimate forces of nature, but of the strong faith that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel (Miline, 91).

The second sign based much of its theological connotation on faith. It demonstrates how the faith works through prayer. With faith, the man ignored all other talks, but persistently pleaded with Jesus for mercy. It brought about healing away from their vicinity. Life was restored both to the sick and the entire village. Christ the Great healer is God.

### 3.3.3 Healing of Lame man at Bethesda (5.1-15)

Jesus went to Jerusalem a festival has not been easily identified. Bruce supported by Westcott and Harris identify the festival with the festival of trumpets (Lev 23.23-25). It was during this festival that Jesus performed his Johannine third recorded 'sign'.

This pool was in Bethesda. It was alleged that an angel used to appear once in a while to bring healing to persons with various sickness. A man was there sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus knew it, and met him, then asked if he wanted to be healed. He narrated all his predicaments and his inabilities to be healed. He had no one to help him to get up, pick up his mat and walk back home. Immediately he got well then picked up his mat and started walking.

The Jews picked offence at Jesus

Their offence was not that the man got healed. They were unhappy because that happened on the Sabbath, and the man was asked to carry his mat on the Sabbath. They failed to thank God for healing the man crippled for thirty-eight years. This should not be so with us.

The significance of this sign is first, Jesus is the initiator of our salvation. It was he who found the man and asked if he wants healed. Second, the man's positive response is an act of faith, which is needed from us to show our participation. Third, the sign of Jesus complete power over our age-long sins and predicaments. Just a word from him can set us free. Fourth, the sign revealed the glory of God. It exposes the working relationship of the Son and the Father. God's love transcends man's yoke of the Sabbath; after all, he is the Lord of the Sabbath. He made the earth and the Sabbath. The Sabbath can never have mastery over him. Fifth, the deity of Jesus Christ is seen, not only in the wonderful healing of the man sick for thirty eight years. It made him declare that he does what the Father directs. They are one. Salvation is assuredly ours.

#### 3.3.4 Jesus Feeds Five Thousand Men (6.1-15)

It was in the country side across Lake Galilee. This Sea of Galilee was later identified with Tiberius. Today it is known as the Golan Heights. It is said that this is the only teaching in this Gospel that was done in Galilee (Milne 103).

The miracle was synchronic with the Jewish national festival. So it would draw much attention and crowd. It should be noted here too that this is the only sign found in the quatriple Tradition. It is reported in all the four Gospels.

##### The Sign:

Jesus was in search of solitude, so went across the sea. He using the rabbinic style, sat down with his disciples, it was then that thousands of people encompassed them. He was concerned that they were without food. Philip looked pessimistic that 200 silver coins were not enough to buy food for just one of the people. The available, bread and fish from a boy was too meagre to talk about, said Andrew. To Philip and Andrew, it was really impossible to have enough to feed the thousand of people.

Jesus gave thanks, and then blessed the five loaves of bread and the two fish. He had the disciples to give to the people seated on the grass. The androgenic society counted 500 men only. If women and children were to be included, the figure would double, if not tripled. Twelve baskets left over.

The significance of this sign is that Jesus' question to Philip and later Andrew was not a temptation, but to strengthen their faith in him. The two were to serve as witness to his signs of his Messianic

acts. The place of obedience is assessed here. Philip and Andrew carried out two orders- making people sit. The people also obeyed; then distribution of food orderly. Our success has in complete obedience to Jesus. Here too, Jesus encourages prayer. He, who is God himself, gave thanks and prayed. This is a big lesson for us to follow. We must pray without season as we express appreciations for our salvation. The little we bring to Jesus in faith, he will multiply it for us. Let us not “measure the need, quantify our inadequate resources, and resign in hopelessness” (Bruce 106).

Another lesson we can get from this sign is that Jesus warns against wastage (6.12-13). He himself is our eternal food. Let’s share him with others. Nigeria as a country has been wasting her resources over the years. Let us not waste the physical food and the natural resources that are given to us. It can be disastrous. In addition, the final declaration: He is the Prophet. This affirmation is based on what the people observed.

The Prophet like Moses gives bread like Manna in the desert.

### **3.3.5 Walking on water (6.16.16-21)**

In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew and Mark), Jesus after feeding the five thousand, makes the disciples embark while he dismisses the crowd and stays to pray on the Mountain. Here in John, Jesus to avoid being made King, fled to the mountain from the crowd. The disciples came down to the shore and embark on their own initiative.

In John’s Gospel, the disciples drove in the evening. It is dark. Jesus comes after they moved a distance of six kilometres. The strong winds blow. The sea is rough. Jesus appears miraculously, John states that Jesus walks on water, he comes near the boat. The disciples are frightened. Jesus assures them “It is I do not be afraid.” They took him in the boat and they arrived at shore immediately- miraculously.

The significance of this sign is that there are four things that the “sign” helps us to know. First, life is rough without Jesus. Maybe they started smoothly, but the torrents and boisterous waves made the going tough. Second, the sea is symbolic of the world, while the boat is of the Church. Jesus the Head of the Church must always be in the Church so as to help calm the storming sea of the world. Third, Faith Awakening: The master has control. He walks on the stormy sea with its waves. He has power over nature. He, the saviour is not a ghost. He comes with words of assurance “It is I do not fear”.

Fourth, the boat landed where they were heading (TEV). With Christ, heaven is our goal. We will get there unfailingly. We are heading to a destination. Let us not lose sight of it. We will get there for “all that the Father gives me knows me, I know them, I give them eternal life and they shall never die” (John 10.25-30 TEV).

### **3.3.6 Healing the man born blind (John 9.1-41)**

The setting is in the purpose of God. After a tough time with the Jews, Jesus moving about saw a man who had been born blind. Who sinned that this man was born blind? None- his sickness is to give glory to God in line with Christ work as the light of the world.

The Healing: Jesus spat on the ground, made some mud with the spittle, and then rubbed the mud on the man’s eyes. Jesus then sent him to go and wash his face in the pool of Silon. He did as Jesus directed, and he returned seeing.

The reaction to the healing: The immediate neighbours and friends questioned if he were the one who used to beg sitting. The man himself said, “I am the former blind man.” He then narrated how Jesus healed him.

The Pharisees: They first questioned and the man told them how it all happened. He refused to accord sin to Jesus. The Jewish authorities then began to doubt if he had actually been blind until they called his parents. The parents: confirmed that he was their son and that he had been blind. They however, refused to disclose how he came to see. Their son was of age let him answer for himself.

The problem of the Jews was legalism. The Jews’ strict enslavement to the law blinded them from seeing, the grace of God in healing on the Sabbath.

### **Theological Import**

- a) The man born blind (vs 1). This expresses the human condition prior to knowing Jesus. This position is represented by Milne, and many modern scholars. Milne states, “Born into a fallen world, we have no natural spiritual perception ... the blind man represents fallen humanity languishing in the darkness of ignorance and sin without hope of salvation” (Milne, 355). Paul also affirmed



this position in Rom. 1.21. Their thinking became futile and their hearts were darkened.

b. The power of Christ's spiritual eyesight:

The man has demonstrated that when we are moved from darkness to Christ's light; his power is graciously granted to us. The salvation becomes real and we move in the progression of faith. This power and growth is noted in the perception of the man healed; from his faint idea of Jesus as "the man called Jesus", (11) he moved on to confess him before his persecutors that "He is a prophet" (17). He went on to declare emphatically, "He opened my eyes" (30). He is not a sinner; he is from God (33). He finally came to profess before Jesus, "Lord, I believe" and he worshipped him (38). Our journey from darkness to light in Christ must positively be progressive as we move 'forward-ever to the city of the King of kings, Jesus Christ our Saviour.

c. Living above waters

The man never hid the banner of truth about Christ. Let's aim at protecting and proving the truth of Christianity no matter what pressure of persecution, character assassination, political/social intimidation etc. His motor-one thing I know, once I was blind (for life) now I see- and only God can do this. Jesus is the Prophet. He is God.

### **3.3.7 The Raising of Lazarus (11.1-57)**

Milne describes this miracle as the greatest sign in John. It is the climax of the revelation of his glory through signs. Bruce sees the raising of Lazarus from the dead as an action which will lead inexorably onto the all-surpassing 'sign' of the death and resurrection of Jesus himself, and the consequent destruction of the Sanhedrin themselves (Milne 157). The Pericope narrated Lazarus was sick in Bethany; later he died. Jesus knew and disclosed it to his disciples. He counted it as an opportunity for them to believe. Jesus explained clearly that this death will bring glory to God, and it will be the means by which the Son of man will receive glory. Filson interprets this that Lazarus' death will lead to the death of Christ as a result of the popular favour which the sign will bring to him (Filson 97). Jesus arrived at the village, met Martha and Mary, condoled them with words of solace.

Lazarus had died and was buried. It was after four days that Jesus arrived. Martha confirmed this and cautioned the Lord that the body was petrifying. (The Jews believed that after a person is dead, the soul moves around for three days. On the fourth day, the soul finally leaves. There is then no hope for the person's

recovery. Decomposition takes place. This explains well, the fears of the sister). Once again, Jesus told her that she would see the glory of God if she believed. Jesus moved to the tomb, commanded the stone to be removed, and then he prayed to the father in order that his listeners would believe that the Father sent him.

The aftermath of the Great Sign: Many who were there believed in him. The Jewish authorities however used the sign as a means to take away his life. They reasoned that if Jesus was not killed, there would be violence, so the Romans would come and destroy their temple and city. They forgot that Jesus' rejection meant the rejection of God and his glorious presence in the temple, which was a means of its protection.

Theological Motif: Christ's sympathy with our sorrow

Jesus saw the grief of the sisters and friends of Lazarus. He understood their sorrow as representative over death. He noticed how painful death is to man as separator. He was moved by human grief and so wept. The weeping was not of despair, not of weakness, but of deep love to his people and what befell them. As he is sorrowful, so has he also by determination removed death from us. He has victory over death.

Power over Death beyond Doubt: Jesus demonstrated to the Jews quite sufficiently that he is the Messiah, that he is life and has power over death. Three times in their presence, Jesus raised a girl, a young boy, and now climaxed in the one dead and even buried for four days. Mary's note that the body might have decomposed (11.39) was in order. It was at this stage when human hopes are gone, that the saviour exercised his power over death. Christ conquered death. He swallowed it in victory as Paul said, in 1 Cor. 15.55-57. You can read it. The power of spirit of the departed are summoned to resuscitate and bear witness to the overriding power of Christ over the monstrous death. Let God be praised in Christ.

The exchange between Jesus and Lazarus:As Nigerians would always say, "Nothing goes for nothing" (This saying follows some serious actions. Gifts are in most cases directed where they will have them back, even bigger. We need committed Christians to purge this evil in our schools, offices, markets and other places especially on roads where police and now soldiers do it openly) the resurrection of Lazarus was the determinant point to the death

of Jesus. The sign gave so much glory to the Father and confirmed the Deity of Christ to an extent that many people believed in him as the Messiah. Soon the Jewish leaders began to speculate that Jesus would gain too many followers if allowed to live. As they themselves were split since the healing of the man born blind, they feared that there would soon be a commotion among them which would lead to the Romans destruction of their city (Jerusalem) and the Temple. This also made Caiaphas to unconsciously prophesy that it would be better for one man to die than the whole nation perishes. Milne saw a far more reaching effect of the sign and their action,

Paradoxically, by their attempt to preserve the status quo, the Sanhedrin contribute to its overthrow, for the elimination of Jesus will in time become part of the political and social ferment which will finally bring upon their heads the very destruction they dread (193).

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

We have seen that the signs Jesus performed as recorded in the Gospel of John are meant to stimulate faith and hope from listeners and readers of today. Remember that the discussions here are in summary form.

Please you can read the detail in the references and further readings.

#### **5.0 Summary**

I hope you enjoyed your studies of the Messiah and his signs. In this unit we looked at the signs of Jesus in John's Gospel and their theological significance for us today. Now let us tackle the question stated below:

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

Identify and discuss various types of Signs in the Gospel of John and show their theological Significance for the Church today.

#### **7.0 References/Further Readings**

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## **Unit 2 The Messiah's Concern for Unity in John's Gospel**

### **Contents**

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- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
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  - 3.1 The definition of the term "Unity"
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  - 3.3 Jesus Prays for the disciples
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- 4.0 Conclusion
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- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
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### **1.0 Introduction**

Unity is an essential ingredient for stability and progress. If there is no unity in society, be it Christian or secular, nothing will work. If the immediate society (nuclear family) i.e. the husband, wife and children cannot agree on issues, the nuclear society is finished. This is not limited only to the family, but to all kinds of societies. If there is no unity among members of the said society or societies, nothing works, and if nothing works, there will be no stability and progress.

The Lord Jesus as John portrays him knew the importance of unity for stability and progress. As said, he prays that "they may be one". For them to carry on the work of preaching the gospel after his departure, they must be one in unity. You will therefore, be studying the Messiah's concern for unity in this unit.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. identify how Jesus prays and sustains the disciples for unity.
2. list the several instances where Jesus spoke to his disciples regarding the necessity of unity
3. identify that Jesus does not exclude anyone from this unity
4. identify the different imageries Jesus uses to stress the need for unity.

### **3.0 Main Contents**

#### **3.1 Definition of the term “Unity”.**

Unity is defined as “the state of being united or in agreement: live together in unity; it is the state of presenting a complete and pleasing whole: a thing consisting of parts the form a whole” (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 1304). The use of the term unity in John connotes the concern of Jesus for his disciples to be united in order to carry out the assignment of preaching the word.

#### **3.2 The Prayer of Jesus for unity among his disciples**

The prayer of Jesus for unity among his disciples illustrates how concerned Jesus was for unity to exist between and among his followers. Jesus prays as recorded in chapter 10 that his disciples should be one. Oneness among disciples will bring the needed peace and stability for them to prepare for the gospel and spread the good news to the world. Jesus would be honoured if the disciples remain in unity. Since the message of Jesus is the message of peace, the followers of Jesus were to behave in accordance with this concern in order to teach the people the message of Jesus.

In John 17: 91-19, Jesus’ concern for his disciples is not to take them out of this world, but rather, to be in the world. He further states that his disciples are in the world but not of the world. This means that they were to stand out against injustice which causes disunity among people. For justice cannot be if there is no unity.

The prayer of Jesus further states that their being in unity will also reflect the unity that exists between the Father and himself; for he and the father are one.

It is sad sometimes to see how this concern of Jesus for unity is thwarted by the disunity that exists even among Churches, not to talk of the secular world. The progress of the gospel is experience more when there is unity among believers. You may have experienced this disunity in your church or else where. It is pertinent that you understand the correct teaching of Jesus about this important issue of unity- that all his followers should be one (spirit, body, purpose) as Jesus and the Father are one. It is because of their being one that salvation was achieved for believers.

### **3.3 Jesus Commands Love for one another**

In John 13.33-35, we have seen the new commandment that Jesus gave to his disciples. It says in part, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.”

Love of neighbour is not unique to Christianity. John does not even imply that. “What is new in this commandment is the dimension of both love and the neighbour.” This new understanding of neighbour has been revealed in Jesus Christ himself, whose love embraces everybody. The verb “love” is in the present tense, which means that this is to be the disciples’ way of life. They are to love everyone, at all times. The Greek word used here to express the idea of love is the familiar term “agape”, the love which follows God’s examples of loving in spite of, and not because of, the way one is. As I have loved you, you must love one another. The love of Jesus which is supreme (15.13) is both the model and the example of Christian love and wherever this love is practiced, Christ is there present.

It is in the love that they have for themselves that people would recognize them as his disciples. As you know love brings about peace and peace comes through unity. One of the main reasons for the problems we experience today in our country, Nigeria is that people do not love one another. Self-centeredness is so much engulfed in people’s lives that people want everything for themselves alone. Because there is no love among people, they feel cheated and dissatisfaction crept in. As such, there is disunity and instability in every fabric of our national life.

Nigeria is a rich country, yet her people are poor because of lack of love. Few privileged ones take everything for themselves. Because of greed, there is no unity and stability in the country consequently, there is no progress. This commandment of love by Jesus is the last words he spoke during his earthly ministry. Last words of a dear one are important for the ones that are still alive. This is no exception. It is important that you and I take this seriously.

### **3.4 Images used by Jesus to show his concern for unity**

Jesus uses some imagery to express his concern for unity among his disciples. You shall learn two of them that Jesus uses in this regard.

### **3.4.1 The vine and the branches**

“I am the true vine and my father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit ... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me...” (15.1-13) KJV.

This is the last of the “I am” sayings in John’ Gospel. To understand this example of unity in this ‘I am’ saying, the Old Testament background will suffice.

In Isaiah 5, God found fault with his vine. He asked “what more could have been done in my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?” (5.4). The vineyard referred to in this text is found in verse 7, “... the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and men of Judah are His pleasant plant.” The point of imagery is lack of unity among the vine and the possessor of the vine, God. The people of Israel were not in unity with their God. In spite of all that God had done for them, they still could not abide in God. So, God had to ask what he was to do again in order for his people to be united with him and bring forth fruits desired of them.

In the New covenant, God declared himself in Christ, the condition of his people. He reshapes them for himself. Jesus declares emphatically using the great I am saying that the Father and he are in unity. He is the true vine and the Father is the vine dresser. If he is the true vine and the Father is the vine dresser, of which they are, then, there is unity in the work of our salvation.

The unity imperative is also seen in v. 7 where we are made to understand that uniting with Jesus; the disciples’ prayers are answered. The condition for answering of prayers is important to note. “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

By bearing fruit, the disciples will be bringing glory to the Father, and proving to the world that they are his and are in unity with him as verse 8 states, “by this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”



The significance of this unity as Kostenberger observed is "... the new messianic community, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles is united by faith in Jesus the Messiah" (p. 449). In this unity there is no racial discrimination, no tribal or sectional separation. We are to be in unity with one another in love. By so doing we shall be glorifying God and Lord Jesus and proving that we are not of the world.

### 3.4.2 The shepherd and his sheep

By definition, "a shepherd is one who looks after sheep" (Advanced Dictionary of Current English). He can look after his own or those of someone else. When he looks after sheep, his attitude towards them will show whether he is a good shepherd or a bad one.

In the Old Testament, the Psalmist (David) describes the relationship between God and Israel in these words, "the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want ..." (Ps 23).

Prophet Ezekiel also gives us the picture that God who is the true shepherd of his people was not happy with the leaders of his people who were supposed to be shepherds - who feed his sheep - but were rather feeding themselves instead (Ezekiel 34). As a result, sheep were scattered all over the earth instead of being together in unity. So in 34.11, God said, "I, the sovereign LORD, tell you that I myself will look for my sheep and will take care of them" (TEV).

In John 10.11, Jesus declares, "I am the good shepherd ..." The word good here in Greek is *kalos* which can also mean beautiful. Brown translates it as "noble" or "model" shepherd. The adjective carries the moral rectitude of goodness and its attractiveness. He is the shepherd who will risk his life to seek and to save the straying sheep. The article before the adjective good and the noun shepherd shows that Jesus is not just a shepherd but *the shepherd* and not just good one but *the good one* (Dana and Mantey, 152). He lovingly cares for his sheep. Isaiah prophesied, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with his arm; and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are young" (40.11).

This picture is also reflected in John 10.16 where we read, "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock and

one shepherd.” This name, shepherd, as you can see, tells us immediately that Jesus wants his sheep, the disciples to be united not just among themselves but with him as well.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

It is important to note from the above discussion about the concern of Jesus for unity among his disciples that he accepts everybody that comes to him. John 10.16 as quoted above is a clear example. Disunity is destructive more than anything else. We all live in a society where people are not united. Jesus in our study is asking for tolerance and patience from everyone.

The significance of Jesus teaching about unity is to be tolerant, to see everyone as a brother or as a sister. Race, language, colour etc should not bring disunity. Why? It is because Jesus does not approve of it. Religion should not be a barrier to unity. Christianity and Islam should not tear themselves up because of disunity. They should live in peace.

#### **5.0 Summary**

You have learnt in this unit that Jesus encourages unity among his people. He took steps to show this especially in his encounter with the Samaritan woman and his teachings to his disciples. He uses different pictures for this by calling himself the good shepherd and the vine where his people are branches that are united in him for the bearing of fruits. It is also known that, unity is important for peace and stability in any society. Everybody is called to be in unity-nothing like culture, race, colour, religion etc should be a barrier to unity.

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Discuss pictures Jesus uses to show unity
2. What is Jesus’ farewell command to his disciples?
3. List some of the reasons for the disunity in Nigeria.

#### **7.0 References/Further Readings**

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ESV - English Standard Version

KJV - King James Version

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### **Unit 3 John's Use of Symbolism**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

It is well known by readers of the Gospels that the Gospel of John makes use of symbols more than the Synoptic Gospels. The symbols are used by John to describe the person, work and life of Jesus. In this unit we shall be studying Symbolism in John where various aspects of symbols will be looked at.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

After studying this unit, you should be able to do the following things:

1. identify some symbols that deals with salvation in John’s Gospel.
2. explain how symbols point to the cross in the Fourth Gospel
3. explain how Jesus is light for the blind eyes.

## **3.0 Main contents**

### **3.1 Definition of the term “Symbol”**

A symbol is “something that stands for something else.” This could be an image, object etc that suggests or refers to something else. For instance, the ‘cross’ is the symbol of Christianity, ‘star and crescent’ is the symbol of Islam. A lion is the symbol of courage etc.” Symbolism on the other hand is “the use of symbols to represent things” (Advanced Learners, 1211). With these definitions, therefore, Symbol in John’s Gospel is to be understood

as something that helps to reveal the person of Jesus- where faith is expected for the one who reads and understands the symbols.

### **3.2 Various Symbols in John**

There are various symbols employed by the writer of John to describe the person and work of Jesus. We shall look at some of their groupings here.

#### **3.2.1 Signs**

As indicated in unit one of module 2, Signs are used to show the identity of Jesus. Seven signs (also called Miracles by the Synoptics) are recorded in the Fourth Gospel to produce faith in the Jesus as Son of God (See details of these signs and their significance in the above quoted unit).

#### **3.2.2 Symbolic Metaphors**

John recorded some symbolic metaphors that Jesus used in describing the work that he has come to do. We shall look at few of them here: light and Bread.

**Light:** Light is a well-known symbol by everyone. It was part of creation account in Genesis. It however, carried different qualities. We talk of day light, torch light, electric light, spiritual light etc. John uses the term light twenty-two times mostly in the context to Jesus; even those other times that are not in the context to Jesus have something to do with him. In John 1.4, John says this about Jesus, “In him was life and the life was the light of men.” This shows salvation that we receive through revelation (light) by faith. This culminates to ‘Life’ being the spiritual life.

The next instance that John uses this term is in 1.9; there he calls Jesus the ‘true light’. Why qualifies this light here? It is not a secret that there are various kinds of light. Some ‘lights’ are bright; some are not, some are parasites to the eyes; some dazzling, yet others are false light. Going by this claim, Jesus’ light is not dangerous neither his light is dim or false. Jesus illuminates hearts of people to be able to understand and know God. It makes seeing possible as well as understanding.

We see yet another occurrence of the term light in 3.19 where it is said, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light ...” This use of light is within the context of judgement. The true light-Jesus has come but the Jews are not ready to accept the ‘light’. They prefer

to continue to indulge in their wicked ways. As such, they stand condemned.

In John 8.12 we saw outstanding proclamation by Jesus as the light. He says, "...I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." He repeated this same claim in 9.5 where he said that as long as he remains in the world, he is the light of the world. We shall understand what Jesus is proclaiming here better if we take into consideration the context of his words.

Chapters 7-9 tell us about the Feast of Tabernacles where emphasis on light is placed in the Feast. It is said that during the Feast of Tabernacles, every evening, four golden candle sticks were lit in the court of the women. These illuminated the whole temple area, and by their light, "Levite, musicians played, the greatest, wisest and holiest men of Israel danced, and the people in general sang and watched right through the night." (Nwega, 152). For Jesus to declare that he is the light of the world at this time, he intends that everyone should not be in doubt of what he means. The Jews would have understood his claims in regards to the Old Testament teachings where God is said to be light. 1. Ps. 27.1, "The LORD is my light and my salvation." 2. Ps. 36.9, "For with you is the fountain of life: in your light shall we see light."

3. Isaiah 60.19 "The LORD will be your everlasting light"
4. Isaiah 60.20 "Your sun shall no more go down: neither shall your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be your everlasting light ..."
5. Mic. 7.8b "Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light."
6. Isa. 42.6; 49.6, "I will ... make you [the suffering servant] a light for the Gentiles."

Moreover, it was the expectation of the Jews that Messiah would reveal himself at the Feast of Tabernacle. By this statement, therefore, Jesus is claiming deity with God and as the fulfiller of the Old Testament Feasts and prophecies concerning the Messiah.

Another thing that we need to understand here in Jesus' declaration is the salvation that is embedded in this symbol. 1.12b states, "He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Jesus is here calling on humanity to decide whether to accept him and have eternal life or reject him and remain in darkness- in condemnation.

As Jesus repeated being the light of the world, and as he demonstrated in 9.7 by opening the blind man's eyes to show how his coming will open spiritual eyes of people; you and I must respond here and now in order to experience life everlasting here present and in the future, and also to be called light of the world (Matthew 5.14). (See more in the discussion under eternal life in unit 4 of module 3);

Bread: Jesus as the Bread of Life.

The second metaphor that Jesus uses in laying bare who he is and what he has come to do is 'bread'. Bread is one of the food items that we use in eating when we are hungry. It nourishes our body.

It is interesting to note that this symbol of 'bread' is used exclusively in John 6. The term 'bread' appears twenty times all in chapter six. Apart from this chapter, the number of its occurrence is insignificant, only three times.

The declaration of Jesus as being the bread of life in 6.35, 41 48, 51 has a setting that we need to examine in order to know its significance. First, the Feast of Passover is mentioned in 6.4. As Bible students you should be aware that this feast commemorates the setting free of Israel from their bondage in Egypt and also points to the coming salvation by a Moses-like figure (6.14). In this Feast, bread and lamb were the key elements of consumption. Though many things come between this reference and the declaration in v. 35 ff, the setting dwelt on food. Feeding of the five thousand has just taken place and people are still in demand of food (v. 26). When Jesus responded by telling them to work for the food that will endure to everlasting life which the Son of Man will give, they probe further by asking what they shall do in order to be the work of God. Jesus tells them to believe in him. The crowd then demanded for a sign before they could believe. Here too, they brought the issue of food into the picture – which Moses gave their ancestors, bread from heaven (manna as in Ex. 16). Jesus first corrected them by telling them the source of the manna- God. In other words, God is at the centre of food. He was the giver to their ancestors, and he is the giver now in the person of Jesus. No wonder, he uses perfect tense which has present effect of the past action. To be more precise in reply to their request as in v. 34, he in v. 35, 51 declare that he is the bread of life, the living one. He is the replacement of the manna which God's presence accorded the Israelites. He himself is the everlasting food that nourishes the believers in the messianic age of the present dispensation. The one who eats Jesus' flesh and drinks his blood will never go hungry again. They will never be driven away (6.37). The real Passover

meal has eternal life and he will be raised on the last day (6.54). This promise is made to those who meet the condition of eating the living bread as it is stated in 6.35b.

Just as symbol of light has stereological significance, so does the symbol of bread. The two symbols clear the clouds concerning who Jesus was and his mission. For he is God incarnate who has come to give people light and food that endures forever.

### **3.2.3 Characters as Symbols**

The Characters during the time of Jesus are employed to draw analogies to groups of people in John's context: Jewish leaders, Samaritans, Christians still within the synagogue, Christians expelled from the synagogue, doubting disciples, and beloved faithful disciples. The characters represent the complete range of faith responses.

Just as John employs misunderstanding and double meaning to reveal the deeper symbolic meaning of the text, so the characters must be interpreted both as real people and symbolic characters too be thoroughly understood.

Specific characters will serve as examples:

The Samaritan woman represents Samaritan religion: Her five husbands are the five foreign nations composing Samaria (2 Kings 17.24; Josephus, Ant. 9.14, 3) and the one she is cohabiting with represents the foreigners who Herod the Great moved into the Samaritan capital which he renamed Sebaste, the Greek word for Augustus.

The reference to a group in the text is indicated by the use of the first-person plural instead of singular as in 4.12,22,25 and 42. It is also seen in her act of leaving the water jug to preach to her people as leaving the Samaritans' faith.

The Blind man represents Christians kicked out of the Synagogue. The blind man in John 9 sees after washing in the pool of Siloam but only recognizes the true identity of Jesus (whom he worships as God) after being cast out of the synagogue (9.38).

In John 10.3, Jesus declared that he is the good shepherd. He enters the synagogue and leads those who hear his voice out of the synagogue to the new fold.

John also made it clear that Christians outside the synagogue are combined with the Gentiles into one flock (10.6).



Nicodemus represents secret Jewish disciples still in the synagogue who must visibly demonstrate publicly their faith in Christ.

In his first appearance in the Gospel, Nicodemus represent Jewish leadership who must be born again. Nicodemus is spokesperson for the group as evidenced by first person plural, “we” (3.1, 10). Nicodemus represents people to whom Jesus will not entrust himself (2.24-25 and 3.1). In 7.50 Nicodemus is described as “one of them.”

Nicodemus also represents those ambiguous Christians who believe in secret and stay in the synagogue. Nicodemus comes to Jesus in secret at night (3.2; 19.39). In a cameo appearance at the feast of Booths, Nicodemus is sympathetic of Jesus but still linked with the Jews speaking of “our law” (7.51).

In 19.38 he is grouped with Joseph of Arimathea who is a secret disciple because he feared the Jews similar to those described in 12.42-43, “who loved the praise of men more than praise of God.” In 19.39 he buries Jesus but is again described as one who came to Jesus at night.

Thomas: Proof before Believing. He speaks for subsequent generations who require proof before they believe in a risen Lord (20.30-31).

### **3.3 The Symbols point to the Cross**

As earlier on stated, symbols in John lay bare the person of Jesus and his mission. The mission of Jesus is forward looking to the cross. There are many instances that symbol in John points to the cross:

1. John the Baptist proclaims that Jesus is the Lamb of God referring to his crucifixion (1.29, 36).
2. Jesus’ hour is related to the cross so that the changing of water to wine points to Jesus’ blood as a cleansing agent (2.4; 13.1).
3. The destruction of the temple refers to the death and resurrection of Jesus’ body (2.19-21).
4. Born from above by the Spirit is connected with the Son of Man being lifted up (3.14).

5. The Shepherd lays down their life for the sheep (10.1-21).
6. The resurrection of Lazarus causes Jesus' crucifixion indicating that the glory manifested by the sign would come only through Jesus' death (11.25, 26, 47-50).
7. The anointing by Lazarus' sister was an appropriate response to the gift of life that Jesus had given him (12.1-8), but even more a response for the consummate gift of Jesus giving his own life (12.7-8).
8. The foot washing occurs at the hour when Jesus is departing from this world (13.1) connecting the cleansing with the cross as does the water flowing from Jesus' side (19.34).
9. The foot washing was a symbol of being washed thoroughly (13.9-10) which only Jesus' death could accomplished.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Symbols are people or things that stand for something else. The Gospel of John employed many symbols in passing his message of who Jesus is and what he came for. All are to reveal Jesus as God and his mission is to die on the cross for the salvation of those who believe. In all these, stand different characters who reveal different kinds of people in response to Jesus.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit you have learnt the following things about Johannine symbolism:

- \* Signs as symbols
- \* Metaphors that represents things as symbols
- \* Characters that portray different stands in respect to the message of Jesus
- \* Symbols points to the salvific message of the cross in the person of Jesus. For anyone who believes in him will have eternal life which is discussed fully in unit 4 of module 3.

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Discuss Light and Bread as metaphors for Jesus?
2. Comment fully on this statement: "Characters must be interpreted both as real people and symbolic characters."

3. Enumerate some qualities of Jesus as light.

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## **Unit 4          Dualism in John's Gospel**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

Dualism is one of the themes that John dealt with in his Gospel. He compares two images to enable his readers understand his point in his theology. This unit therefore, seeks to discuss those images/pictures that John puts forward for his readers to understand his theology.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

After studying this unit, you should be able to do the following things:

1. Define the term dualism
2. Discuss vividly the comparison that the author of John made for his theology to be understood.
3. Write short note on some of the comparisons

### **3.0 Main Contents**

### **3.1 Definition of ‘dualism’**

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Dualism comes from ‘dual’ which means “having two parts or aspects”. Dualism is therefore a “theory based on the existence of two opposite principles e.g. good and evil in all things” (350). In the Gospel of John, the author compares the existence of two opposite principles to make his readers understand his theology. We shall therefore be looking at some of these opposite principles in the sub-sections below.

### **3.2 Dualism in the Physical realm**

#### **3.2.1 Earth below and Heaven Above**

John discusses the dualism involved between earth and heaven. He begins by contrasting himself to Jesus in 3.27. That he is not the Christ (v.28). That “he must increase, but I must decrease.” (v.30).

This contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus is a good setting for the actual contrast he wants to make shortly. That his position as the forerunner of Jesus is settled in heaven and he is happy about his role. To Jesus, he was given the position of the Lamb of God, Son of God, saviour of the world etc. which explains his ministry.

In verse 31, he states, “He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all.”

In this dualism, John makes it clear that Jesus is from heaven while John the Baptist is from the earth. For this reason, Jesus is above everyone, master of all, which of course includes John the Baptist. In v. 32, this is confirmed – Jesus preaching is a testimony of what he had seen and heard in heaven. His testimony is not second hand type. His source was primary- his personal knowledge of his original abode –heaven.

On the other hand, John the Baptist is not of heaven but of earthly origin. As such, he speaks of earthly things (v. 31). His source is secondly. This is seen in 1.32-34 where he said that “... He who sent me said to me, ‘upon whom you see the spirit descending and remaining on him, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit ...’” Earlier, he states that Jesus must become greater and John the Baptist need to become less (3.30). The reason is simple, Jesus is from above and John from the earth and this is established in heaven.

In 8.23, Jesus himself confirms this dualism when he corrected the Jews' faulty reasoning that Jesus might be contemplating suicide when he said, "Where I am going, you cannot come" (7.35-36; 8.22). Jesus contrasts his own origin and home with that of the Jews in v. 23, "You are from below; I am from above, you are of this world; I am not of this world." Their origin is here on earth where they were born and raised. They knew no other place. Jesus on the other hand had come to the earth from somewhere - heaven above, which is his place of origin. As such, his knowledge and experience is beyond earthly things.

Based on this, Jesus went further to stress that he is not of this world, but they are of this earth. By this, Jesus is saying that the Jews lived in sin. Jesus on the contrary is without sin. He comes, lives, in order to destroy the power of sin in human lives. As Ngewa rightly postulates, Jesus was saying. Given your origin and state, the only way you can escape is to believe in me. I am the only one who can make you people of above instead of people of this world. However, given that you do not want to believe, that I am the one I claim to be the one sent from above, I see no way out for you: 'You will indeed die in your sins' (8.24. (p. 157).

The significance of this comparison is crucial for Christians. Christians are "in the world but not of the world." Those that are in Jesus, though they live in the world, their conduct is controlled in heaven above, where Jesus is. It is important the Christians should know this in order that their lives reflect their place of origin-heaven-where their Lord is. But the question is what impact is our faith in Christ having on our environment beginning from our homes, our state and the nation, Nigeria? Why is it that there is great percentage of Christians in Nigeria yet there is so little effect on our nation's morals and the degree of corruption and injustice? Don't we know our origin and destiny?

### **3.2.2 Darkness verses Light**

The next two opposite principles that John talks about in order to make people have faith in Jesus is "darkness verses light".

In 1.4-5, John records, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." What does "that life was the light of men" mean? Old Testament background to this will help. In Ps 36.9, it is stated "... in your light we see light" pointing to God as the source of light and life. He, the logos is being referred to. That is, Jesus is

the life and also the light of men. By this John is laying the foundation for the thought he will develop throughout his Gospel that Jesus is the life- bringer and light –bearer (8.12; 9.5, 12, 36,46, and chapter 9).

Against this light, there is darkness (v.5). That is the dualism that John wants to put forward for his audience. The opposition of light and darkness is a major theme of this Gospel. John has employed two natural things that are familiar to everyone, both Jews and Gentiles alike.

It is important to note that, John has been using past tense (aorist) exclusively but in verse 5, he changes to present tense for the verb *phinei*, “shines”. Grammarians call this type of present, ‘historical present’. It has the idea of ongoing action in the past as well as present.

As Beasley-Murray rightly observed,

“It embraces history and the present time of the Evangelist. The light of the logos shone in the primal darkness at creation, and continued amidst the darkness of fallen mankind; it shone with greater brilliance in the glory of the Incarnate one; and it shines on in the era of the Resurrection, which is the time of the *Paraclete*.” (P. 24?).

The conflict between darkness as light continues to shine in it is found all through the Gospel of John. They are to walk while they have the light, lest darkness “overtake” or “overcome” them (12.35). In 12.46, Jesus’ coming into the world as light is for whoever believes on him should not ‘stay in darkness’. The whole ministry and mission of Christ was a conflict between the light and the darkness. “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it.” At Calvary, the light and darkness came into bitter and decisive conflict and it is clear, the darkness was unable to prevail (overcome).

To John as F. F. Bruce said, “The true light is identical with Jesus Christ, the word made flesh” (p. 134). He is the one that overcame darkness on the cross for humanity. “However, ‘men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil’ (3.19b). But anyone who believes and have faith in him, the light will continue to shine in the darkness of this evil world, Nigeria inclusive.

### **3.3 Dualism based on Temporal Things**

#### **3.3.1 Already condemned verses no judgement (3.18)**

John 3.18 states, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

In this dualistic comparison, John brings out the importance of faith. The verb “believe” is mentioned three times in this one verse and that shows the author considers it to be very important. The already condemned are those people that refused to believe in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

The coming of Jesus divides people into two, the saved and the condemned. When people do not believe in Jesus they condemn themselves already. The unbelief has shut them up to condemnation. However, there will be no judgement for anyone who exercises faith in Jesus Christ is not condemned- there will be no judgement for him or her. Conclusively, therefore, the opposition of these two principles teaches that “His coming gives people the opportunity of salvation and challenges them to a decision. To refuse his good gift is to call down judgement on oneself.” Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* rev. p.206).

#### **3.3.2 Perishable Food verses Food that lasts for Eternal Life (6.27; 4.31-34).**

In the dualism between perishable food and eternal food, Jesus shares with the disciples some basic realities of his mission - the essential character of obedience to God’s will. He does that by contrasting the food that his disciples had just brought from the town of Sychar, where they went looking for food – the perishable one – to the one that they were not aware of yet (v.32). The one they were not aware of is defined in v. 34, where Jesus states, it is doing the will of the one who had sent him (God) and making sure that the work he is sent to do is completed.

By this stress, Jesus is saying that physical food is good but the most important food is doing God’s work to the finish (Matt 6.25; Mark 3.20-21). Does it mean that God’s work was not completed? The work *ergon* refers here to the redemptive work at the cross (12.23-24; 17.4; 18.30). As R. Brown observes, the mention of food in this text first in the literal sense and then figuratively, in 4.31-34 enables Jesus to develop the metaphor in 4.35 in reference to the fruit of his mission as regards the acceptance of the Samaritans into the kingdom (Brown, 1966.181- *The Gospel*



*According to John I-XII. Anchor Bible Commentary 29A.* Garden City, New York. Doubleday).

In chapter 6.27, Jesus again talks about this dualism when he said, “Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life ...” Because there are two kinds of food, and because they were looking for the earthly food that does not last, he implores them to work for the right food. Working here is having faith in Jesus (vv. 2829) and since Jesus is the food that is not perishable spoken of here, and since “he is eternal in contrast to material bread, the life he provides is eternal as well.” (Kostenberger, 207). This comparison of perishable food verses eternal food also point to the fact of having faith in Christ as the eternal food.

### **3.4 Dualism based on Identity**

In this regard, one of these identities will be discussed: Flesh verses Spirit.

#### **3.4.1 Flesh verses Spirit (3.6; 6.63; 8.15)**

In response to Nicodemus’ question about new birth, he goes beyond the new birth and talks about flesh and spirit. Jesus maintains that even if it were possible for a 2<sup>nd</sup> physical birth, the 2<sup>nd</sup> physical (fleshly) birth will amount to nothing – for it will be flesh. That is why he introduces that which is important in contrast the flesh – a spiritual birth (1.12-13). “Born of flesh” is a natural birth, where a husband (physically) meets with mother (physically) to produce a human being. The “Spirit” refers to “the principle of divine power and life operating in the human sphere” (Brown, 131). Jesus is therefore, saying in 3.6 that what he is contrasting is not new. It is in the Old Testament that they the Jews are aware.

The same dichotomy between flesh and Spirit is seen in chapter 6.63 where Jesus states, “It is the spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and Life.” He is telling his audience that his words came from heaven and were meant to give life. For them to think of eating his flesh and drinking his blood only in literal, earthly terms was to miss the point. His words must be understood in the spiritual dimension. Those who live (fleshly life) are taken up with material things, things of the ‘here and now’, cannot understand Jesus’ teaching, they should move beyond that – for the lifegiving spirit focuses on things ‘from above’, which enables us to understand Jesus’ life-giving words.

#### 4.0 Conclusion




This unit has introduced you to a number of contrasts that Jesus uses in setting the stage for his theology. You must have also learnt how each dualistic imagery can help people in having faith in Jesus which is the ultimate purpose of the Gospel. Thus, it is helpful to all who read the Gospel of John.

#### 5.0 Summary

The main points in this unit are:

The definition of dualism which deals with opposing principles. The main issues on dualism in the Gospel of John includes: Dualism in the Physical and dualism in the temporal as well as dualistic identity. In all of them, it is seen that they point to faith in Christ that John discusses all through his Gospel.

#### 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

-  Define the term dualism as seen in the Gospel of John
-  Write short notes on:
  - a. Darkness verses light
  - b. Earth below verses heaven above
  - c. Already condemned verses no judgement
  - d. Flesh verses Spirit
-  Discuss in detail the comparison that the author of the Gospel of John made for his theology to be understood.

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## **Unit 5 Johannine use of Cosmos**

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  - 3.3 *Cosmos*: Man at enmity with God (Ladd)
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### **1.0 Introduction**

For you to understand the theology of John’s Gospel, it is essential for you to understand how John uses the term cosmos (world). This unit therefore, seeks to unravel different distinct

ways the term is used in the Gospel of John and how his theology is built on this concept in line with his purpose of writing.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- \* provide an in-dept definition of Cosmos as used in both John's Gospel and outside of the Fourth Gospel.
- \* identify different uses of cosmos in the Fourth Gospel
- \* Determine the influence of cosmos on the theology of John's Gospel.

## **3.0 Main Contents**

### **3.1 Defining cosmos (world)**

The concept of cosmos was largely defined and adopted in different cultures.

Definition 1:

The concept of *cosmos* according to the Oxford Advanced Dictionary of Current English, it refers to different things depending on the usage. For one, it refers to "the earth with all its countries and people". It also refers to it as "the state of human existence". World could also be referred to as "the way different people behave or live." (1377).

Definition 2:

The concept of *cosmos* in Greek has an established place, yet its etymology is uncertain. The Greek cosmos means the order of the universe, what the Hebrews called "*olam*" or age. *Cosmos* implied the entire universe, comprising the heavens and the earth (Sasse, *TNDT*).

It is however, important to note the term cosmos is used in different ways in Johannine Gospel. It is found eighty times in the

Gospel of John or an average of about four times per chapter. Ngewa reminds us, Only four chapters (2, 5, 19, and 20) do not mention the term 'world'. Chapter 17 has the most references to it (18 times). Chapter 12 and 14 mention it seven times each; chapter 1,3,8,15 mention it five times each; chapters 6 and 18 mention it four times each; chapter 9 and 11 each have two references to it; and it is mentioned once in each of chapters 4 and 21 (p 448 note 44).

In the context of John, the 'world' means more than the physical universe, for it refers to the entire creation of God with special reference to man. Gen. 1.26 describes man as the culmination of God's creation. The *cosmos* finds its completeness in man who was created in the image and likeness of God. The world of John sometimes refers to the society of man. So the world that God loves in John 3.16 is actually mankind and not just trees and other aspects of nature. In another theological dimension, John's world refers to the realm and rule of Satan and his forces. This is the world that the Son of Man came, fought and overcame. This is the spiritual world that is hostile and incompatible with faith in Jesus. The usage in the Gospel of John therefore, depends on the context in which it is used. We will look at different variations of cosmos,

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

What is the meaning of cosmos by John?

## **3.2 A Review of John's use of cosmos by scholars**

### **3.2.1 John's sectarian use of the term *cosmos***

The term 'sectarian' needs to be explained for you to understand John's sectarian use of the term *cosmos* as claimed by some scholars.

The term sectarian is "showing a lack of concern for those outside one's own sect, class," especially religion (Advanced Dictionary, 1061). Based on this definition, J. Louis Martyn asserts that, "The Church in which John lived, then, was a sort of conventicler shoved off into a corner, quite distinct from the emerging Catholic Church, indeed, in some regards hostile to it." (Martyn, 124)

Those that hold this view see in John's use of the term as portraying the world as being a hostile place from which the Christian must remain separate. They quoted John 1.10; 14.17; 17.25 where emphasis is laid on "the world did not recognise Jesus," but "hates him and his followers (15.18-19; 7.7) because they are not of this world (8.23; 17.14).

It is also said that the dualistic language indicates that the community must be separated from the world; as it is stated in 17.6 that the believers are taken out of the world. The sectarian view of the term *cosmos* is also seen in 18.36 where Jesus' kingdom is not of this world and Jesus will not even pray for the world (17.9).

There is also a sectarian understanding of the term *cosmos* in John's Gospel where the love of neighbour is limited to the Christian community (13.34; 15.12) as compared to the shrinking of the love command to enemies found in the Synoptics.

The supporters of this view asserts that John purposely refuses to say that Jesus loves the world (God loves the world 3.16) and the Father and son are paralleled throughout John's gospel except when it comes to Jesus loving the world since Jesus loves only his own who were in the world but are not of the world (13.1). To this end, the proponent of this view concludes that John is an unsocial and unethical Gospel. Against this understanding, we shall in the next subsection discuss the opposing view of John's understanding of the term *cosmos*.

### **3.2.2 John has a Transformational View of Culture and the World**

Brown is one of the scholars who see differently John's use of *cosmos* against sectarian view. He outlined his understanding thus:

1. John's Gospel is the only one to emphasize the incarnation (1.9, 14; 3.19; 11.27; 16.28, 18.37); the disciples are sent into the world just as Jesus was 17.18.
2. John has a nuanced view of the world in the world but not of the world (17.15-18).
3. Many sectarian elements are missing in the Gospel. For instance,
  - a. The Gospel is not legalistic or rule oriented
  - b. The believer is not to be judgmental (Jesus has not come to judge the world 12.47).
  - c. Jesus emphasizes that he taught openly and not in secret like a sectarian (18.20).
4. John has an evangelistic emphasis to transform the world
  - a. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world (1.29).
  - b. God did not send his son to condemn the world (8.4) but to save it (3.17; 4.42).
  - c. Jesus gives life to the world (6.33, 51) and light

- 8.12; 9.5; 12.46).
  - d. Jesus' shalom overcomes the world (17.33)
  - e. Jesus does not just pray for disciples (17.20) but for the world to believe (17.21, 23).
5. John's Gospel employs terminology of the broader Roman world (general imagery rather than Jewish symbols; proto-Gnostic language) to present the Gospel "the ultimate seeker-sensitive Gospel")

Having seen from the above reviews, it is important for us to wedge the two understanding in order to understand what John is talking about when he uses cosmos in his theology.

### **3.3 Cosmos refers to humanity at enmity with God**

George E. Ladd in his "A Theology of the New Testament pp. 226 ff has given us a clear understanding of John's primary use of the term "world" in his Gospel in relation to his theology.

As we have seen in the definition, John's use of the term 'cosmos' is not just referring to the "earth" or universe. John 1.10 says, "... the 'world' was made through him, yet the world did not know him" shows clearly that humanity is in view. Nothing in the world (the individuals) respected Jesus. The creator who came to redeem his creature was rejected by the creature. John tells us that the power (evil one) that caused the 'world' (humanity) to reject his creator (God) is said to be the ruler of this cosmos (12.31; 14.30; 16.11; also 1 John 5.19).

The hatred of the cosmos against Jesus is not only limited to him, but to his followers as well. The hatred of the disciples by the world is not surprise. This is because the disciples were formerly part of the world, but have been chosen out of the world to belong to Christ (17.6), even though they continue to live in the world (13.1; 17.11, 15). They have changed their goals from merely human, earthly goals to Jesus' goals (goals from above), who has come from heaven. As such, since the evil world did not love Jesus, their master and Lord, they too were to be hated by the world.

In John 17.18, John tells us that the disciples of Jesus are not to be secretive but to live in the world with one goal, "to carry out a mission in the world that is not less than a continuation of Jesus' mission."  
(Ladd, 227)




## 4.0 Conclusion

The Johannine use of the term ‘cosmos’ fits in well with his theology which is making people have faith in Jesus and come out of the world in order to be eternally with him. Men may be eternally with him by hearing and responding to the mission and message of Jesus (3.16; 17.6). Conclusively, therefore, the disciples are to perpetuate Jesus’ ministry in the world that men may know the gospel and be saved (20.31) out of the world. The term ‘cosmos’ therefore, is important in understanding John’s theology of salvation as we shall see in Module 3.

## 5.0 Summary

In this unit, we looked at different uses of ‘cosmos’ both in the secular and biblical views. These different perspectives of the term cosmos enable us to articulate better, John’s understanding of the term which is aimed at his theology of salvation. We will take a thorough look at that in units of module 3.

## 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

-  Define cosmos in the Hellenistic and Judaistic view.
-  Discuss in detail Johannine use of cosmos and show how it helps you too understand his theology of salvation.
-  Compare and contrast John’s sectarian and transformational views of cosmos in John’s Gospel.

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## **Unit 6 The Pre-Existence of Christ in Johannine Gospel and throughout Scriptures**

### **Content**




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- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
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### **1.0 Introduction**

This unit discourses the preexistence of Christ as significant to understanding the incarnation, and assignment of Christ. It is the pre-existence that gives credibility to the work of Christ. Preexistence and incarnation thus respond to the old question of religious philosophy which asks how and where there can ever be a point where transcendence and immanence meet. If Jesus' existence was eternal and if His character is inseparable from God, then Jesus is God. The Word (λόγος) was both “with God” and it “was” God.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

-  Ascertain the pre-existence of Christ in John’s Gospel and throughout Scriptures
-  Identify those who had an encounter with the Lord Jesus in OT
-  Prove that the Word of God existed in the beginning of creation

### **3.0 Main Contents**

#### **3.1 The Pre-Existence of Christ in Johannine Gospel and throughout Scriptures**

John 1:1-5 pronounces the pre-existence of Christ Jesus. If we survey the Holy Scriptures, we can discover other passages that attest of the eternal existence of Jesus. For instance, Eusebius acknowledges Genesis 1:26 and Psalms 148:5 designate both the work of the Father and the Word of God by His side: Genesis 1:26, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” Psalms 148:5, attested the pre-existence of Christ, “Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.” As the Father commanded, the Word of God created. The fact that the Word of God pre-existed before creation is clearly stated by Solomon in Proverbs 8:22-31. In this passage, wisdom declares it’s pre-existence, saying, “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.” (Prov 8:22) Eusebius goes on to show several passages where Jesus Christ unveiled Himself in the form of a man to His saints.

It is portrayed that Adam walked with God in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8). Does it not require a human body to walk? Accordingly, did Adam recognize the bodily form of our pre-incarnate Lord. Also, Enoch knew his Lord as he sauntered in close fellowship with Him in Genesis 5:24, “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” One Scriptural proof

to recognize that Adam and Enoch strolled with the pre-incarnate Christ is found in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." In this verse, Paul reveals that the woman was created to give fellowship to man. Humanity was formed to have fellowship with Christ. Christ existed to give fellowship with the Father. Therefore, Adam and Enoch's fellowship would be in the presence of Christ.

Abraham honored the office of Melchizedek by giving Him a tithe of all things in Genesis 14:18-20, "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all." The apostle Paul reveals the deity of this man Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:1-3, "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually." Therefore, we know why Abraham honored such a priest, because he acknowledged Him as deity. The Lord revealed Himself to Abraham in the plains of Mamre on two separate occasions (Gen 12:6-7; 18:1). Abraham acknowledged His Majesty by calling Him "The Judge of all the Earth" (Gen 18:25).

Job knew that the incarnated Christ would stand upon the earth in the latter days, saying, "For I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 19:25-27) In Genesis 32:24-30, Jacob wrestled with a man whom he honored by asking His blessings. Jacob revealed the divine identity of this man by declaring the name of the place as Peniel, for the reason that he had seen the face of God and lived.

Joshua acknowledged the divine nature of the Captain of the Lord's Host by removing his shoes in His divine presence, as shown in Joshua 5:14-15, "And neither he replied; but as captain of the host of the Lord's army, I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon, you stand is holy. And Joshua did so." However, this individual is commonly understood to be an angelic being.

The apostle John tells us that Isaiah saw His glory and spoke of Him in John 12:41, "These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spoke of him." There are also New Testament passages that refer to the existence of Christ before His virgin birth. Philippians 2:5-11 tells us how Jesus left His throne of glory and humbled Himself in the form of a servant. Hebrews 2:9-18 tells us how Jesus partook of flesh and blood in order to pay for the sins of man. Paul tells us that the birth of Jesus happened in the fullness of God's time in Galatians 4:4, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." This statement means that God sent Jesus to earth at this time in the form of a man:

Accordingly, 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 1:1 Remarks the Use of the Word "Logos." The Greek word λόγος was extensively used throughout Classical Greek literature and antiquity, and hence, it derived a wide use of

denotations. John's use of λόγος in the preamble to his Gospel would have been principally based upon one of three possible uses throughout the first century. Andreas Köstenberger reviews three "primary backgrounds" upon which the meaning of λόγος would have been based in the Gospel. Foremost, this word was used in Hellenistic philosophy, as seen in the literature of Stoicism and Philo. Subsequent, this word may be connected with the personification of wisdom's role in creation, as seen in ancient wisdom literature, such as Proverbs 8, Sirach 1:1-10, and the Wisdom of Solomon. Lastly, this word is used in the Old Testament story of Creation when God spoke the world into existence through His Word. Of these three sources for the context of interpreting John 1:1, Köstenberger admits John the apostle used λόγος in his preamble based upon the Hebrew theology of Creation as its chief background. He bases this view on two pieces of literary evidence: the opening phrase "in the beginning" (Gen 1:1, Jn 1:2), and the repetition of the words God, light, darkness, and life, all of which are found all over the Story of Creation in Genesis (Kösterberger 2004).

William Burkitt describes three features of Jesus' character found in John 1:1 based on His description as the Word (Burkitt 1844). These are;

- ✚ His Eternal Existence - He has had an eternal existence. He did not have a time when He was created. He existed outside the realm of time and space.
- ✚ His Personal Co-existence - He has had a personal co-existence with God. Jesus' coexistence means that He had a distinct existence apart from God. If Jesus has existed with God, it also means that His character is inseparable from the character and nature of God.
- ✚ His Divine Essence - He has divine characteristics. If Jesus' existence was eternal and if His character is inseparable from God, then Jesus is God.

The Word (λόγος) was both "with God" and it "was" God. This dual nature of the Word unveils the mystery of the Trinity. Jesus is eternal by His divine nature and He is separate from God the Father. The Scriptures make a number of citations to this great disclosure of the divine nature of Jesus Christ (Jn 1:15; 8:58; 17:5, Phil 2:6, 1 Jn 1:1; 5:7, Rev 19:13; 22:13): John 1:15, "John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spoke, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." John 8:58, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Philippians 2:6, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:" 1 John 1:1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;" 1 John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Revelation 19:13, "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God." Revelation 22:13, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

It is attested that, Jesus did not receive His Blessed, Holy name until His birth. Consequently, in the beginning He is called "The Word." His title as the Word abridges His initial office and ministry before taking upon Him the form of a man and becoming our Apostle and Redeemer. In the beginning, He was the Word of God in creation. 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. 1:2 Remarks, John 1:2 serves as a summary of 1:1. The antecedent of οὗτος is "the Word." The Word of God was in the beginning with God because this is a part of the divine

essence of Jesus Christ. He is the Word of God in His role of creation. 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. 1:3 asserts, the first testimony that the Word is God can be seen in the Creation Story. All things that were created in the beginning were created by the Word of God. Since there was nothing that was created apart from God's Word, we must deduce that the Word of God is superior to all of creation. John 1:3 refers to the creation of the heavens and the earth, which declaration echoes the general revelation that God as the Creator of all things. Creation affirms to all mankind of the one who created it. Paul writes, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" (Rom 19-20) The psalmist writes, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showed his handywork." (Ps 19:1) God has revealed a general knowledge of Himself through His creation. It is remarked that, 1:4 "In him was life" and the life was the light of men, while John 1:3 offers mankind the first witness from the Creation Story that the Word is God, John 1:4 offers the second witness from the existence of life itself, particularly from the creation of mankind. Our life, our very existence is evidence that there is a God, since we have been created in His image. It was through the Word of God, which is the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, that life came into existence. The climax of creation was the life of God breathed into Adam in Genesis 2:7, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." This life breathed into Adam amalgamated him with God. Humanity was more than a created animal; he was a likeness of God upon the earth. This replication of God in man's shape and the life of God indwelling him serve as a proof to the existence of God as the Creator.

Paul describes the witness of God in creation in his epistle to the Romans. This life is a part of God's creation, seen in the animal and plant kingdoms, and it serves as a witness, or light, of God's eternal power and godhead, as stated in Romans 1:19-20, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" One unique attribute to the planet earth is the fact that it contains life. No other planet in the universe is known to be inhabited by any form of life. Accordingly, the creation of life serves as an evidence of the Creator Himself, and the Creator is God through the pre-incarnate Word.

This life assists as the "light" that guides mankind to search for God as his Creator, and predominantly as his Redeemer in need of liberation from the bondages of sin, which mankind is made aware of through his own conscience, which either condemns his actions as evil or excuses them as good, as Paul says in Romans 2:14-15, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)" "and the life was the light of men." The life by which God's creation exists is imparted through the light of God, rather, through the light emanating from the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter Tan says, "In the physical world, life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). In the spiritual world, life is in the light (John 1:4)." (2007: 9). In the Creation Story, the light of God gave life to the plant

kingdom on the third day prior to the creation of the sun and heavenly bodies on the fourth day.




#### **4.0 Conclusion**

John accordingly wastes no time in telling us that Jesus is God (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, John 1:1). Before he took flesh, he existed out of time. He has an existence that precedes the Abraham (8:56-58). To add to this, Jesus uses for himself the same expression Yahweh uses to designate his name to Moses at the burning bush –I AM sent you (Exod 3:14). Jesus does what only God can do: calming of the sea 6:18-24 (see Ps 65:7; 89:9; 107:29); raises Lazarus from the dead. Christ is God true and true.

#### **5.0 Summary**

The use of the word logos is also key to understanding John's background. The word is a stoic coinage for the pre-existent being that pervades all of universe, and in a special way provides the rational order of the universe as well as supplies the standard for conduct and for the proper order of life for rational creatures.<sup>14</sup> This Logos is not a person but a power, so John takes up the concept and applies it to Christ weaving it around Genesis 1. He also employs the Hellenistic wisdom literature in a bid to affirm the incarnation of the logos. The logos is the wisdom who pre-exists all things (Prov. 3:21-26), and is also the creator of things (Prov.8:30). At a point in history, this preexistent wisdom took flesh among a people (Sir.24:8).

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

-  Explain how did John pronounce the pre-existence of Christ Jesus
-  Who is Melchizedek king of Salem?
-  Discuss Logos as the pre-existence of Christ in John's Gospel

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### **Module 3: KEY THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN JOHN’S GOSPEL**

Unit 1: The Deity of Christ`

Unit 2: The Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John

Unit 3: Johannine Use of the Old Testament

Unit 4: Eternal Life in John’s Gospel

Unit 5: Johannine Theology of Death and Resurrection

Unit 6: Johannine Expression of “Jesus as the Light of the World”

#### **Unit 1 The Deity of Christ (Jesus as God)**

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  - 3.2 Analysis of Christ’s Deity in the prologue
    - 3.2.1 The deity expressed through Greek Grammar
    - 3.2.2 The witness of John the Baptist
    - 3.2.3 The Deity expressed through his fullness
    - 3.2.4 The climax of Christ Deity
  - 3.3 Johannine context of the Deity of Christ
    - 3.3.1 The signs reveal Christ’s deity
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## 1.0 Introduction

The four writers of the Gospel have presented our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in four different dimensional perspectives. While Matthew presents Jesus as the messiah in whom the prophecies of God were fulfilled, Mark’s Christology depicts his position as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Working more on his fulfilment motif, Matthew sees Jesus, not just as the new Moses who has given new law on the Mount in the Rabbinic style. Matthew makes us understand that Jesus’ acts of changing the law (*Torah*) could not be tolerated if it were done by an ordinary man as he said: “You heard it decreed to the ancients ... But I myself say to you”. Evangelist Luke sees Jesus as the Greatest Healer who identified himself with the poor, outcasts, women and children. It is in his healings and dealing with the sick and needy that Jesus is realized as God.

While the synoptists lead readers to eventually see Jesus as God, John begins his position to demonstrate that Jesus is God. He defends his thesis throughout the book in all or pericopes, signs and other acts that Jesus is the LORD and God. In this unit you will be learning about the deity of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel of John.

## 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes

At the end of the study of this unit, you should be able to:



1. define what deity means
2. identify in the prologue how Christ is seen as God
3. describe the defence of Christ Deity in the I am sayings in John
4. enumerate the significance of deity of Christ.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Definition of the term ‘deity’**

According to Oxford Dictionary, deity simply means ‘god’ or ‘goddess’ for example Roman deities (gods). When it is written ‘the Deity,’ it means God. In Johannine Gospel, Deity means God. So when we talk of Deity of Christ, we are saying, the Messiah is God.

#### **3.2 Analysis of Christ Deity in the Prologue**

The term prologue is given to the opening part of the Gospel of John 1.1-18. The term itself comes from two Greek terms *pro lego* or *legomai*. Pro is literally ‘before while *lego* means to say. The Greek dictionary defines it as to “tell beforehand or to tell advance of the event”. (Balz,1981). It is called prologue because it tells much of what is found in the main body of the Gospel of John.

##### **3.2.1 The Deity as expressed through Greek Grammar**

John’s Gospel opens in the prologue “In [the] beginning (*En arche...*) this is quickly thought and interpreted by many as referring to the Old Testament beginning of the cosmos expressed in Genesis 1.1 (Hebrew: *Berashit barah elohim*). It is to be noted that the Genesis account refers to the beginning, not of deity, but of the world. It is stated clearly that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Brown notes that the beginning in John is not that of creation for the creation comes up in John 1.3. The beginning in John refers to the period before creation, and is a designation more qualitative than temporal, of the sphere of God (Brown I, 1979, 4).

Robert Kysar is more emphatic when he said,

This constitutes one of the highest claims the Christian has made for Christ: He existed from the beginning. The pre-existence of the logos affirms not only that he existed before the creation itself, but that he existed before “all things began” (1976, 26).

English translations have “In the beginning” in Greek, it is anarthrous. The Greek has no article between “In and beginning”.

One would roughly read “In beginning” which would sound vague, “In a beginning” which would apply a choice among several beginnings. The absence of the article here shows that the author of John does not want to confuse the known beginning of Genesis creation with the unknown beginning of the logos (Christ), the beginning of the abode of God. As a prepositional phrase which also has *arche* as the subject of the preposition *en* has the iota subscript to make it dative case on the term “*En arche*” to read as if it were definite. Moreover, it is qualitatively quantified by the subject, “ho logos”; making it definite per subject of reference. If ever there was a beginning of the God head, logos was there that was the beginning. Furthermore, *en* imperfect tense expresses timeless existence of logos. Commenting on this, John Calvin opined that the evangelist sends us to the eternal sanctuary of God and teaches us that the word (Logos) was, as it were, hidden there before he revealed himself in the outward workmanship of the world.

*Kai ho logos en pros ton theon*: The preposition *pros* going with accusative case means toward. This is a matter of relationship (alongside one another). It is maintained that the preposition implies not merely existence alongside of, but personal intercourse. It means more than *meta* or *para* and is regularly employed in to expressing the presence of one person with another (Morris, 76.) and has the idea of togetherness of equality.

BDF sees the construction as signifying with, in the company of this is the translation that almost all translators employ (the word was with God) this is the “with” of coexistent, consubstantial and co-equal. The word existed in equality with God.

*Kai Theos en ho logos*: This is the phrase that forms the central proof of this unit. To prove that *Logos* is God and God is *Logos*, John puts the two sentences here to confirm the deity sentence, (1) The Word was with God  
(2) God was the word.

High expression of deity from John’s display of Greek here is seen in putting two nouns in the same masculine gender and in the nominative case. The two nouns “*Theos*” and “*Logos*” can be said to be in apposition to one another. *Theos* is equal to *logos*, as *logos* is equal to *Theos*. The verb “*en*” refers to both, as timeless existence. The absence of article before the *Theos* makes people to understand it differently. However, BDF gives us the simple grammatical rule why *Theos* is anathous when it is stated that

predicate nouns are without articles (BDF 237). New English Bible has it paraphrased as “what God was the word was.”

We can therefore, say with John, Christ who was from time immemorial with God is himself God.

The *houtos* of verse 2 is a demonstrative pronoun in masculine gender and nominative case, it is the sum total of the discussions about the logos *Theos* relationship. The case and gender of this pronoun show clearly that *logos* was not and is not an idea as Greek Philosophers could call “reason”, or “speech”. *Houtos* refers to logos as personified. God is living, in human terms God can be referred to as he, hence “*houtos*” (This one, This man, He).

In John 1.3-5, the author John clearly tells us the divinity of Christ as the creator. All things came into being through him. The Greek stresses the fact that apart (without) from him, not even one thing that came into being that which had been made to exists. John is openly saying that Christ through whom all things were made is God. He has life. This life was the light of men. The term for men here is *anthropoi*. This word refers to mankind in general rather than to men as opposed to women. The Greek for man is “*aner*” and for women is “*gune*”, *anthropos* marries the two. The indication here is that Christ as God radiates brilliance of God on all his image bearers unconditionally.

### **3.2.2 John’s Witness to the Deity of Christ**

John the Baptist’s witness was first of all to affirm the pre-existence of Christ. For if John was born before Jesus, and John testified that Jesus was before him, then that existence is eternal. He emphatically denied being Christ. “I myself am not the Christ.” When further pressed with questions, he declared that he is the voice of someone calling in the desert “Make straight the way for the Lord.” The Lord here means the Messiah the anointed one, called in Greek, Christ. It indicated John’s prophecy and Christ’s superiority.

### **3.2.3 The Deity expressed through His Fullness**

In 1.16, the conjunction “*hoti*” is used as causal, which has the translation “because”, as a result of or “for” (BDF, 1). Because of the abundance of his loving kindness and his faithfulness, as a result of the completeness in him of grace and truth we all have received. The causality of the conjunction *hoti*, gives a message,

not on the probability, but of certitude. It is not what he will be that is at state. It is what he was or what Johannine theology expresses, 'what he is that we have come to be what we are.' We can draw from the account of his fullness. The disciples saw the glory of *Logos* incarnate who was "Full of Grace and Truth."

His fullness here refers to the complete Deity of Christ. It is his full measure as God that we have the benefits given to us. The fullness of Christ here spoken of is the fullness of the divine attributes dwelling in Him, manifesting itself in that glory, full of grace and truth, which men beheld. Paul affirms that "In him God was pleased for all the fullness (*pleroma*) to dwell" (Col 1.19).

The significance of the fullness of Christ is the grace upon grace that we have through him. This means that Christians have unlimited measure of being endowed with God's ever abiding kindness through Christ. This is our pride, our joy and our comfort. It is our strength and service of power over against spiritual forces and enemies of the cross. He is our hope of unlimited spiritual and even material blessings today and of life to come.

### **3.2.4 The Climax of Christ Deity**

The last verse of what is called prologue, contains the most exciting revelations of what John intended to demonstrate that Christ is God. *Theos oudeis heoraken popote*: The word "*popote*" is emphatic, never. It is saying, never has any one seen God since the fall of man. The words here echo God's prohibition to Moses in Exodus 33.20. Moses requested to see the face of God or at least to know by physical eyecontact, what God looks like. God told him that no human being will see him and live. However, to help Moses feel his presence, he therefore made Moses watch the glory of his splendour as he passed by Moses. Here in the prologue, John intends to inform us someone who saw God, is here-the Word. He was with God; he is God the proof is in the next clause of the passage. Brown resets the whole verse this way: No man has ever seen God; It is God the only Son; ever at the Father's side; Who has revealed him.

This sets the stage for God's action in providing a means that man can see him. In Christ, the veil is removed, and man is able to see him face to face. The Greek rendering is so emphatic that the divine means of revelation is imperative. The sentence once again reads: "Not even one person has ever seen God" the only way we

have come to see God is through His self-revelation in Christ, as John said, “God the only Son”.  
(Brown, 1979, 35)

Therefore, the prologue has clearly demonstrated the Deity of Christ. He the word, was with God, he was God from time not known. He was the agent of creation and life giver. The word has no genealogy like the birth narrative in Matthew and Luke. This is because he was not created. He is God who has no beginning - he is from the same place with the Father (God) and of the same essence/nature with him. The word became flesh and lived among us. We experienced his glory- the same type that Israelites experienced, like the only begotten full of mercifulness and kindness, the type God was identified with and known as possessing in ancient time.

The prologue has demonstrated enough evidence to convince us that Jesus Christ is God. It should not be to our interest in search of minutest particles of iota to disprove the Deity. Christians should seek to deepen their faith in Christ our Lord and Saviour, and to extend his gift of salvation to those in the darkness and too the illiterates who base salvation on their academic attainments and scientific proof. How the Deity of Christ was seen outside the prologue is our next task.

### **3.3 Johannine Context of the Deity of Christ**

This subsection seeks to see some passages in John 1.19 ff, which has formed the context of the Deity of Christ. Brown calls this first part of John “the book of Signs”. It displays Jesus’ public ministry where God’s glory was revealed and many believed in Christ as the Messiah and God’s presence among men.

#### **3.3.1 The Signs reveal Christ’s Deity**

As it is shown in our discussion on the Messiah and his signs in module two, the wedding at Cana of Galilee shows the Christ, as the best revealer of the Deity and Glory of God (Jn 2.1-11). The Best wine came at last. The custom of the hosts was to provide the best of choice wine at the beginning of the ceremony. After people were saturated with the best, the poor quality could be given without notice. In case of Jesus, what came last was the best, and it was noticed. John’s aim is not to portray the image of Mary, nor of water, not even wine, it is to reveal the glory of God in Jesus.

In the cleansing of the temple (Jn 2.12-22), John wants to show to us that only God that knows the hearts of men. So if Christ knows

and assesses the kind of faith people have in him, then Jesus is God.

In John 3.2, Nicodemus testified, “We know you are teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (NIV). The Greek verb for “we know” is *Oidamen*”. This is a verb of seeing not with eyes but with one’s mind, a verb of understanding. It is a very strong testimony of the Jewish leadership in their perception about the Deity of Christ.

He as recognized as being a teacher from God, after all, the miracles he performed were all signs of the presence of God for only through God such spiritual powers are exhibited. For sure His Deity was confirmed by the Jewish leaders. Their problem was acclamation of His Deity.

### **3.3.2 Amen, Amen, in the Ipsissima Verba Yesu (Jn 3.3)**

In John 3.3, Jesus replied Nicodemus saying, “Amen, Amen, I say to you...” Many scholars including Jeremias, Robert Stein and others strongly believe that it was a Christological expression-Christological as a unique saying of Jesus. Jeremias has given a statistics of Amen in the New Testament Gospels: Mark has thirteen times; Matthew – Luke *Logia* nine times Matthew only nine times; Luke only three times’ and John has twenty five times. (Jeremias, 35).

If indeed the use of Amen is genuinely Christ’s wording, then John’s record about Christ is most Christological. Stein affirmed,

Frequently we find on the lips of Jesus (*ipsissima verba Yesu*) the formula “Amen ...” the manner in which Jesus used this expression is completely new and has no parallel in Jewish literature or in the rest of the New Testament... Its usage by Jesus is seen as a ‘Christology in nude’, for by his use of amen, Jesus is claiming the certainty of what is being said. Amen implies a finality and authority to the words that follow which is quite unparalleled and transcends that of any of the religious leaders ... (Loen Morris, NICNT: the Gospel According to John, Rev. 197 footnote 53).

The certainty of Jesus’ words with Nicodemus is that the New Covenant of God with his people has opened the heavens wide for the faithful ones. Membership is strictly restricted to those who are made new creatures through the work of the Holy Spirit. The new birth is granted to those who abandoned every attempt to become

righteous by human efforts, those who have the willing acceptance of the free gift of grace.  
(Tasker 1977, 67).

### 3.3.3 *Ego eimi*, the I am sayings as Proof of Deity

In Exodus 3 God appeared to Moses and gave Moses an assignment to take the Israelites from Egyptian enslavement. Moses requested for the name of the person who spoke and sent him, the reply was the name in the verb to be “I am who I am”. Moses was to deliver the name “I am” to them. This name later was revealed as Yahweh, the ever-present God. The ‘I am’ who is ever present, all knowing, ever caring, all powerful. The ‘I am’ means there is no one like me in all the earth. Israelites enjoyed much of what was revealed to them to experience, protection and glory.

When the name appeared in the New Testament, it conveyed the sense of HIM again. It was indicative of the fact that the person acting now was there in those days hidden. Few examples will suffice:

- a. I am the bread of Life (Jn 6.35) with *ego* ‘I’ and *eimi* ‘I am’ the reading can emphatically be seen as “I myself am the bread of life” (Brown 29a, 1979, 269). Here Jesus can be seen as the replacement of the Manna which God’s presence accorded the Israelites. He himself is that ever lasting food that nourishes the believers in the messianic age of the kingdom of God.
- b. I am the Resurrection and the life (Jn 11). Only God has life and gives life. Our life is hidden in the resurrected Christ.
- c. I am the way, the Truth and the Life (Jn. 14.6). Christ who is life is also the only way to our final home. He is Truth, the absolute Truth. He cannot deceive his followers and will faithfully guide them to eternal home. Read also Acts 4.12, ‘there is salvation only in the name of Jesus’.
- d. Before Abraham was I am (John 8.58). “*Amen, amen, lego hymin, prin Abraam genesthai, ego eimi*” There are three areas of grammar here that have derivative analysis of Christ’s Deity.

First, the use of *amen* as earlier on said, As for Christ, it comes at the beginning of a statement, to introduce a certainty, an absolute fact. This is rendered “Truly, truly; of certainty.”

Second, the verb *genesthai*. This aorist middle infinitive of *ginomai* means to be made, to come into existence. Used with proposition it means there was time when he was not born. He came to be only for a short time, then died. He was no more to be seen or in existence physically.

Third, *Ego eimi* (I + I am). This combination produces emphasis. This is what Brown interprets “I myself” as divine name, “I am”. (Brown, 267). *Eimi* refers to one who exists. He was, he is and he will be. Though Christ used the divine name I AM he was not stoned to death as Lev. 24.16 demanded. Only God was in existence before things were created including man. Christ’s declaration of existence before Abraham shows the omnipresence of God. For Christ to exist before the time of Abraham and to continue in existence at the time of the Jews and Romans is clear indication of His Deity. You are to read other I am sayings in chapter 9.5; 10.11; and Chapter 15.




#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Jesus is the Messiah. He is God. He demonstrated his deity through his unequalled teachings and performances of signs (miracles) to show that God is at work and present. His death and resurrection demonstrated that he is God who has power over death. No wonder, John begins with the deity of Christ and ends the Gospel with the proof of the deity of Christ in Thomas’ confession, “My Lord and my God.” Now in his victorious position, he will ever remember those he suffered for, died and rose on their behalf.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit, we looked at several proofs available in the Gospel of John for the Deity of Jesus. The unit starts with the grammatical evidence where syntax of Greek grammar helps us to know that Jesus is divine. We also look at other proofs like the signs etc. Let us now attempt this exercise.

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

-  Discuss how John proves Christ’s Deity in the prologue.
-  Show how signs are proven to be the proof of Christ’s Deity.
-  Discuss the significance of Christ’ deity for the Church today



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## **UNIT 2      The Holy Spirit (*Ho Paracletos*)**

### **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
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  - 3.5 The *Paraclete's* continued witness and glorification of Jesus
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
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### **1.0 Introduction**

John's presentation of the Holy Spirit is quite unique as compared with other Gospel writers and New Testament literature in General. In this unit, you will be learning about the teachings of John concerning the Holy Spirit and his functions in the life of Jesus' ministry and after his earthly ministry.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- 1. define the term *Paraclete*;
- 2. list the function of the Holy Spirit during Jesus Ministry on earth;
- 3. state the function of the *Paraclete* after Jesus' departure;

### **3.0 Main Contents**

#### **3.1 The Meaning of the *Paraclete***

The term *Paraclete* is an English word which is the rendering of the Greek *parakletos*, which in turn is derived from the Greek verb *paracalein* meaning "to call to one's side." In idiomatic sense, *paraclete* is used to mean an advocate, a helper, or spokesman or a lawyer who will plead on one's behalf as in a court room. Other

meanings associated with the term *Paraclete* in Pauline writings and Acts are to exhort, encourage and to comfort (Behm, 803 ff.).

The question now is, in what is the use of the term *paraclete* in the farewell Discourses and in the context of those Discourses?

The term *Paracletos* occurs four times in the passages that deal with the *paraclete* sayings in the Gospel of John, viz. John 14.16, 26; 15.26; 16.7 and once in 1 John 2.1. a survey of the usage of the term from different periods in history shows that there are divergent meanings attached to the term *Paraclete* (See the detail survey in S. S. Kim, 22-48). Davis for example, renders it as “comforter” or “Consoler,” (Davis, 35-48). However, as seen above, the primary meaning in Greek is “advocate” in a legal sphere. This primary meaning is to be preferred to that of “comforter,” which the proponents of this understanding based their arguments on the fact that Christian preaching was mainly an exhortation pertaining to the Messianic comfort (Barret, 14). But as Holwerda convincingly argues, “it is possible to show that the Messianic comfort is present in the activity of the *Paraclete* precisely because he is the Advocate,” (Holwerda, 37: footnote number 52).

As regards to its background, it is seen as deriving from Jewish scriptures and Qumran materials. This fits in the proceeding of law suit in Israel where a judge or king behaves like an attorney who seeks to do justice and help the oppressed, e.g. Job 29.15-16, 25b. (Betz, 15 cited by Kim, 39). This is also seen in the Jewish interest in intercessory figures that functioned as advocates, sometimes in the heavenly court (Job 16.19; 19.25). In Zech. 1.12; 3.1-7 these angels are portrayed in a similar way as that found in Job. Lincoln also goes in line with Betz to regard the *Ebed Yahweh* in Isaiah 40.-55 as another possible example of the background of the meaning of the *Paraclete* which has the basic forensic meaning of “Advocate,” (Lincoln, 122).

The above analysis of the term *Paraclete* has shown that it is to be understood as an “Advocate” who is the defender and prosecutor. This fits in well with the usage in the Fourth Gospel generally, and in the Farewell Discourses, which has forensic role of speaking in favour of Jesus and his cause. As Burge puts it, “This context of juridical trial and persecution presents us with the most likely catalyst for John’s introduction of ho *Paracletos*. In fact, it is the comprehensive activity of the Spirit as a forensic witness that best explains the varied tasks of the *Paraclete* in the Farewell Discourses,” (Burge, 205; see also Franck, 20-23). This

understanding will guide us as we look at the text which speaks of the *Paraclete's* function of judgement and witness which we now turn.

### **3.2 The *Paraclete*: The Witnessing and Glorification Function**

(14.15-18, 25-26; 15.26-27; 16.12-15)

To understand what John means by this is to look at the passages as a whole. First, John tells his audience that the *paraclete* is another one. By this, it is assumed that Jesus is the other one for his disciple. Chapter 17 of John's Gospel tells us how Jesus has cared for his disciples and defended them as a lawyer does to his client. For John to call the Holy Spirit, another *Paraclete*, it therefore, means that the Holy Spirit does the same work Jesus had done for his disciples.

This 'another *paraclete*' however, will remain with the disciples. It is through the Holy Spirit that what Isaiah promised in 7.14 will come to pass "God-with-us"

This is stressed in v. 18, "I will not leave you as orphans, I will come back to you." The concern of the disciples was that he was with them for about three years and his departure will mean leaving them without someone to care for them. Jesus therefore has to assume them for his continued presence with them in the person of the *Paraclete* using the indicative mood, which is the mood of reality. Assuring them that what he is saying is real. They must not be orphans. No wonder, the *paraclete* himself, is the "Spirit of truth" (v.17).

The essence of not leaving them as orphans in the person of the *paraclete* – the Spirit of Truth', is seen in v.26. He is to teach the disciples all they need to know. The Holy Spirit's teaching of "all things" does not open room for false teachings. As we have seen, the Spirit is the Spirit of truth. He can not lie or deal with anything that pertains to falsehood. Again, he is coming in the name of Jesus. Moreover, God is the one who is sending this *paraclete*. Therefore, his work of teaching will deal with that which is true. It is not even an openended kind of teaching. He will continue from where Jesus stopped by his departure. As Ngewa rightly observed, "The persons of the Trinity are agreed on a common curriculum."... He would teach them about "all things" related to God's plan of salvation and the blessings it brings." (284).

In 15.26-27, Jesus re-stressed the point that the *paraclete* is coming. When he comes, he will testify about him. He adds that the disciples must bear witness too (v. 27).

John states, the Spirit is first to witness. How? George T. Montague rightly answered the question, “he will do this through the disciples, who are particularly qualified because they have been with Jesus from the beginning (v. 27). As the request of their witnessing, or of the Spirit’s witnessing through them, the hostility of the world gets worse” as seen in 16.1-4a (p.353) because this opposition will not subside in anyway. John tells us about another function of the *paraclete*.

In 16.12-15, the *Paraclete* has another function of glorifying and continued witnessing to Jesus. Jesus in verse 12, which serves as introduction to this section, begins by saying, “I still have many things to say to you.” This introduction of what the *Paraclete* will carry on from where Jesus has left “makes a vital witness of Jesus’ followers to the truth that is at issue in the trial,” (Lincoln, 121). As seen in 15.26, “the Spirit of Truth” is referred to as the *Paraclete*, and here this “Spirit of Truth” will lead them “into all the truth.”

Why the *Paraclete* is now addressed as the Spirit of Truth? For John, “the truth is the true judgment, embodied in Jesus, about God and God’s relation to the world, and in the context of the lawsuit motif, it is what is at stake in the trial.” (Lincoln, 114). As verse 13 says, “he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears” (16.13). As Jesus was with his Father to the point “that his words were to be considered God’s words”, vv. 14, 15, the Spirit is able to “take what is mine and declare it to you,” for “all that the Father has is mine.” By this claim, the Spirit glorifies Jesus.

It is important for you to see the relationship between verses 12-15 and 8-11. This is because the *Paraclete* works in and with the disciples in persecuting the world about the truth of the cause of Jesus. In this regard, the spirit has to give them insight into the future (16.13) and he will have to influence their memory thereby recalling what Jesus had told them (16.1-4). The essence of remembering what Jesus said will be for them to stay in the truth with calmness in spite of the opposition knowing that the world is already convicted as we shall now see.

### 3.3 The *Paraclete*: Judgement Function (16.5-11)

Verses 5-7 serve as introduction to verses 8-11. When Jesus was with them, the disciples did not need warning about future sufferings presumably because he would protect them (18.8-9). But now that he was going and their hearts were burdened with sorrow (16.6), he had to reassure them. Although the disciples will suffer persecution, they will not be fatherless (orphans) without protection from the world's injustice. The term *orphan*, which appears in 14.18 is important in understanding the function of the *paraclete* in our text. Holwerda argues, "In the Old Testament orphans have forensic connotation, and therefore in order to view it against a proper background it is necessary to speak about the righteousness of God in relation to those who are oppressed in Israel" (Holwerda, 38).

The departure of Jesus will be to the disciples' advantage. This is to fulfil the prophecy of Malachi 3.5 that the Messiah would be witness against those who oppress the fatherless, in this case the disciples. Jesus will send another Advocate for them (v.7).

One can see that even in these introductory verses, they are placed in the framework of juridical debate. The Jews, representing the cosmos are the accused and they are judged and convicted before the tribunal of God. This conviction is clearly seen in vv. 8-11 as we shall now see.

In verses 8-11, the prosecuting function of the *Paraclete* in the trial between God and the world becomes clear. "He is the defending counsel for the disciples but the prosecutor or accuser in regard to the world". Bultmann gets it right when he says, "The image that comes before the eyes is that of a lawsuit of cosmic dimension, taking place in the court of God. The world is accused, and the *Paraclete* is the prosecutor" (56162).

In line with this, Testament of Judah 20.5 cited by Lincoln has this to say, "The Spirit of truth testifies to all things and brings all accusations. He who has sinned is consumed in his heart and cannot raise his head to face the judge," (Lincoln, 117). This answers the question of the meaning of *elechein peri*, which is taken to be "to convict of." The rendering "to convict" is the meaning in this text because in John 8.46 and in our text where *elechein peri* is used, it means more than "to convince". It means to bring charge against", "to accuse", (Kim, 74). This meaning is also seen in Jude 15. The setting in which this verse occurs is the judgement when the Lord comes to pronounce judgement on the

ungodly. This is not a means to convince the world with the aim of leading it to repentance. Moreover, considering the general lawsuit motif that is prominent in John's Gospel, it is more convincing to conclude with Kim and Lincoln that *elechein* does connote conviction.

In continuation of the lawsuit in history the *Paraclete* will accuse and convict the world on the grounds of *hamartia*, (sin) *dikaiosyne*, (righteousness) and *krisis* (judgement). The reason for the world's conviction on these issues is set out.

As we have already seen the use of 'world' in the last unit of module two, it connotes different things in different context in the Gospel of John. However, the chief meaning is when it refers to sinful mankind that is cut away from God (3.19).

In interpreting the reasons, scholars are not of the same voice. Carson argues that there should be consistency in interpreting the three nouns:  
*hamartia*, *dikaiosyne* and *krisis*.

In a judicial process it would seem proper that when conviction occur the grounds for conviction would also be presented. Let us now see the reasons for the conviction as we explore the relationship between the above three nouns. It is clear from the text that sin refers to the sin of the world. The cosmos will therefore be convicted of sin because those who belong to it do not believe in Jesus who is the truth, the issue in this trial. This is important because for John unbelief is sin and it is enough reason for one to be condemned. So during his absence, although present with the Father in the *Paraclete* and his disciples, the *Paraclete* will continue to accuse the world of sin in his judgment function as found in our text.

As regards to *dikaiosyne*, the adjective *dikaios* (righteous) is seen two times in 5.30 and 7.24 in the framework of just judgement but the noun itself is not found in John's Gospel except here. Jesus has been proved right by his resurrection and ascension which constitutes his glorification, an event which is against those who reject him as the one sent by the Father as the righteous one; elsewhere also, Jesus' vindication as Son of God is ascribed to the Spirit; but also the part that the Spirit played in Jesus' resurrection and ascension to glory (Rom. 1.4; 8.11).

Holwerda views the scene right when he says, by convicting the world of this (Jesus') righteousness the *Paraclete* is at the same time convicting the world of its own unrighteousness. Because the world has condemned and rejected the Righteous One it stands in the position of rejecting that which God has approved as righteous. In the judicial process that takes place between Jesus and the world before God as Judge, the verdict has been given in favour of the righteousness of Jesus and therefore against the righteousness of the world (Holwerda, 57).

The *Paraclete* also "convicts" the world of its *krisis* (Judgment). Here the point is that the world's ruler stands condemned. As found in 5.24, judgment here is not a neutral term. The conviction of the world has taken place in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The casting out of Satan (12.31) means that he has lost the case. As such, the *Paraclete* convicts the cosmos of its sin, and its judgment based on the righteousness of Jesus.

As Carson points out that whether those in the world are convicted of their guilt or not do not seem to be the point here (Carson, 558). They may or may not be convicted (Franck, 60-61). But the focal point of his text is that whether or not the world is convicted, the fact remains the same, it is guilty.

When one looks back at the traditional Jewish eschatology, one agrees with Lincoln and Barrett that sin, righteousness and judgement were expected to be dealt with at the *eschaton*. It therefore, follows that by sentencing the cosmos on these matters in the present, the *Paraclete* sets the cosmos in the place it will take at the *eschaton* (Lincoln, 120; Barrett, 90).

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

In the Gospel of John, the *Paraclete* is an important term. This term is used in John in the court setting and connotes the notion of a legal counsel, lawyer or an advocate. The functions of the *Paraclete* here are intended to equip the disciples for participating actively in God's case against the cosmos. The rendering "advocate" therefore, fits well the texts of 16.8-11 and 12-15 and other *Paraclate* sayings in the Farewell Discourses.

The conflict between Jesus and the Jews, (the representative of the world) is conceived in forensic terms and pictured as a court process. By Jesus' lifting up he won the case against the world. This to him is not judgment but glorification and he became judge



and convicted the world. By this he bore witness to himself. The work of witnessing did not stop at his departure to the Father. Jesus' witness to himself was foundational. In order to continue with the work, he sent another *Paraclete* whose work will be to be in and with the disciples. He will cause them to remember what Jesus has told them so as to enable them stay with calmness in the truth as they engage the world in this lawsuit. As trial and victory are birds of the same feathers, their witness to the truth (Jesus) will have both rejection on the part of the sons of perdition (the world) and acceptance on the part of the elect (the new Community of Jesus). As the Spirit of truth, his defence and prosecution will be the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

## 5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have learnt the meaning of the Paraclete as the helper, spokesperson and lawyer etc. In the context of John's Gospel, He helps, defends the believers against the evil forces in the world. The Holy is the Spirit of Truth. He witnesses to the world about Jesus and defends them against the world in both his judgement as well as witnessing functions. Now let us try the assignment presented below:

## 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

- ✚ What do you understand by *Paraclete*?
- ✚ Discuss in detail the functions of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John
- ✚ What is the significance of the judgment function of the Holy Spirit?

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## **Unit 3 The Johannine use of the Old Testament**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

It is well known to scholars and laymen alike who read the Gospel of John that it is written with a theological purpose in mind. As he himself made it clear in 20.31 (see unit 2 of module 1 for details). In presenting the theological purpose, he employs different means and methods. One of the ways he does this is his use of Old Testament Scriptures. He makes Jesus stand different from Old

Testament figures. In this unit, you will be learning about this and other related matters pertaining to his use of the Old Testament.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. enumerate Old Testament figures that John compares Jesus with
2. state Jesus' relationship to Old Testament personalities
3. identify the context in which John uses the Old Testament in his Gospel.

## **3.0 Main Content 3.1 Jesus' Relationship to Old Testament Personalities**

### **3.1.1 The New Moses**

The writer of John's Gospel relates Jesus to Moses, the greatest Jewish prophet and comes out with the conclusion that Jesus is a new Moses. He indicated this in many passages in the Gospel.

In John 1.17, he made known to the fact that the law was given through Moses: the new dispensation brought grace and truth through Jesus. The comparison here is between the works and personality of Moses against the one who he revealed. Though Moses produced law, he did not originate it. It was given through him. It came from God. While Moses gave law, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Grace and Truth were divine attributes from God's revelation.

Morris detected a sense of the Deity of Jesus as against Moses earthly origin here when he said,

John may well be claiming accordingly that God's revelation of these attributes was wrongly ascribed to Moses. They were not revealed through him, but they came through Jesus. The association of truth with the Gospel revelation in Jesus Christ is clear in this verse, for in its more usual sense truth certainly came by Moses. But John's concern is with the whole way off salvation by grace as it was revealed and established in the ministry of Christ. Since it "came" through Christ, it points to his surpassing excellence.

If grace and truth revealed God before Israel, before and after the law, and Christ is identified as the one who gives grace and truth, then the proof is that Jesus Christ is God.

In the New Testament perspective, Christ fulfilled the law through proper interpretation. It finds its fulfilment in the love of God, through Christ. This love, central in the new dispensation, is made manifest and ours through the grace of God. So as Moses the law giver, was highly esteemed next to God among Israelites, Christ has surpassed Moses. He did not only interpret the law, he actually changed the laws in his emphatic statements in Matthew 5. According to the Jewish teachings any one who uttered anything in the law was subject to die by stoning. In the emphatic '*ego de lego*' (but I myself) statements, he gave new meanings and even new legal aspects of the law. In so doing, went beyond Moses (unchallenged) employing the divine authority of God and as God.

Therefore, if Moses was highly esteemed (John 6.31; 8.5; 9.28-29; 8.5253) almost next to God but died, Christ repealed Moses and surpassed in excellence. Though he also died, he rose again (John 20 and 21); he is surely God, beyond Moses.

In John 1.45, John reports the fact that Philip confessed the superiority of Jesus over Moses when he said, to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the prophets, wrote- Jesus of Nazareth ..." (KJV). Brown is of the opinion that this is another way that the Messiahship of Jesus was identified. He said, Philip identified Jesus as the prophet like Moses and Elijah, yet beyond the two highly esteemed figures- Jesus the Messiah (1979, 86).

In 5.46, Jesus himself confirmed the testimony of Philip when he said "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me." In the preceding verse, v.45, we have seen that Moses was not on their side for he wrote about Jesus in Deut 18.18-19 and they failed to believe what he wrote. As such, they failed to believe in Jesus, and stands condemned. They needed Jesus before they can have anything to do with the Father.

In 3.14, Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (Num 21.49), so must the Son of man be lifted up. The new Moses did not lift a serpent up, but he himself (Jesus) was lifted up on the cross in fulfilment of Numbers 21.4-9. Anyone who looks at Jesus in faith shall be eternally saved from the bite of the serpent, Satan.

John 6 like Exodus 16, the Old Moses gave manna in the wilderness to the people of God, the new Moses; Jesus gives eternal manna to his own who believes.

### **3.1.2 Jesus is Greater than Jacob/Israel**

Jesus' relationship to another Old Testament figure, Jacob/Israel is stressed in this verse, 1.51. John wrote that Jesus told Nathaniel that he will see heaven opened, the new Israel with angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man". Jesus in the context of verse 51 is more than a "sign" performer. Brown's contribution is significant as he said,

What is the exact point of this? A comparison with Jacob seems to be implied for although Jacob was the first to bear the name Israel (Gen 32.28-30), his dealings with Laban and with Esau marked him as a man of guile (Gen 37.35 ...) Thus in the Messianic days the true bearer of the name Israel will be one who is faithful to Yahweh and serves no other gods (Anchor Bible, 1979, 87).

This is made plain in verse 51 which tells us, he is the link between heaven and earth. The mission of Jesus as mediator is seen here. He is the stair case that enables angels to move back and forth between heaven and earth, between God and human beings. This picture is an allusion to Jacob's dream as seen in Genesis 28.12-13. You can read it.

This mission is accomplished when Jesus gave himself up on the cross and subsequently rose from the dead. By this act, the disciples had the focal point of his message, the message he told them while he was yet to die and ascend, "I am the way ...of salvation- the only one.

The next significant relationship that shows the greatness of Jesus over that of Jacob/Israel is seen in 4.12 where the Samaritan woman asked him in comparison with their father Jacob, "Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well ...?" This question brings out the importance of Jacob to the Samaritans. "The Samaritans claimed that they were descendants of Jacob by way of Ephraim and Manasseh, the Sons of Joseph. The Samaritans' view that Jacob was their father was thus not simply based on his having been one of the forefathers of all Israelites but specifically on this link to Joseph, the Son of Jacob." (Ngewa, 475). He, the great ancestor left his people with something important in this life; water. For Jesus to be greater than Jacob, therefore, he must produce water that is superior to the one given by Jacob.

Jesus who knows everyone's need knew the need of this Samaritan woman, which is spiritual. As such, a contrast is drawn between the water that this woman came to draw from the water that Jesus

was to give in order to be greater than Jacob as Ngewa further states,

- a. The water she came to draw was from Jacob's well (4.6),  
water she would get if she asked for it was given by Jesus (4.10).
- b. The water she came to draw was made available by her ancestor Jacob (4.12), but the water she would get if she asked was made available by God. It is the gift of God (4.10).
- c. The water she came to draw relieves thirst only for a time (4.13), but the water she would get if she asked was living water (4.10), which would give eternal life (4.14) (Ngewa, 66).

The Samaritan woman at last came to the realization that Jesus was not ordinary human being like Jacob. Jesus is greater than Jacob. Jesus is God who gives the living water, which is superior to the water from the well of Jacob. Anyone who drinks of it will have eternal life.

### **3.1.3 Jesus is Greater than Abraham**

Probably, the most momentous comparison is between Jesus and Abraham which occurs at 8.58 where Jesus proclaims, "Before Abraham was born, I am". This cannot be divorced from the immediate context in which it takes place. Chapter 8.31 ff tells us that people that were interacting with Jesus were challenged by him concerning the false security they claimed of being Abraham's children, they became antagonistic instead of carefully examining Jesus' statements.

They insulted Jesus twice in verses 48 and 52a where they said of Jesus as demon possessed. Their reasoning was based on the fact that Abraham had died. If even Abraham, their greatest ancestor died, how come that Jesus is talking about some people not dying (v. 52b). In addition, the prophets follow suit by denying – who were special people appointed by God to represent him. Yet they were no different from Abraham, they died too (v. 52). Moreover, Jesus to them was not greater than Abraham. As such, he must die too. No wonder they asked Jesus, "Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are" (8.53).

In reply to this, he made an incredible claim that John records in 8.58, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM"

(KJV). This translation brings out the Greek expression of the *ego eimi* – the ‘I am sayings’ in John’s Gospel. The combination of personal pronoun *ego* (I) with the verb to be *eimi* (I am), produce emphasis.

Brown interprets this “I myself” as divine name, “I AM” (1979, 367). *Eimi* refers to the one who exists. He already existed before Abraham was born. Only God was in existence before things were created including man. For Christ to declare of his existence before Abraham shows the omnipresence of God. Jesus was talking to the Jews of his eternal existence. As such, Jesus is greater than Abraham. They need to listen to him and believe. Unfortunately, the verses following indicate their negative reaction, against Jesus by picking stones to stone him (v. 59a).

### **3.1.4 Jesus is Greater than Isaiah**

The last comparison that John made in his use of Old Testament is that of Jesus and Prophet Isaiah. The glory which Isaiah sees in his temple vision (Isaiah 6.1-10) is the person of Jesus (John 12.41).

This reference from Isaiah by John is to show that Jesus is greater than Prophet Isaiah. For Isaiah’s prophecy was pointing to the coming of the Messiah, who came in person of Jesus. Yet the Jews of Jesus’ time rejected his claims, did not believe the signs he performed showing his messiahship and even plotted to kill him.

Isaiah was a great Prophet among them, yet the greatest Prophet, Jesus came but they could not believe him. The essence of this comparison also brings out the point of John- to see the unbelief of the Jews in Jesus and his mission.

## **3.2 John’s use of Old Testament: Direct Quotations and Allusions**

Our discussion of John’s use of Old Testament cannot be complete if we failed to discuss the direct quotations found in John’s Gospel. In examination of Old Testament quotations and allusions in the New Testament, Roger Nicole, “New Testament use of the Old” in *Revelation and the Bible* [ed. Carl f. Henry], states that there are about 250 of such citations in the New Testament thus: “94 from the Pentateuch, 99 from the Prophets, and 85 from the writings.” (p.138). Some scholars give higher number than Nicole’s.

Joseph A. Fitzmyer goes on to show that these quotations from the Old Testament are of different kinds. In his “The Use of Explicit



Old Testament quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament” in *New Testament Studies* 7 [1960-61] 305, give the following categories:

Eschatological quotation – that states a future promise or threat.

Modernization quotations – the Old Testament references to contemporary person or incident but the language is not clear to apply it to a new event.

Accommodation quotations – their original contexts are not considered deliberately in order to suit the writer’s purpose or situation

Historical quotations – the intent of the Old Testament passage is retained in the New Testament

In this subsection, you will learn the direct quotations from Old Testament in the Gospel of John under the four groups above.

### **3.2.1 Eschatological quotations:**

The eschatological quotation is seen in John 1.51 “You will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” It is taken from Genesis 28.12. This is a quotation that is realized within the context of salvation. See detail explanation in unit 1 of module 3.

### **3.2.2 Modernization quotations:**

These types of quotations are seen in the following verses; John 2.17 “Zeal for your house will consume me.” It is taken from Ps 69.9. John 10.34, “I have said you are gods.” It is seen in Ps. 82.6; John 12.13, “Hosanna! Behold is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel.” See Ps. 118.25-26; Zechariah 9.9 is quoted in John 12.15, “Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.” In John 12.38, we see, “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed”, which is taken from Isaiah 53.1. We see another quotation from Ps. 41.9 where John quotes, “He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me” in John 13.18. In Chapter 19.24 of John, we see yet another quotation in Ps. 22.18 thus, “They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.” Zechariah 12.10 is seen in John

19.37: “They will look on the one they have pierced.”

### **3.2.3 Accommodation quotations:**

In John 1.23 “I am the voice of one calling in the desert, “make straight the way for the Lord” is taken from Isaiah 40.3; John 6.45 is taken from Isaiah 54.13 thus: “They will all be taught by God”.

In John 12.40, we have “He has blinded their eyes and dreading their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn and I would heal them.” This is a quotation from Isaiah 6.10. Exodus 12.46 is seen in John 19.36, “Not one of his bones will be broken.” In this category, the context of the Old Testament passages is ignored by John in order to bring home his point in the story of Jesus.

### **3.2.4 Historical quotations:**

This category of quotation is found in John 6.31 only where it is quoted,

“He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” This quotation is taken from Ps. 78.24 and 105.40. The Old Testament context refers to God’s faithfulness of feeding his people unconditionally. In John, Jesus was urged to prove that he is greater than Moses if he is to be believed. They claimed that Moses gave the manna to the people.

In all these quotations and allusions, John applied Old Testament scriptures freely without being guided by the verbatim citations as required by modern writers. It is seen by the use of Old Testament that New Testament is the continuation of the Old Testament. It is the fulfilment of the Old Testament as well. Christ is the centre of both. As such, any passage that is relevant, that illustrates the person and work of Christ is used by John.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

The Johannine use of the Old Testament has brought to the knowledge of readers that Jesus is above all prominent figures like Moses, Abraham and Jacob and Isaac signifying his divinity. He is God and this qualifies him to save humanity from sin. As such, his use of Old Testament is not just for fancy. It has theological implication.




## **5.0 Summary**

You have learnt in this unit how the Gospel of John uses Old Testament scripture. He relates Jesus with Old Testament figures like Isaiah, Abraham, Jacob and Moses. His aim is to show Jesus is greater than them; for he was before them and gives what those figures were not able to do and fulfils what they said and represent.

You have also learnt different categorises of direct quotations and allusions in John. All show the free nature of John’s use of these quotations but most importantly, all these quotations prove that

New Testament was in the Old Testament conceived and Old Testament in the New Testament exposed.

## **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

-  Mention key Old Testament figures that John compares Jesus with.
-  State four categories of direct quotations of the Old Testament in John's Gospel
-  What is the significance of John's use of Old Testament?

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## **Unit 4 Eternal life in John's Gospel**

### **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
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  - 3.2 John's view of Life as Present
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- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
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## **1.0 Introduction**

This unit of module three deals with a topic that is at the heart of John. For John to have talked about the Deity of Jesus, Symbols, the dualism, the Holy Spirit, the Death and Resurrection of Jesus etc his focal point is to bring people to the saving knowledge of Christ. This course and unit therefore, is set to discuss eternal life as portrayed by John.

## **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this study, you should be able to:

1. Define ‘eternal life’
2. Indicate how eternal life is the focal point in John’s Gospel
3. Illustrate how John’s thought of eternal life is both present and  
Future.

## **3.0 Main Content**

### **3.1 The meaning of eternal life**

The term “life” in Greek is *zoe* which occurs thirty six times in John. The infinitive form is seen sixteen times, its compound verb form (*zoopeiein*) occurs three times. The phrase eternal life (*zoe aionios*) appears seventeen times in John’s Gospel, which has the same meaning as *zoe* (Bultmann TNDT).

This phrase is seen occurs in the Greek version of the Old Testament (LXX) in Daniel 12.2. In its usage here, it gives the idea of “life of the future age after the resurrection of the dead.” But “life” alone in the Old Testament refers to general well-being in this present dispensation. This is seen in longer years of life here on earth (Ps. 91.16); security of life here (Deut. 8.1); material prosperity (Deut 28.1ff) etc. One interesting idea about this phrase in the Old Testament is found in Ps. 110.11; Deut. 8.3 etc where these blessings that we get in this life for our wellbeing is enjoyed in relationship with God as seen in Deut. 30.15-20. Ladd adds, this feeling that life meant fellowship with God and the enjoyment of

the divine presence and blessings led to the conviction that even death could not destroy this relationship but, that somehow, the living God would enable his people to transcend death (p. 255).

### **3.2 John's View of Life as Present**

The writer of the Fourth Gospel looks at eternal life first of all as having present effect. In fact, his emphasis is to show men the way of life in this present experience which has forward looking into the future. For him, the life to come is already here present to anyone who believes. John 10.10 tells us the main purpose of Jesus' coming, "... I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 6.33 also testified to this claim that Jesus, "the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." If Jesus is called life, then it is not referring to a "cosmic power open to speculation," but he is life because he revealed God, fulfilling the divine commission. His words were words of the Father and are in itself eternal life (12.50).

We have also seen in John that *zoe* does not come through Jesus and his words, it is part and parcel of his person. Read 5.26. This is further illustrated when he said that he is the living bread who gives life (6.51 ff) and living water (4.10, 14). As such, his claim of being "life" is not a vague one (11.25; 14.6).

The question that needs to be asked is how is the eternal life now and here present? John's Gospel answers the question. It is present here and now through faith in the one that comes to give it. The Fourth Gospel makes it clear that this eternal life is present through faith in Jesus the revealer of God. Believers in Christ already have this eternal life as seen in 3.15 "that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life". This is repeated in verse 36; and in chapter six verses forty, forty-seven and in chapter twenty verse thirty-one.

Bultmann, et al rightly assert concerning this present aspect of the eternal life in their interpretation of John 17.22. They said,  
With his revelation he has already given glory (*doxa*) to his own (17.22).  
Hence the promises in the future tense do not refer to a later eschatological future but to the moment of decision when confronted by the word. He, who will believe, will live. (Bultmann, TNDT, 870).

It is also seen that eternal life is "present" in love. Gospel of John makes it clear in chapters 15.1-17 that those who have eternal life in this present dispensation abide in the life giver, Jesus Christ. By

abiding in him is to abide in love, which is a new commandment given to those that accept Jesus by faith (13.34; 15.12).

In other words, life must manifest itself to the outside world in love. It is through this love that life can be understood as the knowledge of God and his messenger. Jesus has clearly indicated in 17.3, “Now this is eternal life; that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” We shall come back to eternal life as knowledge of God later.

### **3.3 Eternal Life as Eschatological**

The other aspect of eternal life in the Johannine Gospel is that of the future existence after death. Jesus begins his teaching concerning this with the Jews who claimed to get life in the future age by studying the Scriptures (5.39) but forgot to accept Jesus who is life. John records many instances where Jesus speaks referring to eternal life as something at the eschaton. In 3.36, he said, “... whoever rejects the son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.” (NIV). This statement indicates the ultimate destiny of man; for unbelievers, they shall not have life everlasting.

Later in chapter 12.25, the eschatological life comes clearly to the fore in these words, “The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Why did Jesus Contradict common sense in this statement? The background clears the confusion. Loving one’s life is refusing going all the way with Jesus. The real life, eternal life is not for such people. After their death here on earth, they will meet yet another one (Rev. 20.14). Believers however, will gain eternal life even while they sleep (die). The resurrection will bring them to eternal bliss because of the eternal life they possess in the present. Dodd puts it in relation to Jewish understanding of eternal life thus,

The Fourth Evangelist alone has given it a form which obviously alludes to the Jewish antithesis of the two ages: he who hates his soul in the *olam haze* will keep it in the *olam haba*; and consequently, will possess *hayye haolam haba*.”

In Jesus dialogue with the Samaritan woman also brings out the eschatological aspect of eternal life. In John 4.14, he said, “But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Jesus concludes by making it clear that the eternal

life can be experienced at the eschaton as seen in 5.29 "... those who have done good will rise to live".

This future life will come to pass at the resurrection of the present body. John 6.40, 54 tell us that Jesus who is the giver of life, who died and rose again, will raise those that he has given eternal life. The one who believes in Jesus (has eternal life) in this present life will die but will be raised at the eschaton as predicted in 5.28,29, "the time is coming when all who are in their graves (those who die physically) will hear his voice and come out ... to the resurrection of life, and ... to the resurrection of judgement." It is further demonstrated in the raising up of Lazarus (11.44 ff).

In John's understanding of eternal life as we have examined above shows that eternal life has both present and future implications for the believers. As Ladd rightly observed, "that this life which is resident in Jesus is nothing less than the life of the age to come as illustrated by the frequent connection between the present reception of life and its future enjoyment." (p. 258).

### **3.4 The Nature of eternal life: Knowledge of God**

In John 17.3 as indicated above brings out what Dodd (Interpretation 49), and Ladd (A Theology, 259) called the nature of eternal life that requires our attention for discussion.

Knowledge in Greek background is used in different ways, philosophically; knowledge is the apprehension of ultimate reality. In Gnostic usage, "It is rather direct apprehension of God by the mind (*nous*), not by hard thinking but by direct intuition and inner illumination" (Ladd, 260). In other words, knowledge is not something that one possesses at birth, but is a gift of God, who illumines man. Ladd summarizes the Greek understanding of knowledge when he states, "He who knows his true nature will scorn his body and he will be able to ascend to God after death."

In the Old Testament understanding, knowledge goes beyond contemplation, it involves fellowship and relationship. As Ps. 1.6 states, "The Lord knows the way of the righteous." This implies that those outside of the chosen nation, Israel are not known by Him (Ps. 138.6). In other words, knowledge of man in respect of his creator implies obedience, response and fellowship with God. This knowledge is the ultimate goal in the life to come as Jeremiah states, "No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'know the LORD,' because they will all know me,

from the least of them to greatest, says the LORD ...” For the Old Testament therefore, knowledge means knowing the Lord, and knowing him is to be in his presence, being in his presence is having eternal life.

Johannine usage of the term knowledge is personalized. It is a relationship that is so intimate that the two involved in the relationship know each other well. This is seen in Jesus’ claim in 10.14-15 that he knows his own and his own knows him too. He relates this to his relationship with the Father, “... the Father knows me and I know the Father.” He knows that God is the one that sends him to do his mission and the Father is with him and him in God (10.38).

It should be noted that John’s understanding of knowledge is different from the Greek thought. For John, the knowledge of God is made possible through the flesh-for the word became flesh. Moreover, *nous* in the Greek thought is not the same with the *pneuma* in John in that *Pneuma* in John is the Holy Spirit of God present in the person of Jesus during his earthly mission and now present in believers as comforter and advocate who teaches believers things that were not taught by Jesus in order for them to have solid knowledge of the living Lord, Jesus. For John, this knowledge comes by faith not by thinking as it was the case with the Greek understanding of knowledge.

John’s understanding of knowledge as it relates to eternal life is in line with the Old Testament usage which is an eschatological blessing. If it is realized eschatology it has been brought to us in the person of Jesus. As such, it is present with believers and also future at the resurrection of the saints.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Eternal life is the central aspect of John’s theology. He begins with it by stating the essence of God becoming man – is to enable us know god and by knowing him, have faith so as to get eternal life, which has two dimensions; the present and the future. Thus, John’s treatment of eternal life cuts across the entire Gospel of John. In the next unit we shall be discussing Death and Resurrection which will be the basis of the eternal life.

#### **5.0 Summary**

In this unit, we looked at eternal life in John’s thought drawing insightful understanding of the concept both in the Greek thought



as well as the Old Testament. The dualistic treatment of the phrase in John was also analysed. How knowledge is not to be divorced from the eternal life also gets our attention. It is in fact the knowledge we have of Jesus and his work for us that gives the ground to have faith in him in order to have eternal life. Hope you had fun reading this unit. Let us now try the following exercises.

## 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise



Define

- a. “life”
- b. “eternal life”



Discuss how knowledge is related to eternal life.



Discuss this statement: “Eternal life is both present and future.”

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NIV – New International Version

## **Unit 5 Johannine Theology of Death and Resurrection**

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  - 3.2 Historical Fact of Jesus’ Death
  - 3.3 The Agony of Jesus
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  - 3.5 The Burial and Resurrection
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
- 7.0 References/Suggestions for Further Reading

### **1.0 Introduction**

When God created the world, death was not part of it. It came, according to the Genesis account, as a result of disobedience to God the creator by Adam and Eve (Gen. 3). Since then, death is something that occurs every day. As you see people die every day, everyone must die one day. The fact that all of us will die someday; it has become a problem to many because they do not know what happens after death. Is there a life after one dies? Or does it mean that when one dies that is the end of everything? The Scriptures tell us that there is life after death. The Gospel of John is no exception. In this unit therefore, we shall be learning Johannine Theology of Death and Resurrection.

### **2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- 1. Define what Death and Resurrection means
- 2. State the fact that Jesus actually died
- 4. Identify Jesus as the resurrection and life
- 5. Discuss the significance of Jesus’ death and Resurrection for

the believers

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Definition of the term “Death and Resurrection”.**

Definition 1: “Death”

Biologically it is said that at death, life ceases to exist and in a given period of time, the body (organism) starts to decompose (decay). The act of cessation of life in the body is called “death”. Oxford Dictionary simply put is as “end of life”. (p. 299)

Definition 2: “Resurrection”

According to Oxford Dictionary, Resurrection is “to bring back something into use; to bring somebody back to Life.” In Christian belief, “the event or time when Jesus became alive again three days after his death” is called resurrection. As such, this unit is looking at the theology of the cessation of life in the body of Jesus (death) and coming into live again (resurrection) of Jesus.

#### **3.2 The Historicity of Jesus’ Death**

Jesus lived at a point in this life as a human being and died at a point in time is a fact not fiction; that his type of death was by crucifixion. A secular Jewish historian, Josephus in the *Jewish War* has the account of the death of Jesus on the cross. The four Gospels (Matthew to John) also give account of his death. You can read Mk. 15.42; Matt. 27.62; Luke. 23.54 and John 19.31. The essence of these references is to prove that Jesus actually died.

#### **3.4 The Death of Jesus – The Actual death**

The question that people ask concerning the death of Jesus is Did Jesus actually dies? For Paulus Brause, a German Scholar, the answer to this question is no. Jesus did not die! In his theory as recorded in Berkhof’s *Systematic Theology*, Jesus did not die. He claimed that those who were punished by crucifixion normally did not die shortly after their crucifixion. He asserts that this kind of death was a painful and prolonged one. So he questioned, “How can Jesus die on the cross in that short period of time? He states that Jesus did not actually die on the cross for the loud cry he made on the cross. The cry showed that his strength was far from

being exhausted. His death was only a death like trance; he was swooned (p. 348).

In refutation of this theory and other like-minded views, John tells us that Jesus actually died. John tells us in John 19.25-27, of those who were present when Jesus died including his name (the writer of the Gospel) as an eyewitness to the death of Jesus. Not just an eye witness, but Jesus gave him the charge to look after Mary, the mother of Jesus and vice versa.

To be sure of Jesus' death, one of the soldiers "pierced Jesus' side "with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water" (19.34). This was in fulfilment of Zechariah 12.10 as John indicates in v. 37 "they shall look on him whom they pierced." The flow of blood was further confirmation of John's understanding that Jesus is the Pascal Lamb.

Significance of his death: The blood was for the cleansing of humanity's sins- anyone who believes. Jesus by his death and piecing of the sword- flow of blood is the perfect fulfilment of the Old Testament sacrifices including the Pascal Lamb. As Ngewa rightly said,

Just as the Jewish people had toe at the flesh of the blameless Passover Lamb, so also everyone who wants one-and-for-all salvation must 'eat the flesh of the son of man' (6.53-54). Not literally but mystically and spiritually, Jesus is to be 'eaten' [taken into oneself] in totality, both his flesh eaten and his blood drunk (6.54). The believer is to take Jesus completely to himself as saviour and Lord. (p. 357).

John now tells us the story of how he was buried and resurrected (19:38 ff). You can read the account of his burial from John 19.38-42.

#### Significance of the Burial of Jesus

The records John has graphically put forward as you have read from the above passage is to prove the reality of Jesus' death, a fact that Romans also ratified who were expert at knowing the symptoms of death (Mk 15.44).

In these records, John has dealt with the Docetists in his day who said that Jesus was not truly human and also denied the

genuineness of his death. Their understanding arose from their dualistic philosophical world-view, which sees all matter as evil and spirit, 'good'. As such, they could not understand why Jesus is human. The idea of incarnation was foreign to them. For God to unite with matter and that God dies was philosophically impossible and unthinkable. Consequently, they denied the death of Jesus on the Cross, but Jesus experienced full reality of death as Milne observed,

He enters into the full reality of death, not merely walking with us right up to the door only to pull back at the final second, leaving us to walk the dark valley on our own. He comes all the way with us right into the grey, after-death world of funeral parlours and the making of arrangements for the disposition of the body, the world of strained faces his place within the world of the receding past where death's destructive power is so real and irreversible, dead ... buried...gone (p.286).

But is that the end of everything? Let us move on and see.

### **3.5 The Resurrection of Jesus (20.1-31)**

The resurrection of Jesus has been a problem to many. History has shown that different people came out with different theories denying the resurrection of Jesus such as swoon theory as already discussed above; Hallucination theory (Osborne, *Resurrection Narrative*, 1984); theft theory (McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*); Wrong tomb theory, (Pieters, *the Facts and the Mysteries of the Christian Faith*, 1933); read the detail discussion of each theory.

John tells us that "on the first day of the week" (Sunday), Mary Magdalene went to the tomb where Jesus had been laid (John 20.1). She was with others as we can see in the first-person plural of v. 2b "we do not know ..." Mark confirms this when he tells us that those who accompany her were "Mary the mother of James, and Salome" (Mk 16.1).

Their mission was not to see whether or not Jesus' body was still there, but "that they might come and anoint him" (Jesus' body).

The Empty tomb as a proof of Jesus' Resurrection: But the unthinkable happened. John tells us, Mary Magdalene "saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb" (20.1). She "ran and

came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple ‘whom Jesus loved’ and narrated what she and her companions had seen.

John 20.3-7 gives the account of the response of these two disciples as they rush to the tomb and confirmed who Mary Magdalene said. In verse 9, John states, “yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.” No doubt John is thinking of passages such as Ps. 16.9-11, and the whole Old Testament witness to the triumph of the Messiah and the eternity of his reign.

In John 20.10-18, the detail account of what transpired is given you are to read it.

The displaced stone, the vacant tomb, the empty grave clothes were the eloquent proof that Jesus had overcome death and had left imprint on the material world for the pragmatic proofs that the Son of Man had gone and men’s effort could not stop the plan of God.

### The Physical Appearance of Jesus Christ

For John to prove beyond any reasonable doubt, he narrated the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ to his disciples beginning with Mary Magdalene.

According to John, Mary Magdalene was the first woman who experienced the appearance of the risen Lord as she was in the garden (v.16).

The second appearance recorded in John is when the disciples were in a room for the fear of the Jews on same day – the first day of the week (v. 19).

The third appearance in John is found in 20.26-27 where Thomas insisted that he must see for himself before believing. Eight days later, Jesus came and addressed Thomas directly – showing him his physical scars as proof of his resurrection (v. 27). Thomas response confirmed his resurrection.

Other appearances occurred in Galilee and are called the Galilean appearances. Here he appeared to seven of the Disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (21.1). Other instances are recorded by the Synoptists.

These manifestations of Jesus to his disciples and many other people convinced the disciples of the reality of bodily resurrection of the Lord because he showed himself to them his hands, feet and

the very imprints of his crucifixion and they believed that he was not a ghost. “The vestige of doubt was removed, the disciples became fully prepared to become witnesses of the resurrection and proclaim to all that “the Lord is risen indeed.” (Hoeksema, Herman, 17).

#### The Prediction of Jesus Christ as Proof of his Resurrection

We have seen on an number of occasions where Jesus predicted his death as well as his resurrection. The first instance is in John 2.19 where he responded to officials of custodian “destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days”. He was talking of the temple of his body. Even the disciples did not understand this until when they recalled at his resurrection. The Synoptics recorded many others that proof that the resurrection of Jesus was real, hence his prediction.

Another important proof to note is his claim that he is the resurrection and life in John 11 at the death of Lazarus. He demonstrated it there (Jn 11) and now he finally demonstrated with himself dying and coming back to life.

Significance of the resurrection: The resurrection of is symbolic of our eternal redemption. Christ liberated us from the hands of death.

He has re-united us with God our Father. Filson confirms this rightly when he said,

This miracle showed that Jesus is the Resurrection and the life, able to raise the dead and give them life. It was a sign to those of faith that the son of God not only gives life to all at creation and sustains life in all men of every generation, but also redeems men from sin now and will raise them from the dead at the last day. To all who believe, he gives eternal life now and, in the age, to come (Filson, 96).

#### **4.0 Conclusion**




It is clear that death is foreign to the creation of God. It came as a result of disobedience to God the creator. God became man in order to die and resurrect to give humankind the hope of living with his creator once again forever. He came, died, and rose again. John has recorded many proofs both for the death and resurrection of the incarnate God- Jesus which demands faith in him from mankind.

## 5.0 Summary

In this unit you have learnt that

- \* Death is something we see in daily experience
- \* That some people denied the death and resurrection of Jesus
- \* That Jesus' proofs of the resurrection are many
- \* His resurrection assures us of our resurrection at the end of this life
- \* His resurrection gives us the work of witnessing.

## 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

-  Define the following terms:
  - a. Death
  - b. Resurrection
-  Discuss the significance of Jesus' death and Resurrection for the believers.
-  Defend against the claim that Jesus did not die and resurrect.

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## **UNIT 6 Johannine Expression of “Jesus as the Light of the World”**

### **Content**




- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes
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  - 3.1 Johannine Expression of “Jesus as the Light of the World”
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### **1.0 Introduction**

This section introduces the witness of the light, describes rejection of the light by those who refused to receive him, and proclaims blessing on those who did receive him. The identification of John the Baptist with the voice crying in the wilderness of Isaiah 40:3 connects this light with the presence of God himself.

## 2.0 Intended Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

-  Ascertain John's usage of the metaphor, "Jesus as the Light of the world"
-  Describe the allusion of "Jesus as the Light of the world" in OT
-  Understand the benefits of Jesus as the Light of the world

## 3.0 Main Contents

### 3.1 Johannine Expression of "Jesus as the Light of the World"

Scholars have a broad diversity of opinions on the meaning of Gospel John in general and the light metaphor in particular. We will briefly survey the views of Augustine, Aquinas and Calvin in the early period. In the modern period, we will look at views within the History of Religions school, represented by Bultmann, Dodd and Haenchen, followed by the Jewish Background school, represented by Beasley-Murray, Carson and Bauckham. Early Pre-critical studies of the light in John's Gospel follow the expected pattern of general historical trends in biblical studies. The question of authorship is far in the background. Textual criticism is less of a pressing concern.

One highlight of leading scholars such as Augustine, Aquinas and Calvin is to examine the text consistent with systematic doctrinal categories in light of other texts in the Bible. For these three, light is handled as a metaphor for a work of Christ which lightens mankind's darkened reason and wisdom. Augustine is concerned to argue against a literalistic impression that Jesus is being claimed in God John to be actual light or even the sun itself. He is not really "that sun which by its rising and background causes the day" (Augustine 1888). but rather is "the Light of wisdom." Augustine goes on to draw out numerous rudiments of the metaphor. He likens how the sun can be used for defining direction to how Jesus demonstrates the way that a man should live. He likewise links Jesus's "I am the light of the world" saying to healing the eyes of the blind, making a similarity between physical healing of blindness and illumination. The light of Jesus is in some way a medication for spiritual blindness: "For the Lord gives light to the blind. So, we, brethren, having the eye-salve of faith, are now educated" (Augustine 1888). Equally, in clarifying the meaning of Jesus's claim to be the light of the world, Thomas Aquinas contends against a literalistic view of Jesus as sensible light: For this physical sun is a light which can be perceived by sense. Therefore, it is not the highest light, which brainpower alone grips, and which is the comprehensible light distinctive of the rational creature. . . . Intellectual light makes the intellect to recognize, because whatsoever light is in the rational creature is all consequent from that supreme light (Aquinas 1998). Physical light from the sun which empowers perception of the physical world is a lower order than intellectual light which empowers knowledge of spiritual things. The light of rationality in humanity is obtained from the supreme light which came in the world in Jesus. The principal metaphorical portion he finds in 8:12 is that light brands spiritual/intellectual things comprehensible. In some way Jesus is the source of man's rationality and also is the light by which reason can function. Remarking on the Preface, he finds that spiritual light can similarly dissipate the darkness of misery and devils, as well as ignorance (Aquinas 1998). This augments the element that light ousts many types of darkness. Calvin advances this thought more, speaking

of a spiritual blindness that distresses the human race. Unfolding how light shines in the darkness, he clarifies that mankind's moral reason is impaired but not completely destroyed: "this light of reason is so overwhelmed by clouds of darkness that it no longer shines forth to any good effect" (Calvin, Institutes 1845). Jesus is the spring of knowledge and wisdom so he is able to reinstate these to man. He is christened the light of the world for, "since we are all blind by nature, a therapy is presented, by which we may be set free and liberated from darkness and made participants of the true light" (Calvin, Comm Calvin's foremost concern in the passages on light seems to be to determine man's moral and intellectual blindness which places him in need of radiance from God. These methods recommend numerous elements of the metaphor as used in John's Gospel and in the Bible commonly. These three early scholars make several acquaintances from John's Gospel to the way light is used as a metaphor in Psalms and the Synoptic Gospels. The metaphorical rudiments they realize and map onto Jesus comprise:

- ✚ Light shows which way to go.
- ✚ Light is needed for eyes to see.
- ✚ Light enables reason.
- ✚ Light dispels darkness.
- ✚ Light can be hidden by clouds but not destroyed.

Modern In the modern period, it is helpful to make a broad distinction between studies of GJohn which take a History of Religions approach versus those which take a Jewish Background approach. We will look at each one in turn.

George R. Beasley-Murray (1999) realizes Christology as John's prime theological concern. Gospel of John uses many titles to Jesus, as well as the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings, with their elementary OT connotation unbroken, but then enlarged, "lifted to a new plane." He portrays Jesus as the mediator in creation, revelation and salvation, beginning with the Preamble. Light is one way he expresses these characteristics of mediation. As in Matthew, John's Gospel refers to many OT Christological texts, but often in a typological manner. Typological fulfillment is the principal way the OT manifests in this Gospel. Jesus is revealed to be the last Moses, the true bread, water and light from the desert, and the accomplishment of the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication. The Evangelist tells the story of Jesus in a way that determinedly and dependably echoes these great OT themes. Parallels can be made to Hellenistic imagery and language, but this should be done while giving suitable weight to the vibrant and irresistible impact of the OT upon the book. The Light metaphor subsidizes unswervingly to the guiding archetype of John's Christology, showing Jesus to be the mediator who completely epitomizes the Father to humanity. In the context of the Prologue with its clear references to creation ("In the beginning"), the Light denotes the light of creation whereas signifying that a new creation is happening with the coming of the λόγος. He goes on to depict that since it originates from the preexistent λόγος, this light has been shining, and stays to shine (φαίνειν), in the darkness. The darkness has not gripped, understood or overawed it, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν, denotating that the "truth of the revelation" has not been recognized and received. This light now shines even sunnier through the incarnation, the resurrection, and into the age of the church through the existence of the Holy

Spirit. Through unfolding Jesus as the light, John displays him to be the foundation in addition to the one who fulfills the work of God in creating, making himself identified, and saving humanity: The advent of the incarnate One is set regarding all aforementioned revelatory and redeeming acts of God as their consummation and perfection. . . . The Logos is the foundation of all life and light in the world. In this manner, the Preamble sets out a grand vision and clarification of the story which shadows. Beasley-Murray (1999) positions the inordinate assertion “I am the light of the world” in 8:12 within the context of the Feast of Tabernacles in 7:37-38.<sup>42</sup> articulated during the jubilee, this assertion was made in accordance with the lamp-lighting ritual which celebrated the pillar of fire which had directed the Israelites out of Egypt: In the desert wanderings, the presence of the Lord with his people was revealed in the Shekinah cloud, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night which saved them from destroyers (Exod 14:19-25) and guided them through the wilderness to the promised land. Jesus’s declaration to be this light, jointly with the call to come after him as the ancient Hebrews had followed the pillar of light in the wilderness, has a vigorous consequence on his listeners. The Pharisees recognize his reference and object, signifying that “it belongs to the function of the Light to discriminate and to judge.” D. A. Carson (1991) treading on the same path with Beasley-Murray on John’s Gospel theology, sources, and use of metaphors. Copying is more probable in the track from Christianity to Gnosticism based on dating and other factors, and the apparently Hellenistic language can be best enlightened by John’s determined choices as a minister to the Jewish diaspora. Much of his vocabulary, as well as his use of light, has a “universal religious appeal” that supports him to influence his listeners. For this cause, it is not appropriate to merely review equivalents with terms discovered in several religious sources. As an alternative, the “conceptual affinities” must be likened to determine what the terms mean for the writer in the setting of the work.

In several of John’s Gospel references to OT people and themes, the metaphor is used to display that Jesus is their fulfillment or replacement: temple, shepherd, word, life and light find their accomplishment in Jesus. In Jewish works, light and life were connected with wisdom and Torah. This metaphor is transformed in John’s Gospel, where light and life are rather associated with “Christ, the Word.” In Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) dialect we might say that John transforms Wisdom is Light and TORAH is Light into Christ the Word is Light. In 1:4, light is connected to creation, seeming to mean that the Word has a self-existing life which was given out at some way in creation so as to be the light of mankind. The emphasis of light is more on salvation: “the ‘light’ is revelation which people may receive in active faith and be saved” (Carson 1991).

Bauckham categorizes the first chapter of Genesis and numerous Messianic prophecies in Isaiah as “the reproductive bases of the light and darkness imagery in the Gospel.” By connecting the Word coming into the world with creation, John claims that the light which shone upon creation at the beginning is “the same light that has come into the world with the incarnation of the Word.” Likewise, directing back to the Isaiah prophecies, the light/darkness dualism expounds a substantial theme in John’s Gospel: “a great light coming in the world, shining in the darkness of

the world, giving light to all people, so that they may come out of the darkness into the light and be able to walk in the light instead of stumbling in the darkness.” Bultmann’s understanding into what he calls a “dualism of decision” is accurate. When the light comes into a world occupied with darkness, the alteration of state of affairs “requires people either to live in it and walk by it, or to stay in the darkness.” These choices lead to a continuing conflict between light and darkness. Beasley-Murray, Carson and Bauckham discover the ensuing rudiments of Light in John’s Gospel:

- ✚ Light dispels darkness
- ✚ A person can walk in light or stay in darkness
- ✚ Light appears as the beginning of creation
- ✚ Light shines in the darkness
- ✚ Light is not overcome by darkness
- ✚ Light reveals things
- ✚ Light brings about discrimination between things
- ✚ Light guides through the wilderness
- ✚ Light saves one from enemies
- ✚ A person may be saved by following light
- ✚ Light comes into the world
- ✚ Light shines on all people
- ✚ A person will stumble if they do not walk in the light

There are three substantial uses of light as a metaphor associated to Jesus: the introduction, the discourses in chapter 3, and the “light of the world” declaration with its instant linking to the healing of the man born blind. In John’s Gospel metaphors are built upon the existing God is Light and the Agent of salvation is Light. The Prologue (John 1:4-9, 18) The applicable text in the preamble consist of the overview of the Word who is light and life in verses 4-9 and the related verse 18 which speaks of him being the only one to ever see God, and who now makes him known.

### 3.2 Textual Consideration, John 1:4-9

4 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων· 5 καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν. 6 Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος, ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ, ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης· 7 οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ. οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖνος τὸ φῶς, ἀλλ’ ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός. 9 Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. 18 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

The preface is obviously a prudently fashioned work with literary movement, recurrent themes, and a clear determination. Many submit that verses 1-5 signify a prevailing hymn which the author merged to commence his book (Beasley-Murray 1999). Whether these segments were brought in from existing sources or are the author’s own formation is uncertain and perchance unconfirmed. Notwithstanding, it is obvious that the book unfastens with a hymn-like quality, using poetic forms to expound divine truths. Also, verses 14-18 might be resultant from a pre-existing church

revelation of belief in Jesus. The passage works within the preface as a kind of confession of faith, specifying the core principles which the author wishes readers to trust. In both cases, the scrutiny of the use of Light within John's Gospel as a finished work is unaffected by the author's imaginable use of sources. If the passages were certainly drawn from previous Christian sources, this would merely be another sign that the metaphor was in use previous to John's Gospel. The simple present tense of the verb φαίνει in verse 5 is astounding as it does not tie the tense of the adjacent verses, which speak of what occurred before creation (the Word who was with God) and of his past intercession of the act of creation. The tense designates an action which is continuing, without reference to when it started or when it may finish. Consistent with Beasley-Murray (1999), the shining of this light consist of the scope of history: The light of the Logos displayed in the original darkness at creation, and sustained amid the darkness of fallen man; it stand out with superior intelligence in the glory of the Incarnate One; and it gleams on in the period of the Resurrection, which is the time of the Paraclete. This line of the hymn consequently bonds together the distant past, all the way to creation and feasibly before, with the time of Jesus's work, and into the present day of the writer. The verb οὐ κατέλαβεν in the linked clauses is in the aorist tense, and likewise designates that all over all this time that the light has been shining, the darkness has not clutched the light. The verb can entail grasped, understood, or overcome. All three denotations can possibly fit the meaning of the passage.

This passage (John 1) is rich with allusions to OT texts. The primary allusion is to the creation account in Genesis. The opening words of the book, Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, refer directly to the opening of Genesis, where Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός. Then the passage speaks about the Word's participation in creation. The inference is that the divine Word was a mediator of the acts of creation designated in Genesis 1. "In him was life," which may be unfolding the source of the life that was breathed into man when he was created out of dust in Genesis 2. "This life was the light of men"—a interested blend of metaphors. The reference of light in the context of an account of creation fetches to mind the light that unexpectedly became present at the spoken word of God in Genesis 1:3. In both Genesis 1 and John 1, light shines into the darkness. But notwithstanding the adjacent networks between John 1:1-5 and Genesis 1, the Genesis account in no way finishes the meaning of Light in John 1. Much more is occurring here than a simple indicator back to creation. John the Baptist is foremost declared in 1:6-8 as a man sent by God to testify about the light. In verse 23 he informs the priests and Levites that he is fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40:1-9, "A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight the paths of our God.'" This prophecy announces a coming day when Jerusalem's iniquity will be forgiven and God will draw near, unfolding his glory and redemption to all people. The messenger is termed in Isaiah 40:9 a "herald of good news" (εὐαγγελιζόμενος) who is to declare to the towns of Jerusalem the coming of God himself to them, "See, your God!" (Ἴδου ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν). Since John the Baptist is sent from God "to bear witness about the light" (1:7), the apostle is making a link between this light and the presence, glory and salvation of God promised in Isaiah 40. This connection is underscored with John the Baptist's introduction of Jesus in John's Gospel 1:29, "Behold (Ἴδε) the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." In framework, this seems to be the

accomplishment of the messenger's calling to declare the coming of God to Jerusalem. Verse 9 speaks of "the true light, which gives light to everyone." This could be a reference back to Isaiah 49:6, talking about the Servant: "I have made you a light of nations, that you may be for salvation to the end of the earth." The link is not firm on its own purely from the preamble. But in milieu of the whole of John's Gospel, it is rather probable that the author is making a proof of identity of the light he pronounces here with the servant of Isaiah 49:1-7 who is sent to reinstate Israel and to bring salvation to all the earth. Verse 18 states that no one has ever seen God. This could be drawing on the experience of Moses when he asked to see God's face. God replied: You shall not be able to see my face. For a person shall never see my face and live (Exod 33:20). The idea here is that the Word is superior to even Moses, able to reveal truth about the Father because he is the only one who has seen his face.

The metaphorical use of light commences right at the inaugural of the Preface to John's Gospel in unification with the portrayal of an eternal Word who has life and light in himself. The metaphor's placement in the introduction is significant to keep in mind for an appropriate analysis of its meaning. Within the framework of the book as a whole, the preamble offers a prologue to the story of Jesus from a divine viewpoint with actually cosmic scope. This viewpoint begins even before creation with the pre-existent Word, who is labeled with lofty language and extensive use of metaphor. A sense of anticipation builds throughout the first chapter as John the Baptist is presented as a harbinger and witness of this Word/Life/Light who has become flesh. Then, the emphasis narrows to a historical moment, as John the Baptist introduces his own disciples, and the reader, to Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God" The apostle's Jewish readers would have caught the reference in John the Baptist's assertion to the herald announcing the coming of God to redeem Jerusalem in Isaiah 40. This literary movement suggests that the author's opening statement is meant to provide the theological interpretation of the story of Jesus that is about to follow. He involves his audience with broad claims that open many questions. Who is this man? What might it entail that he is termed "the light of men?" In what ways is he to be identified with God? What proof backs up these declarations? Readers will imagine the story that shadows to elucidate and determine the lofty statements made about Jesus. Certainly, the flow of narrative and later statements about Jesus in John's Gospel do fill out the metaphorical assertions made in the prologue. The book works together as a whole to present Jesus as the light (and Word, life, shepherd, bread and water) of the world. This is done in service of the apostle's specified purpose, "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31).

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this witness of which John speaks is self-authenticating. The Preamble uses the figure of light, and calls Jesus "the light of the world," a metaphor which He used in controversy with His enemies. "I," He said, "am the light of the world: he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." The instant reaction of the Pharisees was, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true" (John 8:12-13). Light, nevertheless, needs no authentication; it confirms itself. Nobody needs to label or to describe light; it speaks for itself.

In the same way the authenticity of Christ makes its effect on human life and verifies His claims by the transformation that it produces on all that He affects. The risen Christ is His own best witness, and He authorizes the subordinate witnesses that support His claims.

### **5.0 Summary**

However, whether men will see or not, Christ is the true sun and the Light of the World. There is no light for sinners except in the Lord Jesus. The True Light That Lights Every Man There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. God sent John the Baptist to testify about the coming of Christ into the world, yet many of the religious elect did not receive his testimony. John was not the light; he came as a witness to the Light of Christ.

### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

- ✚ Describe Augustine's analogy on Jesus as the Light of the World
- ✚ Explain Johannine metaphor of Jesus as the Light of the World
- ✚ What do you understand by the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings in John's Gospel?
- ✚ Discuss Genesis 1 and John 1, in relation to, "light shines into the darkness"

### **7.0 Reference /Further Readings**

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