

Final Summary of the Gospel of John

Overview

We have repeatedly observed three features of John's gospel that we should remember.

- Its internal structure is built on the interplay between the Lord's own place and his own people.
- Looking back, it knows the synoptic tradition, and extends and supplements it.
- Looking forward, it anticipates Paul's teaching.

Each of these will leave us with a practical lesson.

The Geographical Key

Key, 11-12. Note the shift in gender of the adjective “his own.”

He came unto his own (place).--The adjective is neuter, and in this gender, with “unto,” it serves as an idiom meaning “to his own place,” cf. French “chez lui.” The Greek expression is often translated “to his home” or such like in our Bible (Esther 5:10; 6:12; John 16:32; 19:27; Acts 21:6). Ps 132 is an excellent summary of the notion that Jerusalem was the particular property of the Messiah.

The rest of this verse, and the next, contrast two responses that he experienced as “he came unto his own things.”

and his own (people) received him not.--Those whom he found at home did not welcome him.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.--But there were those who did welcome him. The contrast with “his own” suggests that John will show us these people away from the Lord's own place, outside of his own people.

In the following table, the alignment of the “location” shows whether the Lord is in his own place (right) or not (left).

Episode	Location	Received Him Not	Received Him
1:1-18, Prologue			John the Baptist
1:19-51, Calling the Disciples	Judaea (28) & Galilee		Disciples
2:1-12, Wedding at Cana	Galilee		Disciples
2:13-22, Cleansing the Temple	Jerusalem	Priests	
2:23-3:21, The New Birth	Jerusalem		Many; Nicodemus
3:22-36, The Baptist's final testimony	Judea		John the Baptist
4:1-42, Woman at the Well	Samaria		Samaritan Woman
4:43-54, Nobleman's son	Galilee		Nobleman
5, Healing at Bethesda	Jerusalem	Jewish rulers	Lame man
6, Bread of Life	Galilee	Jews	People
7:1-10:38, Tabernacles-Dedication	Jerusalem	Jewish rulers	Blind man; people
10:39-11:16 Withdrawal	Beyond Jordan		Many
11:17-46, Lazarus Raised	Bethany	Jewish rulers	Mary, Martha

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Episode	Location	Received Him Not	Received Him
11:47-53, Caiaphas' Prophecy	Jerusalem	Jewish rulers	
11:54, Withdrawal	Ephraim		Disciples
11:55-57, Command to Arrest	Jerusalem	Jewish Rulers	
12:1-11, Mary anoints Jesus	Bethany		Mary
12:12-44, Triumphal Entry	Jerusalem	Jewish rulers	People, Greeks
13-17, Farewell	Jerusalem	Judas	Disciples
18:1-11, Betrayal	Across Kidron	Jewish and Roman officers	
18:12-19:42, Trial, Crucifixion, Burial	Jerusalem	Jewish and Roman rulers; Peter	Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea
20, Resurrection	Jerusalem		Disciples inc. Thomas
21, Final Charge	Galilee		Disciples inc. Peter

Lesson

This structure is a warning against apostasy. In our study of Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11), we heard the Lord's rebuke of those "who say that they are Jews, and are not" (Rev 2:9; cf. 3:9). He accuses them of blasphemy because they take the Lord's name in vain, and styles their assembly "the synagogue of Satan." Just being in the holy city, Jerusalem, and serving in the temple does not make someone a Jew.

Similarly, just being in a church does not make someone a Christian. There are those today "who say that they are Christians, and are not." Their blasphemy is just as abhorrent to God as was that of the Jews who rejected the Lord. As then, so today, the assemblies of those who take the Lord's name in vain are ruled by Satan, not Christ.

John's Echoes of the Synoptics

John shows his knowledge of the synoptic tradition in three ways.

Repetition of Common Sayings

Three of the Lord's sayings in John are also recorded in the synoptics, though in different contexts. Any teacher has favorite aphorisms that come up repeatedly, and the repetition of these in different settings shows how common they were in the Lord's teaching, and thus how important they are.

John	Verse	Synoptics	Lesson
12:25	He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.	Matt 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33	Our relation to ourselves : discipline and self-denial lead to ultimate fulfillment.
13:16; 15:20	Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.	Matt 10:24; Luke 6:40	Our relation to the Lord : obedience and imitation.
12:44-48; 13:20	Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.	Matt 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48; 10:16	Our relation to the world : represent the Lord.

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All three of the parallels to Matthew are in Matt 10, the Lord's missionary discourse, where he sends the disciples out “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (v. 6). John may pay special attention to this discourse because it mirrors his own interest in how the Lord was rejected by the Jewish establishment, but received by those on the fringes. However, in Matt the Lord instructs the disciples (v. 5), “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not.” John notes the Lord's involvement with Samaritans (ch. 4) and Greeks (ch. 12), and records his teaching (ch. 10) that he has other sheep “not of this fold.”

Shared Miracles

In common with the synoptics, he reports the foundational truth of the resurrection, and the feeding of the 5000, each with a supplementary miracle (the ascension; walking on the water).

Supplementary Episodes

More often, John does not repeat the Synoptics, but rather supplements them. Throughout our study, we noted at least sixteen places where he records some episode or saying of the Lord that corresponds to a synoptic parallel not directly repeated in John. We can organize these in four categories, arranged in a matrix: John's record of the Lord's {events, words} supplement the Synoptics {events, words}. Here are a few examples:

Events supplement events

He echoes several miracles, as if to say, “You're read of the miracles that the Lord did. He did lots more of the same kind.”

- 4:46, healing of official's son, cf. healing of Centurion's son in Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10
- 5, healing of paralytic at Bethesda, is similar in many respects to the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum reported in all three synoptics (Mt 9:1-8; Mk 2:1-12; Lk 5:17-26).
- 9, healing of blind man with spittle, is reminiscent of Mk 7:33 and 8:23
- 11, the raising of Lazarus, cf. the son of the widow of Nain in Luke 7, or Jairus' daughter in Mt 9, Mk 5, Lk 8
- 21, the miraculous catch of fish, cf. Lk 5

He omits the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, but adds a description of the preliminary hearing before Annas, ch. 18.

Words supplement events

He records teaching that provides further depth for events in the synoptics:

- 6, the bread of life discourse, supplements the synoptics' records of the institution of the Lord's Supper, and also their record of the feeding of the 5000.

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Events supplement words

He records an event that illustrates a teaching recorded in the synoptics:

- He omits the analysis of Pharisaical hypocrisy in Matt 23, but gives the crowning example of it in 18:28 (refusal to enter the judgment hall lest they should be defiled).

Words supplement words

He records teaching that complements synoptic teaching:

- 15:16, “I have chosen you ... that ye should go...” supplements the great commission, “go into all the world and preach the gospel.”
- 16:12-15 in the witness section (promise of future teaching by the Spirit) corroborates Matt 10:19-20; Luke 12:11-12
- The sections in the URD dealing with the world's opposition, as supplementary to the Olivet Discourse, which appears in all of the synoptics (Matt 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21), but not in John.
- 21:15 “more than these” requires knowledge of Peter's boast in Matt 26:31-33 and Mark 14:27-29, and anticipates Paul in 2 Cor 10:12.
- 21:22, ref to survival til the Lord comes, may be related to Synoptic promise in Matt 16:28, Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27, but that refers to seeing, not survival.
- 21:22, 23, “till I come,” is the only post-resurrection promise of his return in the gospels (Luke does offer Acts 1:11). But Matt 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 9:26 earlier promised his return in glory to judge the world.

Lesson

Any book is necessarily limited. The synoptics were not only limited, but also highly aligned with each other. The Spirit directed John to write after their testimony had become known, to preserve an authoritative memory of some of the Lord's actions and deeds that they had omitted, but that were consistent with them.

The multiple testimony to our Lord's life is an example of the OT principle that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Cor 13:1; cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15; Matt 18:16; 2 Cor 13:1). Because of the importance of the subject, the Spirit has given us four witnesses, one of whom is more independent than the others, but by building on the others confirms their accuracy.

Of the named evangelists, only Matthew and John were eyewitnesses. Mark records Peter's experience, and Luke gathers his material from many, but without John we would not have had the direct testimony of two eyewitnesses. “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet 1:16).

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John's Anticipations of Paul

John often records sayings of the Lord, without parallel in the other gospels, that anticipate the teaching of the epistles. It seems that the other gospels appeared first. Then Paul's epistles began to circulate, containing some things that were not documented in the synoptics. Paul claimed an independent revelation, Gal 1:11,12.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul's authority was widely challenged (Gal 1; 2 Cor 10-13). Some who knew the Lord only through the synoptic testimony may have questioned his orthodoxy. It is likely that John writes *after* Paul, and he presents evidence that many of the themes in Paul do have their roots in the Lord's earthly teaching, even though they may not appear in the synoptics. I've collected more than 50 examples of this throughout the book (see Notes). Here are a few prominent examples:

Theme	John	Paul	Notes
Christ as means of creation	1:3 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.	Col 1:16-17 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether <i>they be</i> thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. Also 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 3:9	
Unbelievers as servants of sin	8:34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.	Rom 6:17-20 ye were the servants of sin, ... 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. ... 20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. Cf. Gal 4:22-31	The only instances of <i>doulos hamartias</i> in the Greek Bible
Resurrection and Rapture	11::25-26 I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.	1 Cor 15:52-53 the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal <i>must</i> put on immortality. 1 Thes 4:16-17 the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive <i>and</i> remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air:	
Our position "in Christ"	15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 10:38; 14:20	Rom 8:1 <i>There is</i> therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, <i>Many times</i>	
Greeting of "peace"	20:19-21 came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace <i>be</i> unto you. ... 21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace <i>be</i> unto you:	Rom 1:7 Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. <i>All epistles except Tim and Titus.</i>	Among synoptics, only Luke, Paul's friend, records the resurrection greeting "peace" (24:36)

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Lesson

Confirms Paul's consistency with the Lord's earthly teaching.

Summary

Our faith rests on the eyewitness testimony of those who were with the Lord. John adds the second witness to that of Matthew.

The substance of that testimony is that salvation is not found by membership in a society, or attendance at a holy place, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Those who lived in the Lord's royal city of Jerusalem and who were responsible for the temple worship, by and large rejected him. But all who received him found salvation.

That salvation has been faithfully expounded to us in the following books of the New Testament, notably by our brother Paul.

Notes: Fuller list of Anticipations of Paul in John

1:3, Christ as means of creation, Col 1:16 and parallels
1:9, Rom 1:18-20
1:18; 7:28, 1 Cor 2:14
1:47, Rom 2:28,29
3:29, Christ as the divine bridegroom; this is earliest in his ministry, cf. also Matt 9:15
4:23-24, worship in spirit, Rom 1:9; Phil 3:3
4:37, one soweth, another reapeth, 1 Cor 3:6
4:38, I sent you, others follow, 1 Cor 3:6
4:48, seeking after signs, 1 Cor 1:22.
4:41-41, 47-52; 1 John 5:13, cf. from faith to faith, Rom 1:13.
6:45, every man who is drawn, comes, Rom 8:29-30, Phil 1:6
6:63, quickening spirit, 1 Cor 15:45
7:22, priority of circumcision to Moses, Gal 3:17
7:38, believer as the temple, 1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:19-22 vs. 6:15; and Rom 6, yielding our bodies as instruments to God
8:23, the difference between earthly and heavenly origin, 1 Cor 15:44-49
8:43, cf. 1 Cor 12:3, natural man cannot receive; 2 Cor 4; compare structure with 1 Cor 2:14
8:34-35, servant of sin, Rom 6:17, 20, Gal 4:22-31, only occurrences of this phrase
8:37, 39, true and false children of Abraham, Rom 9:7-8
10:17, imagery of life as clothing, taken off and put on, Col 3:8-12
11:25-26, resurrection vs. rapture, 1 Cor 15:51-54; 1 Thes 4:16, 17
11:40, resurrection as the glory of God, 1 Cor 15:43; Phil 3:20
12:27, "save from," Heb 5:7
12:39, unbelief resulting from divine hardening, Rom 9:18
13:10 as foundation for the two unworthinesses in 1 Cor 11
13:18 and 2 Tim 2:19

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- 13:31-32; 16:15, and Phil 2:8,9
- 14:2, going to prepare a place in the dwelling places of the house of God, Eph 2:11-22.
- 14:16, eternal abiding of the Spirit, cf. his role as seal and earnest in Eph 1:13-14
- 14:17, inaccessibility of the Spirit to the world, 1 Cor 2:14.
- 14:19, sharing in Christ's life, Rom 6:8 and context
- 10:38; 14:20; ch. 15 "abide in me," cf. Pauline "in Christ"
- 14:26, teaching role of the Spirit, cf. 1 Cor 2:10ff.
- 14:28, rejoicing in going to be with the Father, Phil 1:23
- 15:1-5, corporate nature of Christ as embodying the believers, 1 Cor 12 (vine vs. body)
- 15:2, bearing fruit, Gal 5:22
- 16:33, the expectation of tribulation, Acts 14:22; 1 Thes 3:4
- 17:1, the Son's exaltation and subsequent promotion of the Father, 1 Cor 15:20-28
- 17:1-2, the Son's past obedience as grounds for his future exaltation, Phil 2:5-11
- 17:3, the knowledge of God as the essence of eternal life, Phil 3: 10-11
- 17:6, 9, 11, 12, the people given by the Father to the Son for his ministry, 2 Tim 2:10.
- 17:9. two-fold sanctification *en alhqeia*, Eph 5:25-26, the Lord gave himself that he might sanctify and cleans us *en rhmati*
- 17:12 *ho huios t8s apwleias*, the identical phrase appears in 2 Thes 2:3 of the "man of sin." Paul uses our Lord's phrase from John 17 to describe the fate of the coming antichrist. The two are of the same genus.
- 17:21, twofold unity of the believers, with each other and with the Lord; cf. Eph. 2, which emphasizes the twofold alienation of the Gentiles from the Jews and from God (vv. 11-12), the twofold unification that Christ accomplished (vv.15-16), achieving the twofold result of making us "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (v. 19).
- 17:22, the Lord conveys his glory to us, cf. 2 Cor 3:18, where we are transformed into the glory of the Lord.
- 17:23, we are to be "made perfect in one" *teteleiwmenoi eis en*, cf. Eph 4:13, the three goals (*eis*) of our Christian growth, including "a perfect *teleion* man"; also
- 18:12, preservation from physical trials that might overwhelm them spiritually, 1 Cor 10:13
- 19:17, 41, allusions to Adam in association with Jesus: 1 Cor 15:45; cf. Rom 5:12ff.
- 20:17, Jesus' God and Father, 2 Cor 11:31; Eph 1:3; 4:6; 1 Pet 1:3
- 20:19, 20, 26; cf. 14:27; the Lord's greeting of "peace," cf. Paul's frequent salutations, "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Among the synoptics, only Paul's friend Luke records the Lord's "peace" greeting (24:36).
- 21:15, 20-23 anticipate 2 Cor 10:12.
- 21:22 anticipates Rom 14:1-8, the individual responsibility before the Lord.