MOROGORO BIBLE COLLEGE

# Overview of John

…John, last of all, conscious that the outward facts had been set forth in the Gospels, was urged on by his disciples, and divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel (Clement of Alexandria, quoted in Eusebius, *Hist eccl* 6.14-17)

I like the comparison of John’s Gospel to a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is both simple and profound. It is for the veriest beginner in the faith and for the mature Christian. (Leon L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the NT, London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1971, 7)

Scripture is like a river again, broad and deep, shallow enough here for the lamb to go wading, but deep enough there for the elephant to swim. (Gregory the Great, *Moralia*, 4)

## How John shapes his story

### *1–12 book of signs*

#### 1:1-18 prologue

#### 1:19-51 beginnings; the testimony of John (the baptiser)

#### 2–4 Jesus ministry begins: from Cana to Cana

#### 5–10 revelation and testimony in controversy with ‘the Jews

#### 11 the raising of Lazarus and its consequences

#### 12 as transitional, looking back and forward

### *13–21 book of glory*

#### 13–16 the final teaching discourse, privately to the disciples

#### 17 Jesus at prayer

#### 18–19 trial and crucifixion

#### 20–21 resurrection

## How John tells his story

### *seven ‘signs’ in first part of the book*

#### ‘sign’ = Greek *sēmeion*, note 20:31—John’s purpose

#### 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-18; 6:1-15, 16-21;9:1-41; 11:1-53

#### other mentions of signs dotted through first half

##### questions about signs 2:18; 4:48; 6:26, 30; 7:31

##### statements that Jesus did signs 2:23; 3:2; 6:2; 7:31; 12:37

### *seven ‘I am’ sayings*

#### 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5

#### 8:58 absolute use ‘I am’ cf. 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8 ‘I am he’Exodus 3:14; cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; Isaiah 41:4; 43:10, 25; 45:18-19; 46:4; 51:12; 52:6

#### 4:26 ‘I am, the one speaking to you’ cf. Isaiah 45:19; 52:5 ‘I am the one who speaks’

### *seven discourses/disputes* (chapters 6, 7, 8 more disputes than discourses)

#### 3:1-21; 4:1-26; 5:19-47; 6:22-59; 7:14-36; 8:12-59; 10:1-39

### *seven ‘days’*

#### 1:23-28, 29-34, 35-42, 43-51; 2:1-11; 20:1

### *misunderstanding*

#### Christopher Skinner: character interactions with Jesus often follow a pattern:

##### Jesus speaks/acts, often addressing an aspect of his mission

##### the character who hears/sees misunderstands some aspect, thus leading to further instruction or correction

##### Jesus speaks again to clarify what has been misunderstood

##### one or more prologue themes are raised, revealing the misunderstanding, exposing the reader’s (superior) knowledge, and clarifying John’s message about Jesus

#### e.g. Peter 6:60-71

#### others 2:19-22; 3:3-5; 4:10-15, 31-38; 6:43-56; 7:33-36; 8:21-22, 31-33, 51-53, 56-58; 11:4‑16; 13:7-11

### *‘truth on trial’ in John* (Anthony Harvey, Andrew Lincoln)

#### theme of testimony/witness

##### John (the baptiser) as witness 1:19 cf. 1:7, 8, 15, 32, 34; 3:28, 32-33; 5:33; cf. 21:24 (*inclusio*)

##### Jesus testifies 3:11, 26; 4:44; 7:7; 13:2; 18:37

##### another (the Father) testifies for Jesus 5:31-32, 37; 8:13-18

##### Jesus’ works testify 5:36; 10:25

##### the Scriptures testify to Jesus 5:39

##### the Spirit will testify for Jesus 15:26

##### disciples will testify for Jesus 15:27

##### the Samaritan woman testifies 4:39

##### crowds continue to testify 12:17

##### the eyewitness of the cross testifies 19:35

##### a group testifies that ‘the disciple’ testifies truly 21:24

#### Jesus as both witness and judge

### *glory and the glorification of Jesus*

#### in Jesus, we see the glory of God 1:14; 2:11; 17:24

#### Jesus glorifies the Father 8:50; 11:4, 40; 13:31-32; 14:13; 17:1, 4

#### Jesus prays for the Father to glorify his name 12:28

#### God glorifies Jesus (critique of seeking glory from people) 5:41, 44; 7:18; 8:54; 12:43; 13:31-32; 17:1, 5, 22

#### Spirit will glorify Jesus 16:14

#### through the cross 7:39; 12:16, 23

#### the disciples reveal God’s/Jesus’ glory 15:8; 17:10, 22; 21:19

## How John presents ‘the Jews’

### the hostile language; cf. prophetic critique of Israel

### *which* Jews? Is this signalling conflict with non-believing Jews?

### torah attributes asserted of Jesus

#### God’s word, pre-existed 1:1, 2, 14; 17:5

#### source of light and life 9:5; 11:25; 14:6

#### grace and truth 1:14, 16, 17

#### obedience to torah becomes believing in Jesus and doing his word 6:28, 29, 40; 8:51; 14:21, 23; 15:10

### John as *dividing* Judaism, not opposing it

#### does John reflect a situation of conflict with unbelieving Jesus?

#### divisions between believing Jews and unbelieving Jews 1 Thess 2:13-16