



Introduction

Do you know Jesus? I mean, do you really know Him? Not do you know something about Him, but do you know Him as the mediator and advocate of your life, the person who interceded for you and laid down His life on your behalf at Calvary? Do you know Him as your personal Lord and Savior?

The Apostle John introduces us to Jesus. Matthew presents Jesus as king, Mark presents Him as the Servant and Luke sees Him as the Ideal Man, John unveils Jesus in His glory and proves His claims. Of all the gospels, John gives us the loftiest concepts of Jesus.

Who was John?

John and his older brother, James, were the sons of Zebedee, a fisherman of Galilee. Jesus would call them "the sons of thunder", Mark 3:14(3:17). Some scholars believe that his mother, Salome, was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Together with his brother, he was in a fishing business with Andrew and Peter in Galilee. John and Andrew were disciples of John the Baptist yet when the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God, they followed Jesus from that day forward. So memorable was this meeting with Jesus that John even recorded the time of day as the tenth hour. When the call came to follow Jesus, John willingly left his father and his father's fishing business to become a fisher of men.

John was not the perfect disciple during the time he spent with Jesus. He zealously guarded his relationship with Jesus and the inner circle of the apostles closely. On one occasion, John recounted to Jesus how he and the others had stopped a man from casting out devils in Jesus' name simply because that person was not a part of their fellowship. Jesus answered John's jealousy and zeal by saying, "Forbid not any! For he who is not against us is for us!" (Mark 9:36, 37; Luke 9:49, 50). When Jesus traveled to Jerusalem through Samaria, he was refused hospitality in one village because of His destination. This display by the Samaritans toward their master incensed John and his brother James. They asked Jesus if he wanted them to call down fire from heaven to destroy them just like Elijah had done against the priest of Baal. Jesus recognized the ancient prejudices and bigotry that he was dealing with among Samaritans. He rebukes them sternly, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of! For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them!"

John was also ambitious. This is outlined in Mark 10:35-39 when John and James express their desire to Jesus to be granted a place of high position in His kingdom. Jesus uses this time to express to all his apostles that to achieve greatness in His kingdom, they must become the servant of all.

Transformation of John

Time well spent with Jesus effect changes in a person's life. John spent time with Jesus. He was at the wedding in Cana, where Jesus changed water into wine, and was present in Jerusalem during Jesus' early Judean ministry. John records events in Jesus' ministry not recorded in the other gospels. John also had an inquisitive nature; he wanted to know things about the Kingdom. The Inspired Versions tell us the reason Jesus took Peter, James and John to the Mount of Transfiguration was that they asked Him "many questions" regarding His teachings. John has been called the "beloved" or "the disciple whom Jesus loved". He was given the closest seat next to Jesus in the Upper Room

When Jesus was arrested, John along with the other apostles deserted Him. Yet he was the first to rally. He knew the high priest and courageously entered with Jesus into palace of the high priest (John 18:15, 16). Only John is mentioned as standing by the cross. And John is the only apostle mentioned by Jesus in his last seven sayings from the cross. Jesus entrusts his mother, Mary, into John's care. John alone records the sayings of Jesus, "I thirst" and "It is finished". John alone records the events of the piercing of Jesus' side by the Roman soldiers, the flow of blood and water from His side and the burial of Jesus by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. John and his friend Peter were the first of the apostles to go to Jesus' tomb upon hearing that it was empty.

The Gospel of John

Most evangelistic scholars agree that John's gospel was probably written at Ephesus between 90 to 100 AD. There are some who believe that it could have been written as early as 70 AD. One of the reasons that John wrote his gospel was to combat the ideas propagated by the Gnostics. Gnosticism was a blend of Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism that had mixed in with Christianity. Its basic belief was that God is absolutely good and matter was absolutely evil. In order to create the universe, God created a series of beings, each one possessing less deity than the previous one. Christ was the lowest being. This was diametrically opposed to the Christian faith. Essentially, the claim of Gnosticism was that Jesus did not come in the flesh.

Another of John's reasons for writing his gospel was to supplement the other three gospels. His primary reason for writing though is found in John 20:31, "These are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name."

John's gospel is unashamedly evangelistic in nature. It is written to you "that you might believe!"

Questions:

1. In what ways does the Gospel of John differ from the other gospels?
2. What are some of the reasons John wrote this gospel?
3. What does the term "gospel" mean?