



Four Gospels: One Jesus

A Bible Study for Swamp Lutheran Church

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The Gospel of John

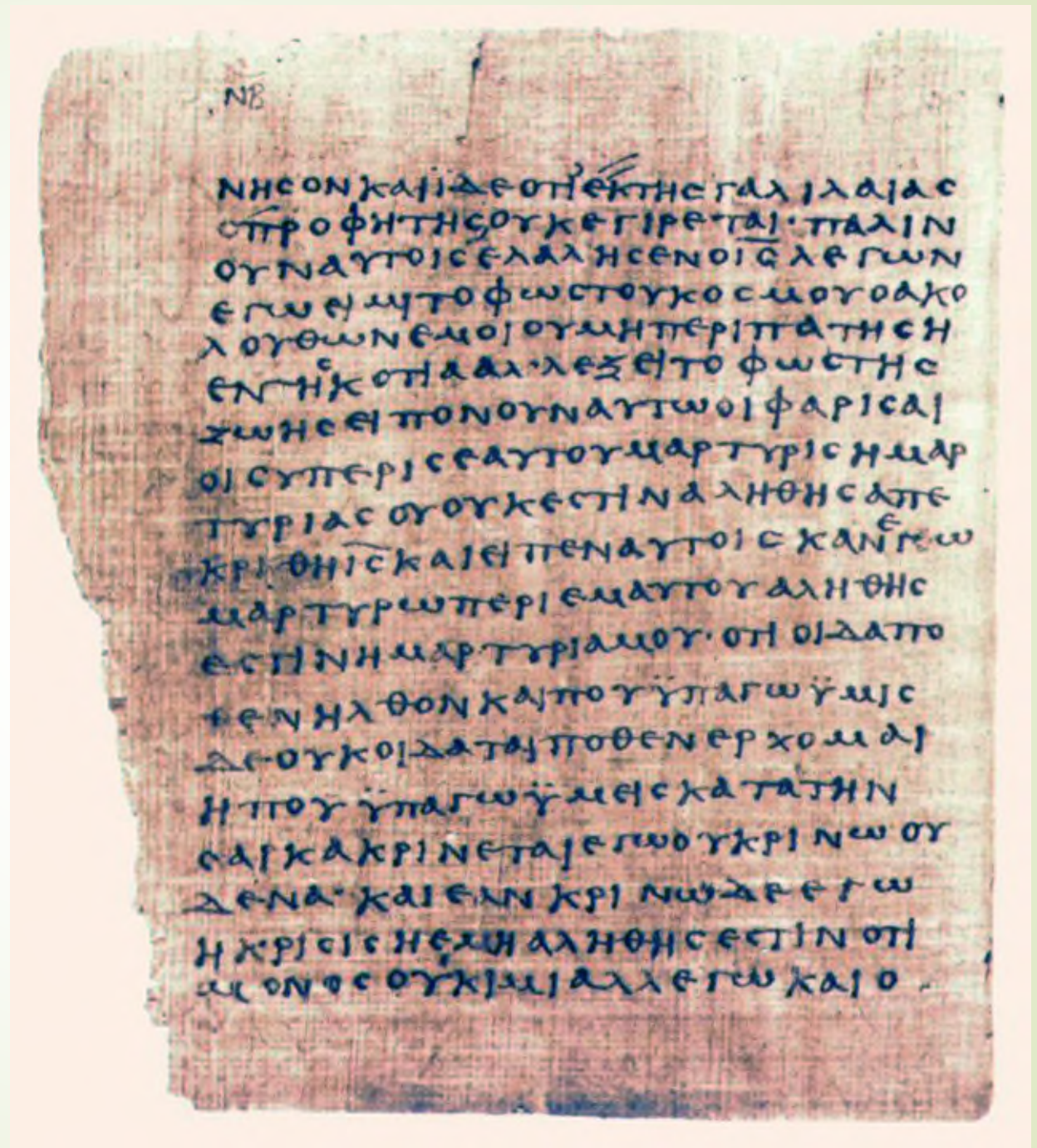
- Unique Among the Four Gospels
- More “Theological” than “Historical”
- Gives us a “Behind the Scenes” glimpse into Jesus’ eternal origin and divine nature.
- Anonymously written, though an early tradition attributes the Gospel to the Apostle John. May be likely it was composed by a disciple of John.
- Dates from around 100 A.D.
- Written for a community of Jewish Christians outside Judea who have experienced hostility, even ex-communication, from the synagogue because of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Highly polemical against Jewish leaders.
- Most likely 1, 2, 3 John come from same author (or disciple) and possibly the Revelation.

Papyrus 66

Bodmer Codex

@200 A.D.

This is almost a complete copy of the Gospel of John from the Bodmer Codex, discovered in Egypt in 1952.





The Structure of John's Gospel

- **Prologue**, 1:1-18 A Hymn of Praise to the Word of God Made Flesh
- **The Book of Signs**, 1:19-12:50 During his public ministry Jesus performs 7 miracles, or “signs” as John calls them. The signs are meant to reveal Jesus’ glory and evoke faith. Interspersed with the signs are extended discourses developed around a theme. During the discourses Jesus is often questioned or interrupted with objections.
- **The Book of Glory**, 13:20-20:31
 - Jesus’ Last Meal with Disciples, 13-17
 - Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion, and Burial, 18-19
 - Resurrection and Appearances, 20
 - Epilogue to Resurrection, 21

Theology in John's Gospel

- The “High Christology” in John
- Jesus is depicted as divine, pre-existent to creation, identified with the one God.
- Jesus is the “Logos” of God.
- Jesus talks openly about his divine role. Jesus knows all events before they occur.
- Jesus is totally and completely identified with the Father.
- Jesus’ glory is manifested when the “Son of Man is lifted up,” a reference to the exaltation of Jesus when he is lifted up on the cross.



Comparing John to the Synoptics

In John, but not in the Synoptics

- Wedding at Cana, Woman at the well, raising of Lazarus.
- “I Am” sayings
- Washing of Disciples’ Feet
- Teachings on Eternal Life
- No demon exorcisms
- Jesus’ home-town never mentioned
- Scenes in the Upper Room

In the Synoptics, but not in John

- Jesus’ Baptism by John, Calling of the Twelve,
- Sermon on the Mount (Plain)
- Institution of the Lord’s Supper
- The Kingdom of God
- Exorcism of demons
- Jesus comes from Nazareth
- The Transfiguration

The Hymn to the Logos – John 1:1-18

¹In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

²He was in the beginning with God.

³All things came into being through him,
and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being ⁴in him was life,
and the life was the light of all people.

⁵The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Logos in Greek and Jewish Thought

Logos – “Word,” “Speech,” “Reasoned Discourse”

- In Greek Philosophy “Logos” serves as an intermediary between what is Real (“Perfect Form”) and what is Seen (“Imperfect Matter”).
- The Jewish-Greek philosopher Philo attributed the Logos to God’s Word and Wisdom through whom creation came into being. Psalm 33:6 “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.” Proverbs 8:22,27 “The LORD created me at the beginning of his work...When he made the heavens I was there.”
- An intermediary is necessary between what is perfect (“God,” “Perfect Form”) and Creation (“Heaven and Earth,” “Imperfect Form”)



The School of Athens
Raphael, 1505

Jesus is the Logos of God

- *“In the beginning”* A deliberate echo of the opening to the Book of Genesis. John is not interested in Jesus’ family genealogy or origin, like the synoptics.
- In agreement with Philo, the “Logos” is God’s Word present since the beginning of creation. However,
- The Logos is not an intermediary between God and creation.
- The Logos is God (“and the Word was God”)
- “The Word became flesh.” “Flesh” English translation of the Greek word *“sarx,”* in Latin *“carne”* from which we derive “carnivorous” “carnal,” literally “meat,” “blood, bone, and muscle.”
- Jesus is God “deep in the flesh,” so much so that the Gospel of Jesus tells us who God really is.

The Book of Signs-Jesus' Glory is Revealed as the Son of the Father

Seven Signs to Reveal Jesus' Glory. John uses "sign" rather than "miracle" because the event points to some truth about Jesus beyond the event itself. Each sign is developed thematically.

1. **The Wedding at Cana** 2:1-11 Represents the end of Jewish ceremonial washings and Jesus' creative and transforming work.
2. **Healing the Royal Official's Son** 4:46-56 Jesus heals from a distance, a sign of the power of his life-giving word.
3. **Healing Lame Man by the Pool of Bethzatha** 5:1-18 Continues (Woman at the Well) the theme of Jesus as life-giving water of new life.
4. **Feeding 5000** 6:1-15 Jesus is the Bread of Life, greater than the Manna in the Wilderness
5. **Jesus Walks on the Sea** 6:16-21 Continuing the Exodus theme of Israel passing through the Red Sea
6. **Healing of a Man Blind Since Birth** 9:1-41 Jesus' triumph of light over darkness, the blindness of the leaders versus eyes opened in faith
7. **Raising of Lazarus** 11:1-57 Jesus, the Son of the Father who "raises the dead and gives them life,(5:21)" also raises the dead.



The Signs Provoke Conflict with Leaders

- After healing a man on the Sabbath “the Jews” start persecuting Jesus.
- ¹⁷But Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." ¹⁸For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only **breaking the sabbath**, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby **making himself equal to God**. *John 5:17-18*
- “The Jews” is a polemical term used by John to identify a group of Jewish leaders comprised of priests, scribes, and Pharisees who virulently oppose Jesus. Remember, John is writing during a time when the Synagogue authorities are ex-communicating Jewish-Christians for believing Jesus is the Messiah. Tragically, Christians throughout the centuries have often applied this term to refer to the Jewish people as a whole, often using it as a justification to persecute Jews. John’s term is best understood as “The Jewish authorities.”



The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus

- In John’s Gospel Jesus makes several statements using the phrase “I Am.” Some stand alone, and some use metaphorical imagery. These are to be understood in relation to God’s identification of himself in the Old Testament.
- Exodus 3:1-20. God appears in the burning bush to Moses in Egypt and tells Moses he has heard the cry of the Israelites in bondage and will rescue them from slavery. Moses says to God, “If I come to the Israelites...and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I tell them?” (Ex.3:13) “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘**I AM** has sent me to you...This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.’” (Ex. 3:14,15)
- I AM (in capital letters) is the Hebrew translation of “YHWH.” Jewish piety believes this name is so sacred that it is not said out loud.” Most Bibles will instead use the word LORD printed in capital letters to signify this proper name for God. Early English Bibles sometimes translated YHWH as “Jehovah.”



“I Am”

Stand Alone “I Am” sayings of Jesus

- ▶ “Jesus said to them (the Jewish leaders), ‘Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was, **I am.**’” 8:58
- ▶ “So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that **I am he**, so that I do nothing on my own, but I speak of these things as the Father has instructed me.’” 8:28 (literally, “I am.”)
- ▶ (When the disciples saw Jesus walking across the water and they were terrified) “But he said to them, ‘**It is I**, do not be afraid.’” 6:20 (literally, “I am.”)
- ▶ (When the soldiers and police from the chief priests and Pharisees came to the garden to arrest Jesus and he asked who they were looking for...) “They answered, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus replied, ‘**I am he.**’” 18:5 (literally, “I am.”)



“I Am”

The Seven “I Am” sayings with images.

1. Jesus said to them, “**I am the bread of life**. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” 6:35
2. Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “**I am the light of the world**. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” 8:12
3. **I am the gate** (for the sheep). Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10:9
4. **I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 10:11
5. Jesus said to her (Martha), “**I am the resurrection and the life**. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die 11:25-26
6. Jesus said to him, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life**. No one comes to the Father except through me. 14:6
7. **I am the true vine**, and my Father is the vinegrower. 15:1

Jesus, the Only Son of the Father

- **The Son is dependent upon the Father:** Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. ²⁰The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. 5:19-20
- **The Father sends the Son:** Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. ²⁹I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me." 7:28-29
- **Jesus does the will of the Father:** For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day." 6:38-40
- **Jesus reveals the Father:** Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 14:8-10



Some Conversation Starters

- ▶ Mark's Gospel depicts an urgent Jesus hurriedly proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Matthew depicts Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish expectations for the Messiah. Luke depicts Jesus as one compassionate for the poor. What do you think John wants us to know about Jesus?
- ▶ How do you see the relationship between the Word and Jesus? Are they the same? Are they different?
- ▶ How does the proclamation that Jesus and the Father are one challenge the church of today?
- ▶ Do you have a favorite Gospel?