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Content Summary: Expanded Overview of the Gospel of John

A poetic prologue introduces Jesus as the Word of God made flesh.
(1:1–18)

John the Baptist testifies that, as one sent to prepare the way, he saw the Spirit descend upon Jesus, who is the Son of God and “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (1:19–34)

Two of John’s disciples become followers of Jesus. One is Andrew, who brings his brother Simon to Jesus as well. Jesus gives Simon a new name: “Cephas” (or “Peter”). (1:35–42)

Jesus calls Philip to follow him, and Philip brings Nathanael, who is initially hesitant, asking, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip says, “Come and see.” (1:43–51)

Jesus changes water into wine at a wedding in Cana. (2:1–12)

Jesus expels vendors and animals from the Jerusalem temple, overturning tables and claiming that the vendors have turned his Father’s house into a marketplace. He says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”—an oblique reference to his own body. (2:13–25)

Nicodemus, a leading Pharisee, comes to Jesus at night for conversation. Jesus speaks to him about the need to be “born

again” (or “from above”) and about how “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.” (3:1–21)

While Jesus and his disciples are baptizing in the Judean countryside, John the Baptist has a conversation with a Jew, testifying to Jesus as the Messiah, bridegroom, and Son of God. (3:22–36)

Jesus has a conversation with a Samaritan woman at a well, speaking of “living water” and of true worship. He discloses knowledge of her private life and then spends two days with others who hear about him from the woman. Many Samaritans come to believe that he is “the Savior of the world.” (4:1–42)

A royal official asks Jesus to come to Capernaum to heal his son, but Jesus performs the healing from a distance, simply by speaking the word. (4:43–54)

On a Sabbath day, Jesus heals a crippled man by the Pool of Bethesda. The Jews begin persecuting him for healing on the Sabbath and for speaking of God in a way that seemed to make himself equal to God. (5:1–18)

Jesus speaks to the Jews further of his unique relationship with the Father and claims to have supporting testimony from John the Baptist and from Moses. (5:19–47)

Jesus feeds over five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fish provided by a boy. He then flees the scene because the crowd wants to force him to be their king. (6:1–15)

Jesus walks on water to join his disciples in a boat; the boat then immediately arrives at its destination. (6:16–21)

The multitude fed by Jesus follows him to Capernaum, and he speaks to them about the “living bread” that comes down from heaven; to have this bread, they must eat his flesh and drink his blood. (6:22–59)

Jesus’s disciples are confounded by his teaching, and some of them turn away, but Simon Peter says, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.” (6:60–71)

Jesus goes to the Festival of Booths in secret, but then he teaches publicly in the temple and engages in extended disputation with Jews concerning his claims and origin. (7:1–52)

Jesus is questioned by a group of scribes and Pharisees about their intention to stone an adulterous woman; he responds by suggesting that the one who is without sin should cast the first stone. (7:53–8:11)

Jesus continues his disputation with the Jews, claiming to be the light of the world and to be “not of this world.” Those who continue in his words will know the truth and be made free, but the Jews who reject him are children of the devil. (8:12–59)

On a Sabbath day, Jesus, using mud made from dirt and his saliva, heals a man who had been born blind. The Jews interrogate the man's parents and then the man himself, who comes to believe in Jesus as the Son of Man. (9:1–41)

Jesus describes himself as the good shepherd who has come to bring abundant life. (10:1–18)

Jesus continues to argue with the Jews, who are divided in their opinions about his identity and authority. (10:19–42)

Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany and raises their brother, Lazarus, from the dead. This miracle attracts so much attention that the high priest Caiphas says that Jesus must be put to death before the Romans hear about him and take action against the nation. (11:1–57)

Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus with costly perfume; she is criticized by Judas (who wanted to sell it and steal the money) but defended by Jesus. (12:1–8)

The chief priests decide to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus, because so many Jews are believing in Jesus on account of his having raised Lazarus from the dead. (12:9–11)

Jesus rides into Jerusalem seated on a donkey, while cheering crowds meet him with palm branches. (12:12–19)

Some Greeks want to see Jesus, and they approach Philip about this. (12:20–22)

Jesus speaks at length about his mission and impending death;

when he prays, “Father, glorify your name,” a voice like thunder speaks from heaven, declaring, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” (12:23–50)

Jesus and his disciples gather for a final supper, and he washes their feet. (13:1–17)

Jesus predicts that Judas will betray him, and Satan enters into Judas when Jesus gives him a piece of bread. (13:18–30)

Jesus offers an extended farewell discourse to his disciples (13:31–16:33). Among other things:

- He speaks of his death as glorification.
- He gives his followers a new commandment to “love one another.”
- He says that he goes to prepare dwelling places for them in his Father’s house.
- He says that he and the Father are one; he is the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by him.
- He promises that the Holy Spirit will come as a helper, advocate, and teacher.
- He speaks of his disciples continuing to abide in him like branches on a vine.

- He describes his own origin as being in God and describes his death as a return to the Father, who sent him into this world.

Jesus offers an extended prayer to the Father for his followers, emphasizing a plea that they might be one, just as he and the Father are one. (17:1–26)

Betrayed by Judas, Jesus is arrested and questioned by Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas, the current high priest; meanwhile, Peter denies Jesus three times. (18:1–27)

Jesus is turned over to Pilate, who asks about the nature of his kingdom and poses the philosophical conundrum: “What is truth?” The Jews are persistent in demanding Jesus’s crucifixion, and Pilate yields to their demands. (18:28–19:16)

Jesus carries his own cross to Golgotha and is crucified. While on the cross, he entrusts the care of his mother to the “beloved disciple”; he also says, “I am thirsty,” in order to fulfill Scripture, and then he dies with the words “It is finished.” (19:17–30)

A soldier pierces Jesus’s side with a spear, and water and blood flow out. (19:31–37)

Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus, and Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus at night, receive the body of Jesus and place it in a tomb. (19:38–42)

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene finds the stone rolled away from the tomb. Peter and the “beloved disciple” inspect the tomb and find it empty. Then Jesus appears to Mary, who at first mistakes him for the gardener. (20:1–18)

Jesus appears to ten of his disciples in a locked room and commissions them with the spiritual authority to forgive or retain sins. Thomas is absent, and he refuses to believe the others. (20:19–25)

A week later, Jesus appears to all eleven disciples, and Thomas exclaims, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus says, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (20:26–29)

John’s Gospel initially closes with an affirmation that Jesus did many things not written in the book, but these that have been written are meant to help the reader come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and so to have life. (20:30–31)

An epilogue relates a story of a third appearance to the disciples. Jesus comes to a group of disciples in Galilee, and they catch a miraculous haul of 153 fish. (21:1–14)

After breakfast, Jesus asks Peter three times, “Do you love me?” and he responds to Peter’s affirmative answer by saying, “Feed my sheep.” (21:15–17)

Jesus predicts how Peter will die (by crucifixion); Peter asks about the “beloved disciple,” and a misinterpretation of Jesus’s answer

leads to a rumor in the church that the “beloved disciple” will continue to live until Jesus returns. (21:18–23)

John’s Gospel finally closes with a notation that this “beloved disciple” is the one who wrote down the testimony to Jesus contained within the book. (21:24–25)