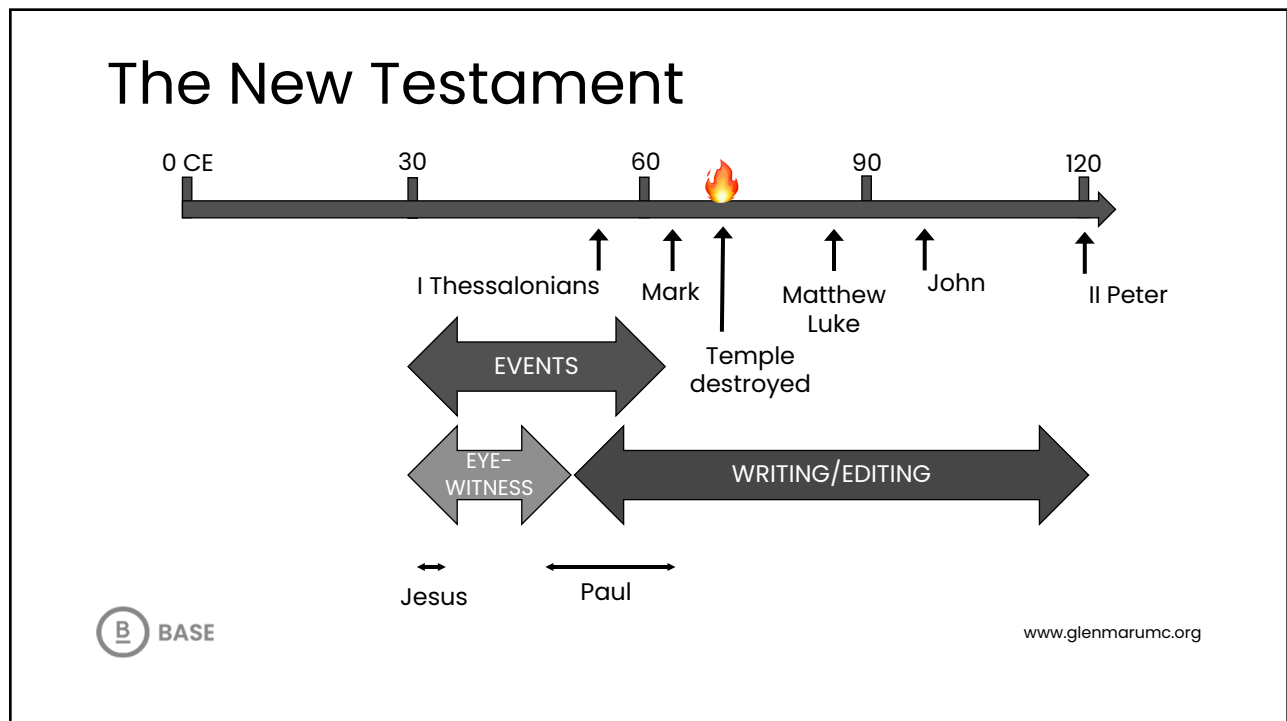




1



2

## Context of the Gospel of John

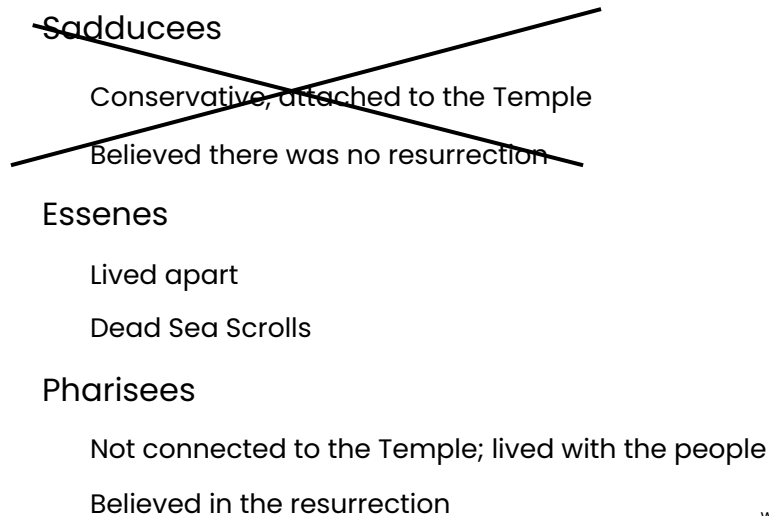
- Concerns in the late 1<sup>st</sup> Century/early 2<sup>nd</sup> Century:
  - Christians being excluded from synagogues
  - Increasing Roman persecution of Christians
  - Growing heresies within Christianity (e.g. Gnostics, Marcion)
- Notorious *past* events
  - 64 CE – fire in Rome and purge of many Christians by Nero
  - 70 CE – Rome destroys the Temple in Jerusalem
- Diversity of views of who Jesus was/is
  - Jesus was only human
  - Jesus was only divine
  - And everything in between



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3

## The Jewish Situation



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4

## Johannine Community

- Proposed 1<sup>st</sup> Century Christian community, closely aligned with Judaism
- Conflict with Jews in synagogues
- Possible source of the Gospel of John and 1, 2, 3 John
- Most likely multiple authors/editors from this community contributed to these works
- Emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit



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5

## The “Jews” in John

- The term “the Jews” occurs about 70 times in John
- Given John’s context, the term likely refers to Jewish leaders who were expelling Jewish Christians from synagogues
- Most scholars would not suggest identifying the term with ordinary Jews



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6

# The Beginning of John

## The Word Became Flesh

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>[a]</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

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

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

**14** And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, <sup>[d]</sup> 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.' ") **16** From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>[e]</sup> **17** The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who <sup>[f]</sup> is close to the Father's heart, <sup>[g]</sup> who has made him known.



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7

## Logos

- Jesus *is* the Word of God
- Jesus (logos) is the means of creation (God spoke!)
- In Greek philosophy, *logos* is cosmic reason
- Strong echoes to Hebrew wisdom literature (Proverbs 8)

**22** "The LORD created me at the beginning <sup>[a]</sup> of his work, <sup>[b]</sup>  
the first of his acts of long ago.  
**23** Ages ago I was set up,  
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.  
**24** When there were no depths I was brought forth,  
when there were no springs abounding with water.  
**25** Before the mountains had been shaped,  
before the hills, I was brought forth,  
**26** when he had not yet made earth and fields <sup>[c]</sup>  
or the world's first bits of soil.  
**27** When he established the heavens, I was there;  
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
**28** when he made firm the skies above,  
when he established the fountains of the deep,  
**29** when he assigned to the sea its limit,  
so that the waters might not transgress his command,  
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,  
**30** then I was beside him, like a master worker, <sup>[d]</sup>  
and I was daily his <sup>[e]</sup> delight,  
playing before him always,  
**31** playing in his inhabited world  
and delighting in the human race.

Proverbs 8:22-31

8

## Primacy of Love

- Mark, Matthew, Luke all agree:
  - Love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself.
- John's demand is even greater:
  - "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."  
John 13:34

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:7-8



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9

## "I am" Sayings

- "I am" = name of God, YHWH
- I am the bread of life (6:35)
- I am the light of the world (8:12)
- I am the gate (10:9)
- I am the good shepherd (10:11)
- I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)
- I am the way and the truth and the life (14:6)
- I am the true vine (15:1)



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10

## Signs and Symbols

- The acts of Jesus that the synoptics call "miracles" John calls "signs."
- Like everything important in John, these signs point to a deeper meaning
- John 9, man born blind

**9** As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" **3** Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. **4** We<sup>[a]</sup> must work the works of him who sent me<sup>[a]</sup> while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. **5** As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." **6** When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, **7** saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. **8** The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" **9** Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he." **10** But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" **11** He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." **12** They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

11

## Who is truly blind?

- First, the neighbors
- Now, the Pharisees ("Jews")
- Next, the man's parents

**13** They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. **14** Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. **15** Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

**16** Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. **17** So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

**18** The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight **19** and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" **20** His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, **21** but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."

**22** His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus<sup>[a]</sup> to be the Messiah<sup>[a]</sup> would be put out of the synagogue. **23** Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

12

## The tension becomes absurd

- The formerly blind beggar vs. the most educated Pharisees!
- (You're permitted to laugh!)
- The end result is that the faithful are driven out of the synagogue

**24** So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." **25** He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." **26** They said to him, "What did he do to you?

How did he open your eyes?" **27** He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" **28** Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his

disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. **29** We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." **30** The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. **31** We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will.

**32** Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. **33** If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." **34** They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

13

## Finally, Jesus enters

**35** Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"<sup>[e]</sup> **36** He answered, "And who is he, sir?<sup>[f]</sup> Tell me, so that I may believe in him." **37** Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." **38** He said, "Lord,<sup>[g]</sup> I believe." And

he worshiped him. **39** Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind."

**40** Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" **41** Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

14

## Jesus of the Gospels

### A Prophet

- Jesus not only spoke the Word of God, Jesus *was* the Word of God
- Jesus confronted hypocrisy: those who preached the Law but did not practice it
- Jesus called for true self-examination
- Jesus called the people to repent, and turn back to God
- Jesus foretold the consequences of present actions



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15

## Jesus of the Gospels

### A Teacher, Preacher and Healer

- For Jesus, faith is active!
- Jesus taught the people about the Kingdom of God through parables, story, and example
- Jesus reinterpreted the Law, emphasizing the primacy of love
- Jesus broke down barriers of gender, culture, nationality and religion to show the wideness of God's grace
- Jesus revealed who God truly is



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16



## Jesus of the Gospels

### **The Son of Man: the unexpected Messiah**

- The “Son of Man” was thought to be the savior of Israel, as foreseen in Daniel 7
- Jesus' suffering and death was totally inconsistent with this image, and caused great confusion among his disciples
- Jesus is proclaimed as Messiah, but not the one anyone expected!



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