

After 2:Before 3

- ***Before reading the Gospel -***

1 - Some 'snippets' or 'tasters', originally written as publicity, to prepare people, who know something of the narratives of Matthew, Mark and Luke, for some differences they will encounter.

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Before reading the Gospel

The following paragraphs mention some things about John's Gospel that were written as 'snippets' or 'tasters' to prepare people, who know something of the narratives of Matthew, Mark and Luke, for some differences they will encounter.

Snippet 01 - A spiritual Gospel - special words

Most people have read something of the other Gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke before they come to read the offering of our writer, John. Indeed, he assumes that we have. When we start to read we are aware that we have entered a new atmosphere; it is more reflective and solemn. It has some repeating words that are the centre of the story that John wants to present. Words like Word of God, life, light, darkness, witness [testimony], believe, receive and authority. John uses these words right through the Gospel. And as we read we shall see that the words are being used differently, so that their meanings alter according to each setting or encounter. Have a look at chapter 1, verse 9. Think about the word "world". See if you can say the three different ways it is used in this one verse!!

Snippet 02 - A fresh and different look at Jesus

Matthew, Mark and Luke have considerable variety in the situations they record of Jesus' encounters and conversations with people. They centre their reports of Jesus around Galilee in the north and then finally present Jesus as resolutely setting his face towards Jerusalem.

John, however, centres the action really around Jerusalem and only has a couple of forays into Galilee. In the other Gospels Jesus speaks in short, sharp pointed sentences in response to a variety of situations; in John we find set discourses that use the favourite words John has for us as themes; there are also puzzling allusions. Overall we return constantly to Jesus' relation with the Father. All this makes for a very fresh look at Jesus.

Snippet 03 - God come to us as man

As John presents him to us, we find Jesus farther apart from the world of men and women than in Matthew Mark and Luke. From the start, John

presents Jesus ministry as less affected by human motives. He speaks as the Son of God who has come down to us from heaven.

Indeed, it is because, as the opening prologue tells us, He is really the Word of God, the second Person in the Trinity of the Godhead, who has taken flesh like ours so that He can save us. So He was in the beginning with God.

John wants us to know this right from the start, so that the background to all our thinking about what Jesus says and does we hold the secret in our mind and heart that Jesus Christ is really God come to us as man.

Taster 04 - Our writer is inside Jesus' head; he knows Him

One thing you will notice about our writer John, is that his writing makes it hard to distinguish between the words he puts into the mouth of Jesus, his central character, and his own words. This is intentional. He knows what Jesus is thinking, he knows why certain things don't happen yet, but they will later. He explains things 'after the fact' and in the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

He has a 'plotted presentation' to offer and we are right to read his Gospel as a very carefully thought out display of Jesus for us.

The other Gospels give us the external story-line of happenings, in which Jesus interacts with the participants of the story. John records events too, but in a way that leads into long discourses about the deep themes involved. He wants us always to be focussing upon who Jesus is - for it is the central issue for us, his readers. How we answer that will decide if we will begin to share God's life or not.

Taster 05 - Our writer is an eyewitness who personally knows Jesus

Another thing you will notice about our writer John, is that he claims to be an eyewitness among other eyewitnesses. He wants to tell us what "we" have seen. He is one of the first Christians, bearing the testimony of what he has seen himself as the 'disciple who Jesus loved'; but not only him, but also the testimony that everyone can make who has seen that 'glory' of Jesus. He also includes the testimony of Jesus as speaking of what 'we' know. So the witness of Jesus and the witness of the early Chris-

tians is a matter of common experience.

So this Gospel is a presentation of those who have seen Jesus for who He really is and He is really glorious. They are eyewitnesses, but not simply of some data they report, but also of what they have come to know. They know someone, they know the Father through the Son and this is what has drawn them to have eternal life - the life of God. Their eyewitness is about what happened and also about what they have seen and come to know. Both forms of 'testimony' are included here.

Snippet 06 - Our writer is an eyewitness of the open life of God

Matthew, Mark and Luke, are often called the 'synoptic' gospels, for much of their material is similar. They give us eyewitness accounts of things that happened. John does this as well - and he has special data which is not contained in the other three Gospels.

John however, is an eyewitness who explains to us the deeper things. He offers the unusual angle that opens for us the depth of the relationship between the Father and the Son of God. He opens for us the inner life of the Trinity. A matter the other Gospels only mention in Matthew 11.27; Luke 10.21-22.

This doesn't make it less historical, rather, it speaks to us of John's most important theme - the revelation of the inner life of God and how we access and share that life through Jesus.

Snippet 07 - John's Gospel: an intentionally different presentation

John assumes that his readers are familiar with the story-line and content of Matthew, Mark and Luke. He writes for those who know the data [3.24, 4.2]. This fact alone means that when John does things differently - and he does - then what he does stands out for us readers. John's presentation also omits certain key events found in the narratives of Matthew, Mark and Luke. He also has events to include that they do not, such as Lazarus rising. So he spends his time in other places, not simply repeating what is known. This opens doors for his readers.

We look at some comparisons in what follows, bearing in mind that Mark's gospel narrative is a basic resource for Matthew and Luke from which they seldom depart. This is true, even as they include material not drawn from Mark, or group together the teachings of Jesus; nevertheless,

they still maintain the Markan order.

Snippet 08 - John's different presentation: starting with Mark

Mark's narrative breaks the history of Jesus adult life and work into two sections.

First, Mark presents Jesus, called as God's Son. He is endowed with the Holy Spirit as he stands with sinners in John the baptiser's baptism in the Jordan River. He testified, taught and healed in Galilee, sending his disciples out on their announcing mission which derived from his.

Second, Jesus after not being well-received in Galilee, is presented as Messiah where he is decisively condemned and rejected by the religious heads of the nation. He was glorified after his ignominious death by his resurrection and ascension.

We need to have this rough order of Mark's in our mind as we consider John's offering. We have already suggested that John assumes that material such as Mark has assembled is known to his readers. Even if you have never read Matthew, Mark or Luke before coming to John, it is good to know that you are reading a Gospel quite consistent with what those writers present, yet it is, at the same time, a very different presentation.

Snippet 09 - Mark's 'stand-out' events, most of which John omits.

There are definite turning points, for Jesus and the disciples, presented in Mark's narrative. They are also common to Matthew and Luke. We list eight of these important events.

- 1.The birth of Jesus.
- 2.The baptism in the Jordan. This is followed by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus as the pleasure of the Father is expressed over the obedience of his beloved Son.
- 3.The temptation of Jesus in the desert by the devil.
4. The confession of Peter that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.
5. The transfiguration of Jesus. This states that he is the perfect man for our sakes, but also that he is the goal and fulfilment of the ministries of Elijah and Moses, who give place to Him, as he embarks now on a new 'exodus', a new way out for his people.

6. The institution of the Lord's Supper. Jesus will give his life a ransom for many.
7. Jesus' agony in the garden. His victorious decision to go through the death.
8. The desolate experience of Jesus on the cross is recorded.

John assumes these but does not include in his presentation 1,3,5,6,7 or 8. He does mention, although briefly, numbers 2 and 4.

Snippet 10 - John's revelation of the interchanges between the Father the Son.

We noted the incidents in Jesus' life that were foundational to Mark's presentation. These unfolded the important matters that moulded Jesus' early ministry and were central to the witness about that life for Mark's readers.

For John, these are not the main elements of the testimony that he wants set forward. Rather than the encounters between Jesus and the people that Mark might present, John understands the fundamental interchange to be the deep inner relationship between the Father and the Son. This constant theme of Jesus' talk opens to us the inner mind and motives of Jesus as they reflect what He knows of the mind of the Father. As readers, this is where John wants to take us in our ever-growing knowledge of Jesus as his narrative unfolds.

Further, if we as readers can be opened to the relations between the Father and the Son, we can get to know the Father through the Son - for we are constantly being exposed to it through all that happens.

Snippet 11 - Jesus' participation upstages the Jewish festivals.

As to location, Matthew, Mark and Luke make for us a clear division between the Galilee and Jerusalem. In John's gospel his simple layout is intersected by another, which overlays the happenings at the Jerusalem location.

John brings Jesus, at least five times, to Jerusalem at the time of significant Jewish festivals. They are presented to us in an order: Passover, Pentecost [5.1], Tabernacles, Dedication and Passover again. The great discourses of Jesus are grouped around these feasts, as well as another

Passover, this time in Galilee [6.4]. Discussions placed within the setting of these festivals shows Jesus taking over the main thing of each festival. John indicates that Jesus participates, not simply as one Jewish man with his fellow Jews, but as the really central person in the meaning of what God was doing in those ancient events.

Such festivals, commemorating past history of the Jewish people of God, direct us through John's discourses, to appreciate how Jesus is the culmination and final meaning of the historical events that took place between the Jewish people and their God. They all point to Him.

Snippet 12 - John's way of constructing the testimony.

Often our writer starts with some act of Jesus, or some word or parable. He then adds a discourse of Jesus, which opens up the inward, spiritual meaning of that act, word or parable.

In the middle of the discourse John can effortlessly glide into an explanation or a comment of his own [1.24; 2.9c,11,21; 4.8 etc]. So much so that it is often quite difficult for the reader to know when the words of Jesus, or another of the writer's main characters, stop and the words of the writer's own comment begin. See the example of John the baptiser at 4.34-36.

An example of this is seen in the conversation with Nicodemus and Jesus [3.1-15] where, at 3.16-21 we must ask are we hearing the words of Jesus or of John?

Of course, it won't matter. For indeed, this suggests that our writer has thought much about the good news he has heard and seen in standing so close to Jesus. And he has no doubt, passed it on to the local disciples where he lives many times. But the driving energy of his testimony now, is the Holy Spirit of Jesus, Who takes the things of Christ and reveals them progressively to the Church [14.25-26; 15.26; 16.12-15]; the mind of Jesus and this writer, under the influence of the Spirit, are in sync.

Snippet 13 - John the well connected, Jerusalem-based and beloved, disciple.

By identifying himself in the story by the label "the disciple whom Jesus loved", of course, John does not mean that others were not loved by Jesus. After all, his whole Gospel is given to convey the love of God to all

mankind in providing us Jesus as the Saviour of the world [4.42]. But he does describe occasions when he is especially close to Jesus.

He is also a Jew by birth and a Palestinian - he is careful with geography and local scenes. He has a mind acquainted with classical Judaism and his witness is that of someone who has connections within Jerusalem, some of which reach into the high-priest's circle and family.

And our writer sees Jerusalem as the place where his lord was crucified. So he selects for us, his readers, Jerusalem as the historically important, central location for his presentation of his understanding of Jesus.

We would not want to forget also the Revelation to John - that book really presents Jesus as the alpha - the beginning, and the omega - the end. The one with authority over Hades and death. The opening of the seals of the future reveal how the cross of Jesus has entered and changed the field of human history. It is the basis for the conquering of the beast of which dominates the world by God's victorious Lamb, as John the baptiser called Jesus [1.29,36].

Snippet 14 - John's fresh language, stating Jewish ideas in re-minted Greek words.

Mark has Jesus beginning his service preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. He also has demons indicating that Jesus is the 'holy One of God'. That Jesus is the Messiah, Mark keeps in reserve as a secret to be revealed by Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God [Mark 8]. A matter which Jesus says the Father has revealed to Peter.

By contrast, John has taken us straight to the titles of Jesus by the end of chapter 1. Look at 1.19-51 and see if you can make a list! Throughout his Gospel he has Jesus speaking metaphors and statements about himself introduced by "I am..." There is nothing secretive here.

He presents the rule [kingdom] of God as now already come in the lives of Christians; he calls it "eternal life". It is about a known relationship with God and John says it is a sharing God's life as a father does with his children - children who have been regenerated, born from above, now with an authority to become 'children of God'.

And John has special themes he brings forward through the use of special words, all of which he has introduced in his prologue. These words recur and permeate his Gospel, turning up in differing contexts which

subtly enhances their meaning. Words such as life, light, darkness, witness, world, receive, believe, become, children of God, flesh and spirit.

Snippet 15 - The new life is an inward matter.

Paul, the apostle of Christ, as a former Pharisee, in his attempt [successfully, he says], to keep the externals of the law, was undone by the internal nature of the 10th commandment - "You shall not covet" [Romans 7.7-12]. He understood that externals were not the issue, there was something more fundamental.

He was registering within himself what the prophets and the Lord had already taught, that sin was a power sitting at the heart of every man and woman. It was known internally be the person themselves. Paul came to see that a true Jew was one inwardly, and circumcision was not an external matter, but a matter of the heart [Romans 2.28-29].

Placing the cleansing of the temple early in his Gospel, John uses it almost as a heading to state that the externally driven religion of Judaism has been superseded.

There is now a new temple [2.18-21] requiring a new worship [3.1-21]. Worship that can now be offered because there are new worshippers, including Gentiles, with intimate access to the Father [4.1-42].

This "inwardness" of John's presentation of eternal life is central to his witness. It stands shoulder to shoulder with Paul's understanding. While they both have similar ideas - they use different words.

Snippet 16 - Eternal life is the kingdom of God within you, by the Spirit.

The discourses of Jesus in chapters 14-17 teach how the Holy Spirit - the Spirit of the God man, Jesus - comes and makes his home within each of Christ's disciples. Each disciple becomes a dwelling place for the Spirit of God. So the people of God become the temple of God.

Each person has an experience of union with God. With the coming of the Spirit of God into them, they become aware, in their inner self, that the Father and the Son have made their home within [14.23]. So they have an inward, direct testimony assuring them that they are known of God.

From here on in Christian experience, as John states, the disciples knew that their fellowship was with the Father and the Son [1 John 1.3]

and that they had received an anointing, it was the anointing which was within them of the Teacher, the Holy Spirit [1 John 2.27]. And if He was there, within them, no one would say to them any more, "know the Lord".

Snippet 17 - John answers the synagogue's objections to Jesus.

From his first appearance, Jesus had opponents. They emphasised a numbers of matters. Their objections were:

1. He came from an obscure origin. They were mistaken in this with regard to his earthly line, a matter answered by the Matthew, Mark and Luke. But John, in his prologue takes this to a new level, he makes the staggering claim that Jesus is the very incarnation of the Word of God.

2. He lacked what they were looking for in the Messiah. Jesus, by life and teaching constantly corrected their view. John has Jesus making it clear to them that they are mistaken in their reading of the Scriptures and particularly of Moses, who spoke of Jesus.

3. His claims were blasphemous. John takes his overt claims to a new level with Jesus' "I am..." statements.

4. He was not very pious in his attitude to Moses, whom they held in high esteem. From the prologue onward, John indicates that a greater than Moses is here. As early as the prologue, it is a matter of the comparison with the 'law' and 'grace and truth'.

5. His death, particularly the manner of it, they saw as a reproach to himself, and if he were to be Israel's Messiah, utterly scandalous and disgusting. It made his claims really unbelievable. John, of course, makes Jesus' death the very forefront of his saving work for us. In dying in the way he did, he was being 'lifted up' to glory. The whole Gospel has this impending 'hour' of his death front and centre.

This very frontal presentation of the Gospel may imply a time when the breach between the Jewish synagogue and the church of Jesus Christ is already historically obvious.

Snippet 18 - John's timing of the crucifixion of the Lamb of God.

Throughout the Gospel of John, we readers are being constantly prepared for the 'hour' that Jesus has to face, when he will return to the Father by way of trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. This going to the father is the high point and climax of John's presentation.

Using the Jewish calendar of the time, and according to Mark, we would understand that the Last Supper, in the upper room, took place on Nisan 14 and the Crucifixion on Nisan 15. So we would draw the conclusion from Mark's chronology that the supper synchronised with the slaying of the Passover lamb.

John however, has the Last Supper with the disciples taking place on Nisan 13 [13.1;18.28] and the crucifixion on Nisan 14. John wants us to draw the association of that date with the death of God's Lamb [1.29,36]. This has been a consistent theme [chapters 6, and 10] throughout the gospel.

John leaves us pondering, because it is a matter of absolute centrality, the death of God's Lamb as a life freely laid down for us as a decision of the Father and the Son [10.14-17]. Probably the Old Testament background of this Lamb is both the paschal lamb in the Passover of the Exodus as well as a reference to the martyred Servant of Isaiah 53 who sets us free from our slavery to the power, sin [8.34-39] and is the lamb who sustains our very life as we walk to freedom [6.49-59].

Snippet 19 - John: same themes as other apostles, different words

The other apostles of Christ express large themes which John also has at the centre of his presentation of Jesus.

1. Matthew, Mark and Luke record of Jesus that he spoke of repentance and faith, leading to the inheriting of the kingdom of God. John tells us to be born from above and so enter on the eternal life now.

2. John has, like Paul, a new creation in mind - a regeneration [1.12-13.3.3ff] that prepares us to live the life now and so become children of God. Both Paul and John stress that both creation and redemption are found in Christ [1 Corinthians 8.6; Colossians 1.16-17 and John 1.3]

3. John, like Paul understands believers in Christ to be spiritually now free [Galatians 4.21-25; 5.13-18 and John 8.31-34].

4. Paul centres on the place given to the crucifixion of Christ and its connection with being justified through faith. John speaks of the word of God, who is God's Lamb for us. What Paul thinks of as being right with God by his grace [justified] John thinks of as eternal life.

Before 3rd Session

1 - Tabernacles, or the Feast of Booths

Exodus 23.16, 34.22; Leviticus 23.34-36, 39-44; Numbers 29.12-40; Deuteronomy 16.13-15, 31.10-13. 1 Kings 8.12, 12.32, 2 Chronicles 5.3, 7.8, Ezra 3.4, 8.14-17, Zechariah 14.16-19. John 7.1-10.21

[a] Exodus lists the three annual feasts, when all the males are to appear before the Lord, as the [a] Feast of Unleavened Bread, [b] Feast of Harvest of the first fruits of your labours and [c] Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labours from the field.

[b] Leviticus tells us it is celebrated on the 15th day of the seventh month [Tishri, Sept/Oct] and is called the Feast of Booths [also called Succoth] which is from the verb "to weave together" referring to the plaited branches with which the booths were covered. A booth was a temporary shelter usually made for cattle [Gen 33.17] or for men [Jonah 4.5] and especially in a battle field as they camped out [2 Samuel 11.11; 1 Kings 20.12]. So we must not think, in modern style of a booth as we think of a cubicle such as is used as a phone booth, or voting booth. It is a temporary natural shelter made from branches found in the fields and forest.

[c] The feast recalls the time they were redeemed, and lived in temporary shelters. There are offerings offered for seven days and on the 8th day there is a holy convocation; the 1st day is a rest day, as is the 8th. They are to take foliage from the beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and the willow. They are to live in booths for seven days; all the native born in Israel "so that your generations may know that I had sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

[d] The feast is celebrated using many offerings each day. Numbers relates the considerable number of offerings which are offered over the 8 days.

[e] Deuteronomy tells us that it is a joyful, family feast including all the children, the servants, the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and widows of the towns - it was not just a feast for the farmers and the agricultural districts. It is a joyful feast and celebratory of what God has given them.

[f] It was a time to remit debts and read the Law. It was also at

this time every seven years to remit debts at the Feast of Booths; and to gather together to read the law for the men, women and the children and the stranger; so that they may learn and fear the Lord and be careful to do what He said.

[g] Important occasions co-incided with Tabernacles. 2 Chronicles reminds us that the Ark was brought into the Temple that Solomon had built at the time of the Feast of Booths; which was remembered as the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple.

Ezra 3 recalls that, at the building of the altar of the God of Israel under Joshua the son of Jozadak and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, they celebrated the Feast of Booths [so it must have been Sept/Oct]. Ezra 8 makes clear that Ezra read the Law to the people who had returned from the captivity. As they gathered they went out and made booths of the leafy branches and they made booths of them on their roofs, courtyards, in the House of God and in public squares.

[h] God the Provider is celebrated and acknowledged. Zechariah 14 prophesies of the nations who are left after the Armageddon experience will come up to Jerusalem and worship the Lord and celebrate the Feast of Booths. If they do not celebrate then they will have no rain, This is the plague with which the Lord will smite them if they do not celebrate the Feast of Booths, not longer will there be a merchant in the houses of the Lord that day.

What this implies is that, just as the feast of booths celebrated the ingathering of the harvest, and acknowledged that all of the produce was really from God, Who owned the land, and provided the early and latter rain for the harvest so it must be acknowledged by the nations that He is the Lord and Provider of the whole earth. It is He who provides for the rich production of the earth for us to eat. In this way the punishment for those nations who do not go up to acknowledge and celebrate this truth is that they shall have no rain.

2 - The Feast of Tabernacles at the time of Jesus

At the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated in Jerusalem, John's Gospel makes this the setting for two of Jesus' major themes of teaching concerning Himself.

At that time, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in a particu-

lar way in Jerusalem.

[1] Each person had to provide for himself a Succoth [booth] in which he slept and ate his meals for the seven days.

[2] Each person had to collect twigs of myrtle, willow and palm in the environs of Jerusalem. These were the original makings of the booths, but later, some of them were bound together in a sort of festal plume, called the lulab, to which a citron was added. The lulab was a symbol of rejoicing and was carried daily and waved aloft as the Hallel [Psalms 113-118] were sung.

There were three common rites celebrated each day.

[3] The water libation was the first common act of each of the days of Booths.

[a] On the morning of the first day of the Feast, a procession of priests led down to the Pool of Siloam a water container, which was to suffice for the seven days.

[b] It was brought back with the shofar being blown at the city gate [Isaiah 12.3].

[c] The pilgrims, singing the Hallel and waving their lulabs, watched as the priests walked around the altar and the people cried "Save us we beseech thee O Lord."

[d] The priest then ascended the ramp of the altar to perform the libation, with two silver bowls, one for water and one for wine.

[e] On the seventh day, they walked around it seven times, and the priests, instead of waving their lulabs aloft, beat the earth with them to show that the ceremony was ending.

[4] The second great common rite, the lighting up of the temple, was enacted at night. It expressed the rejoicing of the feast. Four, very large Menorahs, were lit and illumined the entire temple area. Under these, the people danced a torch dance to the accompaniment of flutes; while the Levites, descending the 15 steps that led down to the Court of the Women, chanted the Song of Ascents [Psalms 120-134]; one for each step. This lasted most of the night for each of the seven days.

[5] The priests only, at dawn each day of the feast, went to the East gate of the temple. At sunrise they turned West and said, "Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their faces toward the east and they worshipped the sun toward the east; but as for us, our eyes are turned toward the Lord. [cf Ezekiel 8.16]

[6] On the 8th day the Hallel was sung in a solemn assembly.

3 - The water and the light of John Chapter 7-8

Just as the tabernacles reminded them of their whole wilderness wanderings, then the water of libation was something that brought back to mind the way that the Lord had provided for them the water in the wilderness. This was one of the elements of the wilderness journey which would be one their minds.

The other element was the lighting of the women's court by the Menorahs. The Menorahs themselves recalled the light of the presence of God which lit up their way right throughout the wilderness and which not only meant the presence of God but his protective presence and guidance for them throughout that time they dwelt in Booths.

It is these two elements, water and light, which are uppermost in the section of John's Gospel where the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication of the Temple are used as the backdrop for an exposition of these two central themes of the Gospel as it expounds the Lord's person in chapters 7-9.

4 - John's Gospel uses the OT in its presentation of Jesus

John uses the OT material as being fulfilled and brought to its conclusion in Jesus. We can see this in the way that, lying behind the material brought up for discussion, there is usually an OT incident or motif which is preliminary in the mind of the readers.

[a] In the Prologue we were introduced to some theme words which are taken right through the first half of the gospel, and are built upon in a variety of settings. These words are simple words and yet, as the themes builds, they are often used in an increasingly deep way. They are the words of the prologue such as Word, life, light, darkness, witness, believe, world, receive, children of God, born of God, flesh, glory, truth.

[b] Also, in the use of OT incidents which are then clearly referred to Jesus or some aspect of His life and suffering.

[1] The titles of chapter 1: Lamb of God, he who baptises in the Spirit, Son of God, Rabbi, Messiah, he of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Joseph, King of Israel, Son of Man.

[2] He is the providing bridegroom of the wedding feast [chap-

ter 2] bringing the kingdom of joy and feasting and of consummation by the conversion of the legal style of cleansing to the wine of the kingdom. He is also the bridegroom of the people of God [3.28-30]

[3] His body is the temple of the Spirit [chap. 2]; just as He is a walking tabernacle, a Bethel - a house of God - upon which there is an open heaven communicating with men and women. [Chapter 1.51]

[4] Entering and seeing the kingdom of God [chapter 3] is a matter, as Ezekiel foreshadowed, of being born of water and spirit [Ezekiel 36.5-7]. Jesus is lifted up as the Serpent in the wilderness was [3.13] for salvation from the wrath of God.

[5] He is the provider of the gift of living water, greater than Jacob, the digger of wells. He is so even for Samaritans [Chapter 4] who have had five foreign rulers over them in their history, none of whom were their husband.

[6] He is the Lord of the harvest, and insists that men gather food for eternal life [4.27-38] which is the satisfaction of obedience to God's will.

[7] He is the Lord of the Sabbath [5.16 ff] because He is the Son of his Father. He raises the dead and judges the world. He has the witness of the Father.

[8] He is the Feeder of men and women in the wilderness, as of old. He is the bread of life, the daily manna and yet by his death He is true food and true drink for His people. He is the bread from heaven.

5 - Jesus as the giver of the water of life

We have seen the water of purification [chapter2] used as a basis for supplying the wine of the kingdom – something fulfilled in the miracle of Jesus providing for his people in the marriage and life.

We have also seen the water infiltrating into Jacob's well, which was the occasion of Jesus speaking of a gift of God, in contrast to the resting water of the well this was living [running] water which He will give [4.10-14]. It is a satisfying water which, once taken, becomes a source or supply of water, a well which springs up to eternal life – the very life of God = the life of the kingdom of God.

We have seen the water of healing in the pool of Bethesda, stirred up by angelic activity. But alas; you have to be first to it - it constitutes a

race among men and women who are sick, to lay hold of it. A man seeking help to appropriate the stirred water, is healed by a word of Jesus' command.

We have seen the food [manna from heaven] and drink [water from the rock] of the wilderness now likened unto Jesus flesh and blood. The giving of life to his people is connected with his death and suffering. There is something there which makes Him the source of life to them. [Chapter 6].

Now we see on the last Day of the feast of Tabernacles Jesus cries out [7.37-44]:

[1] They should come to Him and drink if they are thirsty.

[2] The drinking activity is equivalent to believing in Jesus; so to come to faith in Jesus is to drink in such a way that the thirst of men and women is not so much quenched as there will be a river of living water flowing from the belly of the man [from his innermost being]. So the image of drinking/believing leads to a reception of life in the inner being of a person which will flow out from there.

"thirsty" then come to mean craving the life of God.

[3] The editorial explanation of the writer John, is that Jesus was specifically speaking of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Which believers in Him were to receive. This reception is understood to be future at the time of the record of Jesus speaking it. The timing has to do with Jesus being glorified. ["Glory" in this Gospel is a study in itself].

[4] This is the first reference to the glorification of Jesus which the Gospel exemplifies. It is a characteristic of John's Gospel [1.14, 2.11] and includes the whole Passion and the Triumph which followed. So John regards Jesus Death as a Victory [12.32, 11.4,40] as Jesus understood the hour of his death to be the hour of his glorification [12.23]. Similarly, Jesus spoke of the moment Judas went out as the time He was already glorified [13.31]; and that He had already received His glory by the faith of his disciples before He suffered [17.10]. In another aspect of this same idea, his glorification followed after his withdrawal from the earth 17.5, 16.14]. Here John uses this phrase about Jesus' glorification as a way to express the divine unity of the work of Jesus in His whole manifestation [1 John 3.5,8, 1.2]. This is different from Paul, who regards the two distinct stages of Jesus ministry as humiliation and exaltation.

6 - Jesus as the Light of the world

It is best to understand our passage in chapter 8 by considering the development of the word “**light**” throughout the gospel and in connection with the life which God brings to his own.

1.4 In Him was life and the life was the light of men. In a Person was life, and this life is for men the light. This raises the question of life in relation to light. This light is something which shines in the darkness

i.e. it breaks in on that which is already there the darkness does not ‘overcome’ it [comprehend] either in the sense of encapsulate, understand

1.9 John Baptist is not the light: the true light

a. comes into the world in the sense of the incarnation]

b. enlightens every man. What will this mean - we shall have to see what the light does to people to understand the development. Suspend judgement here for the moment. Yet, whatever it means it is cosmic in scope

3.19-21 The scene of 3.14ff, is that which has established the message on the basis of Numbers 21.1-9, where, as the wrath of God comes into the camp of the Hebrews, Moses pleads for the people, and the Lord allows them to set up a brass serpent to which they can look if bitten. Then, as they trust the word of God for their salvation from His wrath, then they have it. This picture is the basis for first understanding that the immediate purpose of the Father in sending Jesus was to save the world.

But, having stated that, verse 19 introduces the idea that light has come into the world

a. those who practise evil. Men choose darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil [i.e. their choices are a reflection of their deeds - they have a pre-commitment already in play]

Men do not come to it because it involves an exposure of their deeds as to source. The light brings division, this division is seen on respect of the movement of people. Which in turn reflects their actions. And we are concerned with the source of their action.

b. those who practice the truth

They come to the light to show that their deeds have been worked in God. i.e. the source of their deeds becomes clear, their deeds are the work of the Father, as Jesus’ are. God’s light brings a recognition of His action everywhere. So - the light actually brings division, and recognition of the work of His in the world in men is seen. As to source.

Notice the chiasmic pattern here in the style of John. There is a pattern

of A,B and C which is repeated in the clauses as below.

{A} Everyone who does evil hates the light and

{B} does not come to the light

{C} lest his deeds should be exposed

But

{A'} he who practices the truth

{B'} comes to the light

so that {C'} his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God

Here we see a way to think about the text so as to see the equivalents and contrasts which John uses to convey his message.

So for example:

A: he who does evil is contrasted with practicing the truth. Not, as we might have expected "does good". It is the practised truth which is the opposite of evil. In this way, usage of the word truth is explained.

B: coming to the light is explained as affected by the motive. One does not want his deeds exposed, the other does so that God may get glory. See the statement of the Lord in regard to the blind man in 9.3.."that the works of God might be manifest in him."

C: Exposure of evil is contrasted with manifestation of God's works. The light does both, it exposes evil for what it is, it also shows you what God is doing so that He may receive glory.

5.35-36 Jesus witness to the truth is greater than John's

8.12-20 Here, in the light of the Feast of Tabernacles, perhaps as the lighting of the lamps in that festival brings forth the occasion, Jesus announces that He as the light of the world. He explains that this may be said of Him because the ones who follow Him do not walk in the darkness; they have the light of life. So, this understanding of light as connected with light makes clear that it is the life they receive which works as light in darkness does – it presses it back and they can walk in the light of that life. It speaks of a perception made available to the walker because of the possession of the life within them.

9.4-5 and the following verses

The day and the time for the working of the works the Father gave Him to do. Here we are seeing the matter of the source of His works is the one in question. Compare this with Jesus' constant understanding and

teaching that the works He did were not his works but the works of the One Who sent Him. A time is coming when He cannot do those works. The “and it was night” of 13.40 show how the rest of chapter 9 illustrates the works of Jesus and the strength of the 9.39-41 reply to them.

At the end of the chapter 9 there is a statement of judgement is issued over the Pharisees in the light of their presumed self knowledge and understanding.

12.35,44-46 verse 35- “the light” is here obviously the person of Jesus. They are to walk [re-live in such a way] while they ‘have’ Him.

A. If they live this way the darkness will not overtake them.

B. The one walking in the darkness is typified by the fact that he doesn’t know where [in the sense of goal or immediate movement?] he is going. The darkness has a confusing effect which effects the life of a man.

C. The thing to do “while they have the light” is to believe in the light [= trust Me]. The reason for doing this trusting, is that they may become “sons of light”. Now we have a movement which speaks of their status in relation to the Light.

Here we see the inter-relation between light, darkness, believe, sons of God.[born of God]

verse 46 - Now the statement is made clear. “I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in me may not remain in darkness.”

Here is the direct correlation between “believe” and “light” both associated with the Person of Jesus. Further, not to remain in darkness, implies that the persons of the world are in the darkness. And we have learned from verse 35 that the darkness is typified by not knowing where one is going, and also is a position of being overtaken by another power.