

JOHN **INTRODUCTION**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to the Gospel of John as we begin to embark on this amazing book that will show to us the deity of Jesus Christ or that Jesus is Almighty God!

First of all, let me start out by dealing when the Gospel of John was written. The reason that this is important is that some say that this Gospel was not written by the Apostle John but some 150 years or so after John was around.

From what I can gather, as we look at the evidence, John probably wrote this Gospel in Ephesus around 80-90 A. D.

The John Rylands papyrus fragment 52 of John's gospel dated in the year 125-135 A. D. contains portions of John 18, verses 31-33, 37-38, and this fragment was found in Egypt. So if this was a copy, that means that John wrote this and again, according to most scholars, probably late 80's to early 90's.

Why is that even important to us?

It is important to us because it shows us that the time span from the original writing of the Gospel of John until its earliest copy or fragment, is approximately 35 to 45 years!

Why are there so many that try to say that John didn't write this, but it was written at a much later date?

It is really simple. John gives us a clear testimony, without a doubt, of the deity of Jesus and they didn't like that because they reject the deity of Jesus, so they said it was written much later to build up the Christian faith.

But there again is a huge problem with their logic, like I have said. If there was a piece of John chapter 18, a fragment that was found in Egypt back in 1920 that dates somewhere between 125 and 135 A. D. there must have been wide circulation of this Gospel to make it to Egypt!

And the author of this Gospel was John, written probably from Ephesus, like I have said.

Daniel B. Wallace notes that, “the unbroken stream suggests recognition (or at least acknowledgment) of Johannine authorship as early as the first quarter of the second century. Indeed, John’s Gospel is unique among the evangelists for two early papyri (p66 and p75, dated c. 200 A. D.) attest to Johannine authorship. Since these two [manuscripts] were not closely related to each other, this common tradition [of Johannine authorship] must precede them by at least three or four generations of copying.” (“The Gospel of John: Introduction, Argument, Outline” [Biblical Studies Press: [www. bible.org](http://www.bible.org), 1999])

Now what about four Gospels, why do we need four Gospels? We truly only need one Gospel to give us all the information that we need, right?

First of all, God is the Author and yes, He used human instruments to write these words. But if He is the Author of the Bible, and He is, then what He has given to us is there for a reason, not just something to fill in some pages in the Bible!

Let me give you this perspective and that will lead us into what we will be talking about this morning in our ***INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN!***

There are not four Gospels!

Now hear me out. There are not four Gospels but one Gospel that is four-fold! You see, with these Gospel’s the Holy Spirit is speaking to four different groups of people and emphasizing a different theme of Jesus’ life and ministry!

First of all, we have what we call the synoptic Gospels. And that word “*synoptic*” just means to “*see together.*”

Those are Matthew, Mark and Luke and they do cover pretty much the same territory, but they emphasize the picture of Jesus they want to portray, or I should say the Holy Spirit wants to portray for us.

Then there is the Gospel of John, and his focus is far different than the other three.

John focuses on Jesus’ ministry primarily in Jerusalem while the other Gospels focus on Jesus’ ministry primarily in Galilee.

John focuses on who Jesus is, the Son of God; while the other Gospels focus on what Jesus taught.

And as we will see, John builds his Gospel around 7 miracles and 7 “*I AM*” statements made by Jesus with his whole purpose of writing this Gospel is given to us in John 20:30-31, which says “**And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**” John 20:30-31.

There are two main reasons why John wrote this Gospel.

The first reason is that you would **BELIEVE** that Jesus is the Son of God, the Anointed One.

In fact, the word “**believe**” ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ in the Greek, is used by John some ninety-eight times in this Gospel!

What a great book for someone who is searching for God because John paints that picture for us so that we would believe!

In fact, Charles R. Erdman said that this fourth Gospel *“has introduced more persons to follow Christ, it has inspired more believers to loyal service, it has presented to scholars more difficult problems, than any other book that could be named.”*

The second reason is that you would have **“life”** and that life is found in His Name, in the name of Jesus!

And, interestingly enough, the word **“life”** is used some thirty-six times by John in this Gospel!

What a wonderful book this is because we will not only see Jesus as Almighty God but that He has given to us eternal life, to those who believe!

Now, remember that each writer of the Gospel had a specific view of Jesus and the audience they were writing to.

And that is what I would like to focus on now. And you are going to see an amazing picture that the Holy Spirit is going to paint for us in regard to the person and the work of Jesus.

In Numbers 1:1-3 we are told, **“Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: ‘Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above - all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.’”**

Now I know, you are probably thinking, **“Where in the world is he going with this? I thought we were supposed to be in the Gospel of John, and we are not even in the New Testament, we are in the Old Testament, in the book of Numbers!”**

I think you will see how important this is as the painting, you might say, is finished!

Here in Numbers God wants Moses to number the men who could go to war from 20 years old and above. Not only that, but God is instructing them to set up camp.

Now I do realize that going through this census is difficult and why is it so important to us? But it is.

I am going to take this in sections, and you will see the numbers in these groups and where they were to set up their camp and the standard that they were under for each of them. Bear with me, I think you will be blessed!

As we read here in Numbers 1:20-43 the total number of men who could go to war from the 12 tribes of Israel were 603,550. Levi is left out because they were the priestly tribe, but keep in mind that they are not forgotten when you see where they were to be located in the camp!

After getting the totals from each of these 12 tribes, in Numbers chapter 2 we see how they were to be set up in camp, on the east, south, west and north side. And keep in mind that three tribes will be on each side of the camp with one of the three being the chief tribe or the lead tribe.

Let's begin looking at Numbers 2:3-9 as we look at those who were to camp on the east side.

On the east side of the camp were the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

Now the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun were under the lead tribe of Judah, whose banner was a gold lion on a scarlet background.

Thus, when the pillar of fire or the cloud, which represented the presence of God, the Shekinah glory, began to move, Judah and those tribes associated with them moved first in the camp.

Also, the total number of men able to go to war, 20 years old and above was 186,400 from these three tribes.

Now let's apply what we see here to the Gospel's. Which Gospel presents Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah? Keep in mind that the banner for these three tribes was a gold lion on a scarlet background.

Interestingly enough the Gospel according to Matthew presents Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah and here in the camp we see the very same thing, Judah with its banner of a lion. So, in the camp of Israel, and in this Gospel, we see the Kingship of Jesus.

And Matthew is writing to a Jewish audience, and that should just make sense to us. You see, Matthew quotes out of the Old Testament some 129 times!

He uses the phrase, "**That it might be fulfilled**" 9 times, once again pointing to the fact Jesus is fulfilling what the Old Testament prophets spoke regarding the Messiah.

And the phrase, "**That which was spoken**" he uses 14 times, and once again He is showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of regarding the Messiah.

In Matthew chapter 11 we are told that John the Baptist is in prison and the reason he was put in prison is that he came against the marriage of Herod Antipas and his brother Phillip's wife, Herodias. So John is thrown in prison for coming against this relationship.

And John believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but now, because of the situation that he was in, he began to doubt that. So John sends his disciples to Jesus and he told them to ask Jesus, "**... 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'**" Matthew 11:3.

Again, John had let the circumstances he found himself in cause him to doubt what he believed. But our God is gracious and merciful to us and He will give us the comfort we need even during those difficult times we face in life, and that is what He will do here with John.

So as the disciples of John the Baptist come to Jesus, they ask Him this question and listen to what Jesus says to them. In Matthew 11:4-6, “... **‘Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.’**”

Jesus could have told them, “*Of course I am. What is wrong with you and what is wrong with John. Go and tell John that I am the Messiah, end of story!*”

Now we see that Jesus really doesn’t deal with us that way and I am thankful. Like I have said, He is gracious and merciful, He knows our weakness and He will meet us where we are at if we are willing to listen to Him.

So what is the point that Jesus is making here?

What Jesus tells these men of John is to listen and look at the miracles that were done and then go back and tell John those things you have seen and heard.

How does that help?

This is awesome.

What we see here is Jesus authenticating His ministry by fulfilling what the Old Testament prophets said that the Messiah would do when He came!

He wants the disciples of John the Baptist to not only see this but go and tell John that he needs to look at all that he has seen Jesus do, and then compare them with the Old Testament Scriptures and when you do, you will see that Jesus is the Messiah, He is the One that Israel has been waiting for.

And Jesus does the same with us when we doubt. He brings us to the Word of God so we can see and hear what He is saying to us and we can be encouraged as the disciples of John where and as John would be when they told him these things!

And Spurgeon sums it up like this. ***“Blessed is he who can be left in prison, can be silenced in his testimony, can seem to be deserted of his Lord, and yet can shut out every doubt. John speedily regained this blessedness, and fully recovered his serenity.”***

That is what we must do if we want to be at peace in a world that is in turmoil! Let the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit comfort us, encourage us and keep us moving forward.

Also, as you look at the genealogy of Jesus here in Matthew, and in each of the Gospels we get a different picture as you will see. Matthew gives us the genealogy of Jesus from the Son of David and thus, heir to the throne! In fact, he takes all the way back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. In other words, Jesus has the right to be on the throne of David because He is not only a descendant of Abraham, a Jew, but he is a descendant of David, and thus, He has the right to sit upon the throne of David!

And it does fit with what this Gospel is all about, Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords! In fact, in Matthew chapter 5 and on through Matthew chapter 7 we see the manifesto or the constitution of the King as He speaks of what His Kingdom is to be like. You might think of it like this, ***Jesus is establishing the rules of the Kingdom!***

Again, Matthew is writing to the Jews and thus, he wants them to see that Jesus is the One they have been waiting for, He is the Messiah and thus, he uses many Old Testament passages to prove his point!

Matthew shows us Jesus as the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the King!

As we read on here in Numbers, in Numbers 2:10-16 we see the second group of people that were located on the south side of the camp.

These were the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Gad.

Now the tribes of Simeon and Gad were under the lead tribe of Reuben, whose banner was a man on a background of gold.

These three tribes were the second group to move out and the total number of men that could go to war from these three tribes was 151,450.

What is the picture that the Lord is painting for us here?

When we look at their banner, this man on a background of gold, the man speaks of humanity.

Interestingly enough, the Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as the “**Son of Man**,” speaking of His humanity.

That phrase, the “***Son of Man***” is used some twenty-five times in the Gospel of Luke!

Thus, like I have said, Luke is presenting to us the humanity of Christ!

We are told in Luke 19:10, “**for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**”

Why is that so important to us?

Because if God was going to pay the price for our redemption, He had to become a man. Yes, fully God and yet, fully man in the Incarnation. Thus, He could be our Kinsman Redeemer because He is a relative of ours, and yet, without sin!

As we read, Jesus came to save, as the Son of Man, that which is lost and that is speaking of you and me!

Remember that Matthew was writing to Jews and thus, he emphasized the Old Testament and how Jesus was the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of the Messiah.

Luke wrote his gospel to the Greeks emphasizing the humanity of Jesus, that He is the Son of Man!

And again, this is interesting when you look at the genealogy that Luke gives to us regarding Jesus. It is different than what Matthew gives to us and there is a good reason for that.

Luke takes us all the way back to Adam, while Matthew takes us back to Abraham, why?

Because Luke is showing us the humanity of Jesus and thus, he takes us back to the first man, Adam, while Matthew is showing us that Jesus is the King of the Jews, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, so he takes us to the father of the Jews, Abraham and links Him to the throne of David!

Let me share with you some of the things that Luke brings out regarding the humanity of Jesus. And there are more in the other Gospels, but I want to focus on Luke here.

First of all, we are told that *He was born of a woman* in Luke 1:30-38.

We also see that *He was subject to the laws of human development* in Luke 2:40 and Luke 2:52.

He also possessed the essential elements of human nature, and in regard to that we are told that *He possessed a body* in Luke 24:36-40. *He suffered physical agony* according to Luke 22:40. *He experienced intense sorrow and distress* according to Luke 13:34-35. *He died* according to Luke 23:46.

Again, Luke is presenting to us the Son of Man who came to save man from his sin. The humanity is something that is so important, as we have seen, because it links us to Jesus. God became flesh and dwelt among us, took on a human body, flesh and blood, to save us!

As one writer put it, “The humanity of Christ refers to the reality that in his incarnation, the Son of God assumed a complete human nature with all its limitations (but without in any way surrendering his divinity), so that he might serve as humanity’s representative, substitute, and example. . . .

In his incarnation, the Son of God assumed a complete human nature - body, soul, mind, and will . . . he is already a divine person, but rather he gave personhood to the human nature that he assumed.

As a human, Jesus experienced all the ordinary, non-sinful limitations of humanity. He grew and developed. He experienced hunger, thirst, weariness, and the full range of human emotions.

His humanity was as integral to his saving work as his divinity. As the true human, the last Adam, he lived out obedience to God through our common humanity as our representative and substitute: through his life, death, and resurrection, he merits salvation for all who are united to him by faith. . . .

. . . the Old Testament anticipates that the redeemer of fallen humanity would be one who is both God and man. The New Testament plainly teaches that Jesus Christ is this divine-human redeemer. His humanity is apparent throughout the “whole course” of his obedience. His conception, birth, development, limitations, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, ongoing priestly work, and final return give powerful testimony to the genuine humanity of Christ. It remains only to tease out briefly a few implications from this rich biblical teaching.”

Luke shows us Jesus as the Son of man!

As we move on here in Numbers chapter 2, I am going to skip Numbers 2:17 or where the Levites were located, and I will come back to that in a few minutes, and you will see why when we get there.

As we move to the west side of the camp, we see that this is where the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin are located and that is found in Numbers 2:18-24.

In this group we see that the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin were under the lead tribe of Ephraim, whose banner was a black ox on a gold background.

These three tribes were the third group to move out when camp broke, and the total number of men that could go to war from this group of three tribes was 108,000.

When you think of an ox you probably recognize him as a beast of burden.

That is interesting to me because as you look at the Gospel of Mark you see that Mark presents Jesus as the suffering servant.

Remember what we are told in Mark 10:45, “**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**”

You see, Jesus is our ultimate example of what it means to be a servant. Let me explain it like this.

The word “**ransom**” is the Greek word LYTRON which means “*the price of release*” and it refers to a payment for the release of a slave or captive. It also carries with it the idea of a substitution.

In other words, Jesus exchanged His life, He took my place so that I may live. And the lesson that Jesus is giving to these guys who were so interested in power and positions, is you need to give your life to others if you want to be great in God’s kingdom!

Think about that. The King of kings and Lord of lords, Almighty God became a servant to serve and now He wants us to serve others with that kind of love.

As you read the Gospel of Mark it moves very quickly, it is kind of action-oriented, and the reason for this is that the audience was the Roman people. That would appeal to the Romans, that kind of writing style.

We also saw that the Gospel of Matthew gave us the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Abraham, showing that He is a Jew and Jesus was a descendant of King David, linking Him to the throne!

In Luke we saw the genealogy of Jesus go all the way back to Adam, linking Him to man and thus, Luke showed us Jesus the Son of Man!

But as you read Mark you will find no genealogies in this Gospel, which seems very strange. Why would Mark not list the genealogy of Jesus?

Because you don’t list the genealogies of a servant or slave. And for the Roman audience, that would just make sense not seeing the genealogy of Jesus listed here because He is pictured as the Suffering Servant!

So the Gospel of Mark shows us Jesus as the *Suffering Servant!*

As we move to the north side of the camp, we see the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. And we see this in Numbers 2:25-31.

Now the tribes of Asher and Naphtali were under the lead tribe of Dan, whose banner was a gold eagle on a blue background.

These tribes were the fourth group to move out when it was time for them to break camp.

And the total number of men that could go to war in these three tribes was 157,600.

So what does this represent to us? We know that the last Gospel is the Gospel of John and it fits in perfectly.

You see, the eagle represents supreme sovereignty as he soars through the heavens.

As you read the Gospel of John you will see John present to us, Jesus as the Son of God!

And that is the picture we see here in this banner, the deity of Jesus.

Matthew is writing to Jews and thus, he quotes out of the Old Testament many times.

Mark is writing to Romans and he is very specific and moves rather quickly through the events of Jesus' life.

Luke is writing to Greeks showing them the humanity of Christ.

And John, who is he writing to?

John wrote primarily to the church, which is interesting because there is nothing mentioned of the coming Tribulation Period, the Antichrist and-so-on.

Why is that?

Because the church won't be here during the Tribulation Period but will be with the Lord! Pretty amazing how the Bible does not contradict itself but what it speaks about is consistent throughout the Scriptures!

Now we have seen in Matthew the genealogy of Jesus given to us through the lineage of Abraham and specifically through David, giving Jesus the legal right to sit upon the throne of David. And this genealogy is through his stepfather, you might say, Joseph.

We also saw Luke give to us the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to the first man, Adam. And yet, the genealogy is a little different than what we got from Matthew. Why is that?

Because the genealogy that Luke gives to us is from Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Why is that so important?

Because, in Jeremiah chapter 24 there is a curse placed on the lineage of David. Let me explain.

Coniah, (also known as Jehoiachin or Jeconiah), was a King in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. And Coniah was wicked, and the Lord was finished with him, He wanted nothing to do with him. He only reigned for 3 months and 10 days and then was taken into captivity.

We are told of these events in II Kings 24:13-17, **“And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king’s house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said. Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king’s mother, the king’s wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all who were strong and fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.”**

And in just those short 3 months and 10 days he turned so far from the Lord that the Lord placed a blood curse upon him and his descendants because of his wickedness. And I am sure that at this point Satan and his forces were probably throwing a party.

Why would they do that? Why would they be rejoicing over this curse?

The reason is simple.

Back in II Samuel chapter 7 God promised David that through his seed the Messiah would come. And from Solomon on down in the Southern Kingdom of Judah there was a descendant of David on the throne.

But now this blood curse placed on the descendants of Coniah has put a halt to that. It looked like Satan won. I wonder how the people felt when they heard this, did it even bother them? It should have!

But as evil as man may be, we don't need to fear because God has a plan!

In the New Testament book of Matthew, we see Jesus Christ presented as Messiah the King, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, as I have said.

And keep in mind that Matthew takes us back to Abraham, the father of the Jews to show us the lineage of Christ. Matthew takes us through the lineage of Solomon, from which Coniah was a descendant to Joseph, Jesus' stepfather.

Again, keep in mind that the Lord said that no descendant of his, Coniah's, shall be on the throne of David.

So then how can Jesus sit on the throne of David with this blood curse on the descendants of Jeconiah or Coniah?

Keep in mind that Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus but the legal father of Jesus.

That means the blood curse did not pass to Jesus because He was the adoptive son of Joseph. And yet He had all the rights of that lineage, including the right to sit on the throne of David through His adoptive father, Joseph!

But what about the blood line, where does that come in?

When we look at the Gospel of Luke, we will see the genealogy of Mary and Mary is also from the lineage of David, from the tribe of Judah.

But her genealogy is not through Solomon and Jeconiah. You see, her lineage is through another son of David, Nathan and thus, there is no blood curse that is passed on to Jesus for if there was, then He could not have paid in full the penalty for our sins, He would have His own sin to deal with! But Jesus was without sin as the Scriptures tell us!

It is amazing what God has done but we should not be amazed, He is God! This is how God could bring forth the Messiah from lineage that has been cursed? All things are possible with God and don't ever forget that. Don't ever think that Satan has outsmarted God! Thus, He had royal blood through Joseph, the adoptive son of Joseph, the legal right to the throne, and yet without the blood curse, through Mary.

It is as Charles H. Dyer sums it up for us as he wrote,

This prophecy also helps explain the genealogies of Christ in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Matthew presented the legal line of Christ through his step-father, Joseph. However, Joseph's line came through Shealtiel who was a son of Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Matthew 1:12; cf. 1 Chron. 3:17).

Had Christ been a physical descendant of Joseph and not virgin-born, He would have been disqualified as Israel's King. Luke presented the physical line of Christ through Mary, who was descended from David through the line of his son Nathan (Luke 3:31). In that way Christ was not under the "curse" of Jehoiachin.

- Charles H. Dyer

So we see the genealogy of Jesus in both Matthew and Luke, one from His stepfather Joseph, and the other through His mother Mary.

Then we came to Mark and Mark presented Jesus as the suffering servant and thus, there is no genealogy of Jesus in Mark because a servant's genealogy is not important.

But what about the Gospel of John, many say that there is no genealogy in this Gospel as well. I disagree with that. I believe that John gives us the genealogy of Jesus and it is really the theme of the Gospel he wrote.

Listen to what John tells us regarding the genealogy of Jesus in John 1:1-2, "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.**"

John shows us that Jesus is God, that He is eternal, that He has always existed! And we will look at this more next time, because it is the theme of this Gospel and it is important for us to understand, like I have said.

The Gospel of John shows us Jesus as *Almighty God, His deity!*

Now I did skip the Levites in Numbers 2:17 and I need to cover that before I paint this picture or complete this picture for you.

In the middle of the camp were the Levites with Moses, Aaron and the priests camping by the entrance of the Tabernacle on the east side.

After the first two groups broke camp, then the Tabernacle was to be moved and then two other groups behind the Tabernacle, to guard and protect those that could not fight.

The other families of Levi also camped around the Tabernacle with the Kohathites on the south side, the Merarites on the north side, and the Gershonites on the west side. And their responsibility was the care of the Tabernacle including its upkeep, its transportation and-so-on.

So the entire Tabernacle was enclosed you might say by the Levites.

Let me sum this up for you by reading from Numbers 2:32-34, **“These are the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers’ houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses. Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers’ houses.”**

Now let me show you the picture or the completed picture that God has painted for us here, it is amazing!

Make no mistake, God is a God of order and He is very detailed, even in the camp of Israel, which may not seem important, but it is. And, surrounding the Tabernacle, protecting it were 603,550 soldiers!

First of all, as you looked at the camp of Israel, understand that their tents always faced towards the Tabernacle, which was located in the center of the camp.

And so, when you wake-up in the morning the first thing you would see is the smoke from the morning sacrifices being offered up. When you went to bed at night, you would see the light of the Tabernacle shining; you would see the Shekinah glory burning bright.

Thus, the Tabernacle was the focus of the nation and needed to be in the heart of the camp, where it was.

That is a great lesson for us. In fact, when communities were being built, many years ago, they would be built around the church, which was the center of the community, and the homes would spread out from there.

Thus, the church, a place where people came to worship God, was the focus of their community and their life. It is sad to see we have lost that focus in our society today.

But again, what an important lesson for us to learn as individuals, as a family, and as a nation. The strength of any individual, any family, and any nation is found only when God is in the center, when God is the heart, the focus of their lives. And look at our nation today!

Now as you look at the camp of Israel you would always do so from the east, facing the opening of the Tabernacle.

Now if you take the number of people from each tribe and place them in their position in the camp; north, south, east and west, you will find your vertical axis will have a slightly longer dimension on the bottom than on the top, 186,400 to 108,100.

The horizontal axis will be almost equal, south to north, 151,450 to 157,600.

And their camps would be setup due north, due south, due east and due west.

Also, in the center of the camp is where the Tabernacle was located. And in the Tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant, located in the Holy of Holies.

And this is the place where God dwelt, above the Mercy Seat, which was located on the top of the Ark of the Covenant, between the wings of the Cherubim.

In *Exodus 25:22* we read of God meeting with them in this place. The Lord said, “**And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.**”

Now, unbeknown to the children of Israel, or anyone else for that matter, God was giving a beautiful picture of His great love for us. And the only way you could see this picture, as you looked at the camp of Israel, is if you were directly above the camp, if you were flying over it or on a high mountain looking down upon the camp.

Now what do you think you would see as you looked down upon the camp of Israel? Balaam the soothsayer and the King who hired him to curse Israel, Balak the King of Moab, saw this picture. So what did they see?

If you did look down you would see a picture of a cross, made by the various tribes, which camped east, west, south and north.

Not only that, but right in the middle of the cross was where the Tabernacle was located, which represented the presence of God. And the sacrifices that were done in the Temple would cause the blood of these animals to be spilled.

Thus, as you looked at the camp of Israel you would see God in the middle of the cross! Sound familiar? It should!

You see, the shadows of the cross in the Old Testament are brought to light with Christ, as **HE** is placed right in the center of this picture, right in the middle of the cross!

Remember what Jesus said to the Jewish religious leaders in John 5:39-40, **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.”**

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, and it does drive home the point that they missed what the Scriptures were showing them. It reads, **“You search and investigate and pore over the Scriptures diligently, because you suppose and trust that you have eternal life through them. And these [very Scriptures] testify about Me! And still you are not willing [but refuse] to come to Me, so that you might have life.”**

The pictures, the types, the Old Testament testifies of Jesus, the Messiah, Almighty God! And even in Numbers, a book that many don't read but it is filled with lessons and types for us to learn from, we have this beautiful picture being painted for us of Jesus on the cross of Calvary thousands of years before this event took place!

It is as Jesus said, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”** John 3:16-21.

And as we have seen, the Gospels give to us a beautiful picture of Christ.

He is the Lion from the tribe of Judah as Matthew presents to us.

He is the suffering servant as Mark presents to us.

He is the Son of man as Luke presents to us, speaking of His humanity.

And John presents to us Jesus as Almighty God, His deity!

What a beautiful picture and now you understand why we have four Gospels!

Only God could do something like that, no man could orchestrate events spoken and then coming to pass thousands of years down the road, but God can because He knows the beginning from the end! He is Almighty God!

Thus, what He shares with us in the Bible is something we can trust because God cannot lie but man has no problem. And when someone denies the deity of Jesus Christ it is not because there is no evidence, but they reject that truth.

Again, keep in mind that the reason John wrote this Gospel is simple. He tells us in John 20:30-31, and it is very clear. He wrote, "**And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**"

Make no mistake about it, John wrote this Gospel with the intention of showing and proving to us that Jesus is Almighty God, His deity!

And to end this Gospel, to put his stamp of approval that these things are true, He wrote in John 21:24-25, **“This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”**

The apostle John was an eyewitness to the events that took place in the life of Jesus and he is testifying of that fact.

In I John 1:1-4 listen to the confidence John has in what he is saying, the reason he can be so certain of these things, **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”**

John opens up by speaking of the fact that Jesus is eternal and thus, He is Almighty God!

When John writes, **“That which was from the beginning”** he is not talking about the beginning of the world or creation, but before there was anything, when all there existed was God, Jesus was there, the Word was there!

In fact, when John says, **“In the beginning was the Word”** he uses the imperfect form of the Greek word *en* which expresses the idea of *“continuous timeless existence.”*

Then, in John 1:3 when he says, **“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”** he uses the Greek word is *egeneto* that means *“to come into existence”* or to *“begin to be.”* Here he is speaking of the creation of all things, the physical universe and all that goes with it.

But, in regard to the Word, no matter how far back in time you go, the Word has always existed because He is God!

And so we have seen that the eternal God, Jesus, became flesh and dwelt among us and John can attest to that with 100% confidence.

How can he be so sure?

Because John was there, he heard Jesus talk, he saw Jesus with his own eyes, he looked steadfastly at Jesus examining Him, he touched Jesus.

Thus, Jesus is not some ghost or spirit, but He was flesh and blood in the incarnation, and He was fully God!

In spite of what the Gnostics were saying, John was there and thus, these things are true concerning the Word of life!

You see, they were eyewitnesses of the Lord, and thus, the Gnostics were not, and we can trust the accounts of John and the other disciples because they saw what transpired.

It is as one writer put it, ***“I am so glad my knowledge of eternal life is not built upon the speculations of the philosophers or even theologians but on the unimpeachable testimony of those who heard, saw, gazed at, and handled Him in whom it was incarnate. It is not merely a lovely dream, but solid fact, carefully observed and an accurately recorded fact.”***

So we have seen that Jesus is Almighty God, He is eternal and in the Incarnation God dwelt in a body of flesh. Fully God and fully man in the Incarnation.

And what John wrote in I John, applies here to this Gospel of John as well, because John was there with Jesus and he is testifying of these things.

Now, keep in mind that the synoptic gospels focus primarily on Jesus Galilean ministry and public teachings. While John's gospel focuses mainly on Jesus' Judean ministry and His private teachings to His disciples.

And, as we will see, almost one half of John's entire gospel deals with the last week of Jesus life before His crucifixion, what we call "*Passion Week.*"

Also, keep in mind that Jesus did many more miracles than what John wrote about. In fact, he tells us that if he did write them all down "**... that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. . .**" John 21:25.

So John gives to us seven miracles that Jesus did and they are specific, this is what he focused on,

Jesus turned the water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee – John 2:9.

Jesus healed the nobleman's son – John 4:46–54.

Jesus healed the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda – John 5:2–9.

Jesus fed the five thousand John 6:1–14.

Jesus walks on the Sea of Galilee to rescue His disciples – John 6:16–21.

Jesus heals the man blind from birth – John 9:1–7.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead – John 11:1–44.

There are also the seven “*I AM*” statements that Jesus made in John’s Gospel that again point to the deity of Jesus. They are,

I Am the Bread of Life – John 6:35, 41, 48, 51.

I Am the Light of the World – John 8:12; 9:5.

I Am the Door – John 10:7, 9.

I Am the Good Shepherd – John 10:11, 14.

I Am the Resurrection and the Life – John 11:25.

I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life – John 14:6.

I am the Vine – John 15:1, 5.

So many powerful lessons the Lord has for us as we go through this Gospel. My intentions, with this introduction, is that you would see the hand of God not only in the Gospels, but throughout the Scriptures, from Genesis through the book of Revelation.

One writer put it like this. He wrote regarding this Gospel,

It is rightly said that each of the Gospels presents Christ with a distinctive emphasis. Matthew emphasizes his kingship, Mark his servanthood, Luke his manhood, and John his Godhood.

Certainly all of the Gospels present all four truths, but their separate emphases have allowed them unique functions in telling the story of Christ.

John is unique in his powerful presentation of Jesus as the great Creator-God of the universe. His massive vision of Christ has been used countless times to pen the eyes of unbelievers to who Jesus is and the way of redemption.

The Gospel's continuing effect on Christians is equally profound because in John's account believers find an ongoing source for expanding their concept of the Savior's greatness. The serious student of John will find that each time he returns to the Gospel, Christ will be a littler bigger . . .

- R. Kent Hughes – John – That You May Believe, p. 15

My prayer as we go through the Gospel of John is simple, it was John's desire, "**. . . that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**" John 20:31.

And, especially in the days we are living in, that the things of this world would decrease its hold on you, its power on you, and Christ would get bigger and bigger so that no matter what, your joy may be full!

THE CAMP OF ISRAEL

Gospel - Mark
Ephraim – Black Ox (Banner)
Manasseh
Benjamin
Total = 108,100

West

Gospel - Luke
Reuben – Man (Banner)
Simeon
Gad
Total = 151,450

South



North

Gospel - John
Dan – Eagle (Banner)
Asher
Naphtali
Total = 157,600

Levites
camped
around the
Tabernacle
with God
dwelling in
the middle
of the camp
or cross!

East

Gospel - Matthew
Judah – Lion (Banner)
Issachar
Zebulun
Total = 186,400