

The Gospel of St. John

Listed below are four themes that are threaded throughout the Gospel of St. John. These themes are intertwined and support one another. To grasp the message of John's writing, one must search out and follow these four themes through the whole of the Gospel.

THEME ONE: The Light vs. Darkness Theme

The dual between **light** (Christ and his ways) and **darkness** (Satan and the ways of the world) is one of the more obvious themes in the Gospel of John. Examples of this are found in almost every chapter and every page of the Gospel of John.

THEME TWO: The Water/Life Theme

Water is one of the most significant elements in sustaining life. In the Gospel of John, Christ is shown as having power of water and thus has the power to give living water. Note the following examples:

- (1) Christ turns water to wine (John 2)
- (2) Christ's discourse on Living Waters at Jacob's well (John 4)
- (3) Christ heals the invalid man at the Pools of Bethesda (John 5)
- (4) Christ walks on water (John 6)
- (5) Christ offers living water during Feast of Tabernacles (John 7)
- (6) Christ heals the man born blind at the Pool of Siloam (John 9)
- (7) Christ washes the feet of the twelve (John 13)

THEME THREE: The Seven Signs and the Seven Discourses

The first half of the Gospel of John is built around seven signs (miracles) and seven discourses. The signs and the discourses seem to be related to each other; the discourses speak of various powers the Savior has that are necessary in helping each child of our Heavenly Father to gain eternal life and the signs or miracles confirms that the Savior has those powers. The seven signs and seven discourses are as follows:

SIGN	DISCOURSE
(1) Water converted to wine (John 2:1-11)	(1) The natural man converted to the spiritual man (John 3:1-21)
(2) Bringing life to the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54)	(2) The living waters that bring everlasting life (John 4:1-42)
(3) The healing of the invalid on the Sabbath (John 5:1-18)	(3) The Divine Son, the Lord of the Sabbath (John 5:19-47)
(4) Miracle feeding of the multitude with bread (John 6:1-15)	(4) Christ is the bread of life (John 6:22-66)
(5) Jesus walks on water (John 6:12-21)	(5) Christ, who will walk into the presence of the Father, offers living water to all (John 7:14-39)
(6) Healing of the man born blind (John 9)	(6) Christ is the Light of the World (John 8:12-59)
(7) The raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11)	(7) Christ, the Good Shepherd, will lay down His life for his sheep that he might bring about the resurrection (John 10:1-18)

THEME FOUR: The Replacement/Transcendent/Fulfillment Theme

For John, the coming of Christ brought about a replacement, transcendence, and fulfillment of events and places which were held sacred among the Jews. In other words, Christ is *the* ultimate fulfillment of the sacred events and places of the Old Testament. The following are examples of this theme.

- The replacement of the Temple with the body of Christ (either resurrection or body of the Church) [John 2:13-22]
- The replacement of the worship in the sacred mountains of Gerizim and Ebal with the worship of Christ [John 4]
- The replacement of the Sabbath worship of the Pharisees with the proper worship of the Sabbath taught by Christ [John 5]
- The replacement and fulfillment of the Feast of the Passover with Christ, the Bread of life [John 6]

- The replacement and fulfillment of the Feast of the Tabernacles with Christ, the light and life of the world [John 7-9]

THEME FIVE: The Seven I am's

Throughout his gospel, John often records the Savior using the phrase, "I am". Many scholars have noted seven particular "I am" declarations that emphasize just who and what Jesus is. These declarations are important to John's testimony of Christ. The seven "I am" declarations are as follows:

- (1) "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35; see also 41, 48, 51)
- (2) "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12)
- (3) "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7, 9)
- (4) "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14)
- (5) "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25)
- (6) "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)
- (7) "I am the vine" (John 15:1, 5)

There are other "I am" statements that help the reader understand who and what Jesus is that might be added to these seven. Can you find them?