

may glorify you" (17:1). John wanted to communicate that God was a relationally loving God who desired to comfort the dark, sinful world, which was headed toward death and destruction. God . . . loved . . . the world . . . so he sent Jesus.

God Loved . . .

Religion is often seen as humanity's attempt to reach up to the heavens. John, however, showed that God was fulfilling the Old Testament expectation of a caring God who would come to comfort his fallen creation: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for" (Isa. 40:1-2). Humans were not working their way to heaven; rather, God came and provided a way.

John showed that God sent his Son because he loved us (3:16). Jesus offered up his life as a sacrifice because he loved us ("Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," 15:13). This was "good news" (= "gospel") for a lost humanity. The Creator God, the all-powerful Lord of the universe, was loving and desirous of a relationship with his frail creation—so much so that he went to great lengths in providing the way of forgiveness so that they could be brought back into relationship with him.

John would emphasize that God revealed himself, not just with words, but through the living Word, because he wanted to have a personal relationship with us.

God Loved the World . . .

John wanted his readers to understand how much God loved *the world* that he used the word *world* seventy-eight times in his Gospel. The term *world* (*kosmos*) is found just four times in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Although the idea that God loved all people—both Jew and Gentile—appeared in the Old Testament, the message that God chose Israel as his special people was emphasized. Though God initially chose Abraham with the hopes that through Abraham "all peoples on earth will be blessed through [him]" (Gen. 12:3), many Jewish people in Jesus' day de-emphasized God's love for the Gentiles.

God Loved the World So He Sent Jesus

Because God loved this sinful world, he was motivated to act. God could not sit idle because the world was in a bleak situation. It was captive to sin and darkness, under the influence of the "ruler of this world" (12:31 NASB; 16:11; "the devil," 8:44; 13:2; or "Satan," 13:27), and, as a result, would be judged, condemned, and finally brought to death (5:24). As surely as the blind man could not see anything (John 9) and often stumbled and fell, so, too, the world was in darkness and desperate for the invasion of the "light of the world" (9:5) so that they would not stumble and fall (11:10).

Jesus, the "Word," who was with God the Father (1:1), was sent by the Father to the world in order to reveal his love. John showed that the idea of Jesus being "sent from above" was very important by using "send" verbs about sixty times in his Gospel. The *shaliah* principle in Judaism said that "the sent one is as the sender," which signified that the one sent had all the authority of the sender. Jesus, as the sent one, comes from the Father, with all his authority (3:34; 4:34; 7:29; 8:26).

Jesus came as the "Good Shepherd" who loved and took care of his sheep (10:15, 28), in contrast to the *bad* shepherds of Israel, who were blind (9:40-41). The Jewish leaders of Israel? Jesus was not taking care of the sheep, so God sent a different

dant of David to rescue them in fulfillment of Ezekiel 34:23: "I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them." This *good* shepherd would rescue and seek out the lost sheep, bind up the injured, give them peace, lead them to good pasture, and tend them (Ezek. 34). This is love: Jesus, the Sent One of God, sacrificed his own life on behalf of his sheep—all because God loved the world.

As the Sent One, Jesus did only what the Father told him to do (14:31; cf. 5:19). Jesus, the perfectly obedient Son, shared in the ministry of the Father and said near the end of his life, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (17:4; cf. 19:30: "It is finished"). Just as the only hope for the royal official's son who was close to death was life through Jesus (4:47), this "dead" world could find hope only in the life that was brought through the Sent One, Jesus.

### John (in His Gospel) Demonstrated That Jesus Was the Christ, the Son of God

Though John emphasized God the Father, Christology (= the study of the person of Christ) was also one of John's most important emphases. Jesus was the expected Jewish Messiah, but he was also much, much more.

The Expected Messiah . . .

Though God had promised Israel an eternal land inheritance and eternal throne (Gen. 17:8; 2 Sam. 7:13), the Jewish people in Jesus' day had lived under foreign oppression for most of the previous six hundred years. This fact, along with numerous Old Testament messianic prophecies, awakened in them a desperate longing for a *Messiah* to come and free them from Roman oppression.

One of John's main goals was to convince everyone to believe that "Jesus is the Christ" (20:31). Christ was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *Messiah*. That is to say, both "Christ" and "Messiah" mean exactly the same thing: "anointed one." There were many "anointed ones" in the Old Testament (priests, kings, prophets, even the pagan king Cyrus). As the expectation of a coming Messiah grew, however, people began to think less of anointed *ones* and more of an Anointed *One*.

Jewish expectations for the Messiah were quite varied. Some expected a priest like Aaron and others a prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:18), but the majority expected a warrior king like King David—who had freed Israel from foreign oppression through military might.

We see these expectations in John. Jesus was called the "prophet" by the Samaritan woman (4:19) and by the Jewish crowds after feeding the five thousand (6:14; cf. 7:40; 9:17). John clearly showed, however, that most Jewish people expected the Messiah to be a warrior king. Nathanael declared, "You are the king of Israel!" (1:49). After the feeding of the five thousand, the crowds wanted to make Jesus king by force (6:15). As Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey (12:13), the crowds hailed him as King, probably with the expectation that he would start a messianic revolution against Rome. When he failed to do this, many in the crowd who shortly before shouted "Blessed is the king of Israel" concluded that Jesus was not the Messiah.