

## Intro to the Gospel of John – John 1:1-51

**AUTHOR:** John the Beloved, disciple of Jesus

**DATE OF AUTHORSHIP:** Between 90 and 100 BCE, approximately 65 years after Jesus' death and resurrection

**AUDIENCE:** Primarily Jewish, mixed with some gentile converts

**NOT SYNOPTIC:** This is just a fancy way of saying that John's gospel is unlike the other three. Matthew, Mark, and Luke's gospels are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they are written from a very similar point of view and follow a very similar timeline, while John's gospel is much different.

- Key features of Jesus' ministry are missing from John's gospel.
  - There are no exorcisms or parables.
  - There's no fellowship at the table with sinners.
  - The key synoptic phrase "the kingdom of God" occurs only twice.
  - 5 of the 8 miracles detailed in John's gospel are missing from the synoptics.
- Many key synoptic events are absent.
  - Jesus' baptism
  - Jesus' temptation in the wilderness
  - The transfiguration
  - The institution of the Last Supper
- Many stories told in John's gospel are left out of the Synoptics.

- Miracle of changing water into wine
- Jesus' conversations with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman
- The Raising of Lazarus from the dead
- Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet
- Jesus' high priestly prayer
- The account of doubting Thomas
- John's literary style is unique.
  - John writes his gospel account more thematically than the other three. He doesn't focus so much on chronology, rather he groups stories and happenings together to better prove a point.
- Jesus' teaching style is uniquely represented.
  - In the Synoptics, Jesus speaks in parables and short wisdom sayings. But, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus speaks in long discourses and dialogues with his opponents, the Jewish leaders.
  - The Synoptics relate Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God, repentance, and right behavior toward God and others. In John, Jesus speaks more on philosophical issues of truth, life, and knowing God.
- How Jesus speaks about Himself is also unique in John's gospel.
  - Jesus speaks more openly about himself in John than in the other gospels.
  - In the Synoptics, Jesus' teaching focuses on the Kingdom of God and his role as its inaugurator. In John, he speaks more about himself and his unique relationship with the Father.

- There is no “messianic secret” in John’s gospel account.

#### **OVERARCHING THEMES OF JOHN’S GOSPEL:**

- Jesus’ ‘I AM’ Statements
  - The Bread of Life (6:35)
  - The Light of the World (8:12, 9:5)
  - The Door (10:7)
  - The Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
  - The Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
  - The Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
  - The True Vine (15:1)
- Heavy emphasis on the Holy Spirit
- Heavy emphasis on Prayer

#### **JOHN’S PROLOGUE POINTS TO JESUS AS GOD:**

- John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (ESV).
  - “Dwelt among us” can also be interpreted as “tabernacled among us.”
  - “We have seen his glory” refers to the glory that Moses asks to see in Exodus 33:18.
  - “Only Son from the Father” calls back to Psalm 2:7.
    - Other translations say, “Only begotten Son of the Father.”

- “Full of grace and truth” is drawn from Exodus 34:6-7 where Yahweh declares to Moses what His character is.
  - Hebrew word used for grace here – hesed
  - Hebrew word used for truth here – emeth
  - Hesed and emeth are seen as shorthand for Yahweh’s character all throughout the Old Testament.
- Proverbs 16:6 “By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil” (ESV).
  - “Steadfast love” = hesed
  - “Faithfulness” = emeth
- John is using all of these Old Testament Scripture references in his prologue to make the following points:
  - The only thing that can atone for sin is the character of Yahweh.
  - Jesus is full of the character of Yahweh.
  - Jesus is Yahweh.
  - Only through Jesus is our sin atoned for.

#### **ANCIENT RELIGION OVERVIEW:**

- Local deity: Has limited power and is willing to talk and listen to you.
- Cosmic deity: Has all cosmic power and authority but won’t interact with you.
- Cosmic deities were known to have created local deities to do their bidding, so they didn’t have to be bothered by humanity.

### **OPTIONAL READING FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING:**

- Book of Exodus
  - Exodus 3 – Moses and the Burning Bush
  - Exodus 33 – Israelites delivered from Egypt, Yahweh shows Moses His Glory
  - Exodus 34 – Yahweh gives His name and Character
- Book of Genesis
  - Genesis 1 – Creation Narrative (Elohim using speech)
  - Genesis 2 – Creation Narrative (Yahweh using His hands)

### **TAKEAWAYS & LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS:**

1. What about the context of John's gospel surprised you or stuck out to you? How will this change the way you read and interact with this gospel?
2. Do you find yourself viewing God as more of a local deity (engages with you, but lacks power) or a cosmic deity (distant and all powerful)? What has led you to these conclusions?
3. Who do you need God to be to you in this specific season or stage of life? How can others pray in agreement with this and support you?