

John Chapter 1

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Introduction:

1. We have used the delightful *New Living Translation*, translated by 90 translators, for this study.
2. John is the simplest of the four gospel, yet at the same time it is the most profound. It was written many years after Matthew, Mark and Luke were in circulation.
3. While some have dated it before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, most authorities chose a later date such as AD 90.
4. With this late date, the other three gospels were already widely circulated. It was not necessary for John to revisit such questions as the genealogy of Christ or His virgin birth so John is free to bring up more information about why Jesus is the Christ.
5. Matthew, Mark and Luke portray Jesus frequently in His Galilean ministry while John speaks of Him frequently at Jerusalem.
6. Each Gospel shows a different *origin* for Jesus. **Matthew** shows Him coming from Abraham and fulfilling the promises made to Abraham. **Mark** shows Jesus as coming from Nazareth, a town with little reputation. **Luke** shows the Man Jesus coming from the first man Adam while **John** shows Jesus coming from heaven.

START AT THE BEGINNING

(1:1.) In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

- In the first scratch from his inspired pen, the writer John identifies with Genesis 1:1. "**In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.**" Before the sun, moon and stars—**God** existed. **God**, not creation, is eternal. John is thoroughly anchored in the truth and validity of the Genesis record.
- **The Word of God** was the moving force at creation time. "**And God said . . .**" Genesis 1:3, 6, 11.
- John also says that *time* had a **beginning** and is not eternal as some teach.
- Now John introduces the key person in his unfolding gospel—the *living Word*.

(2.) He existed in the beginning with God.

- **James E. Smith** speaks of the “always wasness” of the Word. There were and still are people who cannot accept that Jesus, **the Word**, was in the **beginning**. Rather, they present Jesus as the very first life that was created by God. In our times, they use a different translation of John 1:1-2:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god. This one was in the beginning with God.” *New World Translation (2013 revision)*
- **The Word** was not just “a god,” but **was God**. John settles the matter.
- How could John know about the eternal nature of **God**? He wasn't there so he had to have received his message by direct inspiration.
- In these opening two verses, John has affirmed:
 - That the **Word** was before the beginning.
 - That the **word** was personality.
 - That the **Word** was deity.

(3.) God created everything through Him, and nothing was created except through Him.

- *Gnostics* taught that **God** distanced Himself from creation because it is inherently evil. But the truth is that **God** the Word **created** anything that has been **created**. Without exception, everything material in the universe owes its existence to the Word.

(4.) The Word gave life to everything that was created, and His life brought light to everyone.

- Beyond initial creation, there is **life** in the **Word** and whatever **man** knows about right living came from His hand.
- These qualities were not created, but are an extension of deity, eternal elements of God's being. They are the **light** of mankind.
- The **Word** not only created the universe, but He imparted **life** to it.

(5.) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

- The power of this **light** from God is so great that **the darkness** cannot **extinguish it**. Man has an inborn fear towards both death and **darkness**.

- Now that we have the heavy theology out of the way, we shall see how this **light** from God came to earth.

GOD'S ADVANCE MAN

(6.) God sent a man, John the Baptist, (7.) to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony.

- Luke gave the details about how John **was sent from God**. Because Luke's Gospel had been in circulation from some years, John condenses the story to this single sentence.
- Note that **John the Baptist** was only **a man**. Also note that the writer John did not mention his own name in the book we call the Gospel of John.
- It was God's intention that **everyone might believe in the light**, but people are free to make their own decisions.

(8.) John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light.

- **John** the Baptist was **not the light**, but came to identify **the light** for others. John was to be The Identifier. Jesus said that John was *a* lamp shining in John 5:36.

(9.) The One who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. (10.) He came into the very world He created, but the world didn't recognize Him.

- Some had a real difficulty with the fact that the Creator of mankind would become a human Himself. Even though the Maker of all things came into His own creation, yet he was not recognized for who He was. They simply would not read His ID.

(11.) He came to His own people, and even they rejected Him.

- God had prepared a special nation, Israel, to watch for and receive the Light of the World, but even those prepared (**His own**) to receive the Messiah of Israel failed to do so. Even the people of Nazareth, where He grew up, rejected Him.
- **Paul Butler** writes:
Here is the great tragedy: A people that had so long been nursed, disciplined and prepared to present the Messiah to the world for salvation, scorned and finally shamefully crucified the Incarnate Word.

(12.) But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. (13.) They are reborn -- not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

- **Believing and accepting** Jesus gives a person the right to go further in the relationship. All human *second* births begin with human decision to obey God.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

(14.) So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

- The writer John makes a clear statement about the the **Word**. God became man **and made His home among us**. He “tented” among us. So Rotherham’s translation:

And, the Word, became, flesh, and pitched his tent among us, and we gazed upon his glory,—a glory, as an Only-begotten from his Father. Full of favour and truth.
(John 1:14 Rotherham)

This connects John’s gospel with the *Book of Exodus* where the tent of God was constructed so God could live among His people.

"Have the people of Israel build Me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them. (Exodus 25:8 NLT)

Now God is again going to live among His people.

- John was there and **saw** it. John beheld the **glory** of Jesus at Cana in chapter 2:11. There were many such events. Many healings and even some raised from the dead. Jesus demonstrated **the glory** of God.

(15.) John testified about Him when He shouted to the crowds, "This is the One I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for He existed long before me.'"

- Jesus was younger than **John** the Baptist by six months. But because of His eternal nature, He is **greater** than John. His rank is superior to this man who was sent from God while Jesus is God. Jesus is eternal.

(16.) From His abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.

- Knowing Jesus was an act of **grace**; being God's child was an act of **grace**; receiving the Holy Spirit was an act of **grace**. This list goes on. Nothing God has done for us is deserved; it is all a **gracious blessing**.

(17.) For the law was given through Moses, but God's unending love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.

- While there was grace in **the law**, yet Jesus brought grace unending. There was a vivid comparison.
- The earthly title of the eternal **Word** is given: **Jesus Christ**. John has not used that name until now.

(18.) No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is Himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

- Moses desired to see **God's** face, but could not. Now mankind can **see** the **Father** by **seeing** the Son, **unique One**.
- The multiple nature of **God** is set forth again. Jesus shows us how the **Father** would have lived among us.

DAY 1 — THE OFFICIALS CHALLENGE JOHN THE BAPTIST

(19.) This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?"

- The **priests** were controlled by the ruling Council of 70, the Sanhedrin. The **Temple assistants** included the Temple police.

(20.) He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

- If the inquisitors from Jerusalem were thinking that John the Baptist was **the Messiah**, they heard a clear denial.

(21.) "Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?" "No," he replied. "Are you the Prophet we are expecting?" "No."

- **Elijah** was the greatest of Israel's oral prophets. Like John the Baptist, he was not a writer. They also expected a literal flesh-and-blood **Elijah**. These Jerusalem experts probably misunderstood Malachi:

"Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives. Malachi 4:5
NLT

- They also looked for one called **the Prophet**, being unaware that this was another name for the Christ (Greek) (or Messiah, Hebrew.) The Lord, through Moses, had promised a coming prophet:

I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him.
(Deuteronomy 18:18 NLT)

(22.) "Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?" (23.) John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah: "I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!'"

- These interrogators were sent from the brightest scholars in Israel. There should not be a question about John's authority. It is based on **Isaiah**, a book they accepted. John cited **Isaiah** to them:

Listen! It's the voice of someone shouting, "Clear the way through the wilderness for the LORD! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God!
(Isaiah 40:3 NLT)

- The questioners were not interested in who John was announcing, only in getting a report back to the officials at Jerusalem.

(24.) Then the Pharisees who had been sent (25.) asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"

- But the authority question persisted. If John was not the **Messiah, Elijah** or **the Prophet**, why was he **baptizing**?

(26.) John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is Someone you do not recognize. (27.) Though His ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be His slave and untie the straps of His sandal."

- He is **baptizing** because the Lord told him to. But the overarching purpose of his ministry is to identify Jesus for the populace.
- John was so humble that he claimed he was **not even worthy to be His slave and untie the straps of His sandal.**

(28.) This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

- The location of this **Bethany** is unknown.

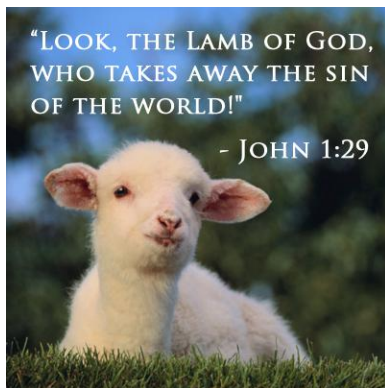
DAY 2 — THE BAPTIST INTRODUCES THE LAMB OF GOD

The first step in Jesus' ministry was to assemble a group of disciples.

(29.) The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

All Jewish people would understand this figure of speech. **John's** disciples were listening and evaluating, too. They could see that **John** was more than impressed with Jesus.

- At Passover, each family provided a lamb for sacrifice to roll their sins ahead. **John** identified a single **Lamb** provided by **God** to remove **the sin of the world.**



(30.) He is the One I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for He existed long before me.'

- The Baptist is quoting his own comment from an earlier time. (vs. 15)

(31.) I did not recognize Him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that He might be revealed to Israel."

- Probably **did not recognize him** in the sense that he did not realize the real *identity* of Jesus. This comment would loosen the ties between John and some of his disciples.

JOHN THE BAPTIST IDENTIFIED JESUS

(32.) Then John testified, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon Him.

- A strong evidence to **John** was that Jesus had visibly received the **Holy Spirit** at His baptism. **John** had **witnessed** this at the baptism of Jesus.
- There is no record that Jesus had miracle-working power until he received **the Spirit**. This means that Jesus could not work miracles during His youth and during His 20s.

(33.) I didn't know He was the One, but when God sent me to baptize with water, He told me, 'The One on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

- God had communicated directly with His prophet John, telling him how to identify the one who would **baptize** others in **the Holy Spirit**.
- One instance of this was when the 12 were **baptized** in the **Holy Spirit** on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. It is not an unlimited promise to everyone.

(34.) I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that He is the Chosen One of God. "

- John the prophet says without hesitation that Jesus in the **Chosen One of God. God** in human form because he had seen Him.

DAY 3 — JESUS SELECTS DISCIPLES

- This was different. Normally disciples in Israel selected their rabbis. But here Jesus did the picking. He said:
You didn't choose Me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using My name. (John 15:16 NLT)
- Jesus is not picking high-ranking men with extensive formal training in tradition. He is picking sincere men who knew the Scriptures and loved their God.

(35.) The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. (36.) As Jesus walked by, John looked at Him and declared, "Look! There is the Lamb of God!"

- **John** the Baptist understood the role of **Jesus**. He understood he himself was a forerunner and advance man.

(37.) When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.

- So the ranks of John's **disciples** are thinning as men switch to **following Jesus**. But after all, that is why the Baptist was sent—to lead men to Jesus.

ANDREW AND A FRIEND ARE CHALLENGED TO FOLLOW

(38.) Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" He asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are You staying?" (39.) "Come and see," He said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with Him to the place where He was staying, and they remained with Him the rest of the day.

- These men had time to talk. This must have been a fascinating interview. They stayed on as disciples of Jesus. The *friend* must have been the John who was writing the book. He had taken note of the exact time of the meeting.

ANDREW AND PETER FINDS THE MESSIAH

(39.) Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus.

- **Andrew** was the quiet brother of the more forward **Simon**. They were both fishermen on the Sea of Galilee.

(41.) Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").

- These brothers knew the Scriptures and shared in the national expectation of a coming **Messiah**.
- John was writing to a general audience because he defines **Messiah** for his readers. It would not need to be defined if all of his readers were to be Jewish.

(42.) Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John -- but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").

- **Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus**. Such powerful words and a wise move. **Jesus** could handle this interview once He had been included.

- His parents had named him **Simon**, but Jesus had another name in mind that he would call him later. The name Jesus planned for **Simon** means *Rocky*, a small rock—**Peter**.
- Now there are three men named **John** in the story, although the writer John does not mention his own name in the book. He was still present.

DAY 4 — PHILIP FINDS THE ONE PROPHESED (vs.45)

(43.) The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow Me."

- **Philip** is a Greek, rather than a Hebrew name. His Jewish parents may have had some experience outside of Galilee.

(44.) Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown.

- **Bethsaida** was a small fishing village. Later, we find **Peter** with a house in Capernaum that became a base of operation for Jesus and his men. **Andrew** lived there, too. We can only speculate that **Peter** married a daughter in the home and moved there, along with his brother **Andrew**. That would explain why **Peter's** mother-in-law lived there, too.

NATHANAEL FINDS THE SON OF GOD, THE KING OF ISRAEL

(45.) Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth."

- **Philip** and **Nathanael** were buddies in studying the Scriptures and had looked for the Prophet foretold by Moses.
- **Nathanael** is called Bartholomew in the other accounts of Jesus' life.

(46.) "Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" "Come and see for yourself," Philip replied.

- **Nazareth** did not have a good reputation with **Nathanael**. Maybe this was a case on inter-community rivalry.
- **Philip's** response was a wise one: **Come** and check it out.

(47.) As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel -- a man of complete integrity."

- Deceit must have run high in the land because **Jesus** identifies **Nathanael** as not being **deceitful**. He was transparent and straightforward.

(48.) "How do You know about me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."

- **Nathanael** had come and seen more than he thought possible. **Jesus** knew what he has been doing!

(49.) Then Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God -- the King of Israel!"

- Here is the person the nation had waited for for centuries. He is **God** in the flesh. **Nathanael** is convinced.

(50.) Jesus asked him, "Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this."

- This remarkable meeting and its miracle is just the beginning. Nathanael will have **greater** experiences in the next several years. He will see water turned to wine, the blind made to see, even people raised from the dead.

(51.) Then He said, "I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the One who is the stairway between heaven and earth. "

- Jesus must be referring to an incident in the life of Jacob where he saw a stairway.

As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. Genesis 28:12 NLT

So Jesus is saying that He **IS** the **stairway** to **heaven**.



- **R.C. Foster**

summarizes the selection of these disciples:

This record of the actual opening of Jesus' ministry is full of victory. He does not declare Himself in spectacular fashion to the multitude, but a little group of select and eager men begin to have an insight into His glorious personality.

- They recognize Him as the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the Son of God and the King of Israel.