

Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

John | God Became Flesh

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How does the Gospel of John begin?

“In the beginning...”

~ *John 1:1*

Now, where else have we heard a book begin with these three words: *in the beginning*?

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...”

~ *Genesis 1:1*

It is clear from the first few verses in John that he had the first few chapters of Genesis on his mind as he began his Gospel. So, what happens in the first few chapters of Genesis?

- **Genesis 1–2** | God creates the world and everything in it, and it was all very good.
- **Genesis 3:1** | Satan enters the garden and deceives God’s people
- **Genesis 3:6** | Adam and Eve rebel against God. They turn their back on Him.
This is called sin, and sin separates us from God.
- **Genesis 3:15** | God gives His people a promise of hope: He would send a Savior (who would come from the Seed of the woman) who would crush the head of Satan – and so we have this hope of God restoring this relationship that was lost.

And then for the next 39 books of the OT, God’s people are waiting for this promised Savior. And then Jesus comes! And here in John 14, Jesus is speaking words of comfort and hope and life to His disciples, and in verse 6 we hear Him say,

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

~ *John 14:6*

In the Garden of Eden, God’s people lost their access to God.
But here Jesus is telling them that **HE** is the way to the Father.

Earlier, in chapter three, we hear Jesus having a private conversation with a religious leader, and it was in that conversation that Jesus says probably the most famous sentence in the history of Christianity:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

~ *John 3:16*

If this is true – if Jesus is **the way** to the Father... and if we are saved through **believing** in Him – then what you and I believe about Jesus is more important than anything in our life.

What you believe about Jesus is more important than what you believe about anything else in the world (politics, economics, social issues, church, government, current events).

We have all sorts of ways of identifying ourselves to those around us:

- I'm a 9th grader
- I'm an African
- I'm a healthcare professional
- I'm a Baptist
- I'm an American
- I'm a deacon
- I'm an immigrant
- I'm a musician
- I'm pro-life; I'm pro-choice
- I'm a Republican; I'm a Democrat
- I'm a mom of 4 kids

All of those things matter. But **the thing about you** that matters infinitely more than any of these other things is what you believe about Jesus.

What's interesting (or I should say "*troubling*") is that every major religion in the world claims to believe in Jesus.

Over the past month, I've been having intentional conversation with **Mormon missionaries** in the area. We've had a couple of them over to our house for a meal, and then I've had several in-depth conversations with them about theology, doctrine, soteriology, inspiration, the gospel...

I love these men. I've thoroughly enjoyed my time with them, but we have some **massive disagreements**.

- The unchanging, eternal nature of God.
- The sovereignty of God.
- That our God is the One and only God, the Creator of all things.
- That God has faithfully preserved His Word and His church throughout the past 2,000 years.
- What it means to be saved. How we get saved.
- The nature and criteria of prophesy.
- The difference between mystery and contradiction.

But the most important difference between Mormons and Christians is what we believe about Jesus Christ.

This isn't just a difference between Christians and Mormons; it's the fundamental difference between Christians and every other religion in the world.

- **Mormonism¹:**
 - *Agree*: Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, God’s appointed sacrifice for our sins
 - Firstborn spirit-child of the heavenly Father and a heavenly Mother
 - The spirit brother of Satan
 - Progressed to deity in the spirit world
 - One of many gods
 - Not equal to God the Father
 - We can become gods just like Jesus...and just like the Father

- **Jehovah’s Witness:**
 - God’s firstborn son and the sacrifice for humanity
 - A spirit resurrection (not a bodily one)
 - Created by God (Jehovah)
 - Not God. Not equal to God.

- **Islam²:**
 - Born of a virgin.
 - Wise teacher.
 - Miracle Worker.
 - Revered prophet sent specifically to the Children of Israel.
 - Ascended into heaven.
 - He did not die. He was not God, nor the Son of God.³

- **Hinduism:**
 - Wise, holy teacher.
 - One of many gods (not uniquely divine).
 - The perfect example of “self-realization”.⁴

- **Buddhism⁵:**
 - An enlightened, wise, and holy teacher.
 - Not divine.

- **Orthodox Judaism:**
 - Respected Rabbi
 - Miracle Worker
 - Son of Mary (though not a virgin)
 - Crucified on a cross
 - Did not rise from the dead. Not the Messiah. Not the Son of God.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-8-beliefs-you-should-know-about-mormons-when-they-knock-at-the-door/>

² Founded by Muhammad on the Arabian Peninsula in the early 7th Century. He claimed to be restoring the monotheistic religion corrupted by the Jews & Christians. Their holy book is the Quran.

³ Quran 2:87; 3:46, 49–51, 55; 4:157, 171; 5:75; 6:85; 9:30; 19:18–22.

⁴ Some consider Jesus to be a symbol of humans can attain, rather than a true historical person.

⁵ Based primarily on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (a spiritual teacher from India who lived from c. 563BC to 483BC and is known as the Buddha).

As far as I am aware, every major religion accounts for Jesus, but only Christianity accounts for the claims that Jesus made about Himself.

- Yes, He was a Miracle Worker, but He was more than that.
- Yes, He was the Sacrifice for our sins, but He was more than that.
- Yes, He was the Messiah, but He was more than that.
- Yes, He is the only begotten Son of God, but He is more than that.

And John devotes His Gospel to telling us exactly who Jesus is.

- **Matthew:** The Gospel of Jesus is the answer to every OT promise and hope.
- **Mark:** The Gospel of Jesus is not just words, but it is the power of God.
- **Luke:** The Gospel of Jesus is for all people (Jesus' relationships).
- **John:** Jesus' identity

PRAY

CONTEXT

- Written by one of the twelve apostles: John.
- He was one of the three men in Jesus' inner circle (Peter, James, and John).
- John (and his brother James) had the nickname "Sons of Thunder".⁶
 - They most likely earned this nickname from stories like the one we read about in **Luke 9:54** where they are walking through a city that doesn't believe in Jesus, and so their proposed solution was to call down fire from heaven and burn the city to the ground.
- John regularly referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."⁷
- He was a pillar in the church of Jerusalem.
- One of the last surviving eyewitnesses of Jesus.⁸
- John is the author of the three letters (epistles) at the end of the NT, the book of Revelation, and the Gospel that we are looking at this morning.

PURPOSE STATEMENT:

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*

Key word in this verse (and in this book) is the word "**believe**".

- John uses this word over 100 times.⁹

⁶ Mark 3:17

⁷ John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20.

⁸ The majority of the disciples had been martyred for their testimony in Jesus.

⁹ Every chapter except for 15 (abide), 18 (truth), and 21 (love & discipleship).

READ:

- 1:12
- 2:11
- 3:16
- 4:41
- 5:24, 46
- 6:29, 47
- 7:38
- 8:24
- 9:35–38
- 10:25–26
- 11:25
- 12:46
- 13:19
- 14:1
 - 15 = Abide
- 16:27
- 17:20–21
 - 18 = Truth
- 19:35
- 20:29, 31
 - 21 = Love & Discipleship

This was John's **purpose** for writing this book: that we might believe in Jesus.

And so the question we need to ask is “**Who is this Jesus?**”

- The Jesus who didn't die on a cross?
- The Jesus who was a wise teacher but nothing more.
- The Jesus who is going to return to earth as a follower of Muhammad?
- The Jesus who worked miracles but isn't the Son of God.
- The Jesus who was a good man but who wasn't the Messiah?
- The Jesus who is one of many gods?

John said that life comes from believing in Jesus, but it would seem that every religion in the world believes in a “Jesus”, and none of them are the same.

So the **question** is: Who is the Jesus that John is calling us to believe in?

- I think this is the most important question you and I could ever ask.
- And answering this question is the point of John's Gospel.

I only want to look at two passages in John this morning, but first, I think it will be helpful if we go back to Exodus 3 – to that moment when God meets with Moses at the burning bush.

Exodus 3:13–15: “I AM” = that is My name forever.