

The Gospel of John: *Know Jesus and Live*

Part 1

Introduction to John

Tech specs

- **Author:** the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, a Palestinian Jew and a member of Jesus' inner apostolic circle during his earthly ministry.¹
- **Audience:** John's original audience consisted of both Jews and Gentiles living in the larger Greco-Roman world in Ephesus. For the Jewish reader he demonstrates Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah, the fulfillment of many OT themes, and the Son of God who was sent by God the Father to reveal the only true God and to provide redemption for humanity. For the Gentile reader he frequently explains Jewish customs and Palestinian geography and translates Aramaic terms into Greek.²
- **Date:** most likely between 70-90 A.D.

Unique Features of John's Gospel

- Some of us may know that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are commonly referred to as the Synoptic Gospels "for the simple reason that they give us synopses of the life of Jesus— overviews of His ministry on this earth."³ John, however, doesn't seem overly concerned with giving the reader a synopsis of the life and ministry of Jesus. This was observed by the early church father Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) who said, "Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain [in the other canonical Gospels]...composed a spiritual gospel."
- John "devoted almost two-thirds of his written account to the last week of Jesus' life."⁴
- John's Gospel is "the most theological of the four Gospels."⁵
- John "gives us the most extensive revelation from the lips of Jesus of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity."⁶

The theme of John's Gospel

- We don't have to guess about what John was trying to get across. He laid all his cards on the table when he said...
 - ❖ John 20:31--*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
 - This is why I gave our series through the Gospel of John the subtitle, "*Know Jesus and Live.*" It was John's deep desire that people who come to know Jesus and be saved, it was John's

¹ ESV Study Bible notes

² Ibid

³ R. C. Sproul. *St. Andrew's Expository Commentary: John* (Kindle Location 187). Reformation Trust Publishing. Kindle Edition

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid



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deep desire that people grow in the knowledge of Jesus and abide in Jesus. Beloved, this will also be our goal as we study John's Gospel together.

I. The Word

- Ever wonder why it is that John uses this term? Ever wonder why he didn't simply say "In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God and Jesus was God?" Rest assured John's choice of words was not arbitrary.

What the Jews would have heard

1. "The Word" to a Jewish person would have brought mind O.T. passages that speak of God creating all things. Passages like...
 - ❖ Genesis 1:1-3--*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.*
 - ❖ Psalm 33:6--*6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.*
 2. "The Word" to a Jewish person would have brought to mind O.T. passages that speak of God revealing truth to his people. Passages like...
 - ❖ Isaiah 38:4--*Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah:*
 - ❖ Jeremiah 1:4--*Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying,*
 3. "The Word" to a Jewish person would have brought to mind O.T. passages that speak of God healing and saving his people. Passages like...
 - ❖ Psalm 107:20--*He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.*
 4. "The Word" to a Jewish person would have been thought of as powerful and effective...
 - ❖ Isaiah 55:11--*so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*
- In describing Jesus as the Word, John clearly knew he was using terminology that resonated with the Jewish people.

What the Greeks would have heard

- "The Stoics (a school of Greek philosophers) understood logos (the Word) to be the rational principle by which everything exists...As far as they were concerned, there is no other god than logos, and all that exists has sprung from seminal logoi, seeds of this logos."⁷
- In describing Jesus as the Word, John clearly knew he was using terminology that resonated with many Greeks as well.

II. The Attributes of the Word

1. The Word is **Eternal**
 - ❖ John 1:1--*In the beginning was the Word,*
 - ❖ John 1:2--*He was in the beginning with God.*

⁷ D.A. Carson. *Pillar New Testament Commentary Series: John.*

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2. The Word is **personally with God**.

❖ John 1:1--*the Word was with God...*

❖ John 1:2--*He was in the beginning with God.*

- This statement has tremendous trinitarian significance. Here we see that the Word is not merely part of God. The Word is a separate person who is with God.

3. The Word is **God**.

❖ John 1:1--*...the Word was God.*

- Some have argued that the absence of a definite article (*The* God) indicates that Jesus was not actually God. They would argue that Jesus is divine, but not actually God. However, as D.A. Carson puts it...“This will not do. There is a perfectly serviceable word in Greek for divine (namely *theios*). More importantly, there are many places in the New Testament where the predicate noun has no article, and yet is specific.”⁸

4. The Word is **God’s agent of creation**.

❖ John 1:3--*All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

5. The Word is **life and light**

❖ John 1:4--*In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

- Life and Light are highly significant themes in John’s Gospel. We will hear these terms time and time again through our study so we must know what they mean.
- **Life**--when John says “*in him was life,*” he is saying that the Word is the source of physical and spiritual life. Physical in that he is God’s agent of creation. That is simply to say that “*In him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).*” Spiritual in that the world is “*dead in the trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1)*” and the Word has come “*that they may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).*”
- **Light**--“the light is revelation which people may receive in active faith and be saved,”⁹

6. The light of the Word is **almighty**

❖ John 1:5--*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

- Absolutely nothing stops God’s Word from doing all that it seeks to accomplish.
 - ❖ Isaiah 55:11--*so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*
 - ❖ John 10:28-30--*I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. 30 I and the Father are one.*
 - Remember how we paraphrased this? Jesus is basically saying, “I am the omnipotent, all sovereign God of the universe and I am giving my sheep eternal life and there is no power in this universe that will prevent me or hinder me from doing so!”

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid



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III. The Mission of the Light

The Light came to shine on the entire world.

- ❖ John 1:9--*The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*
 - We need to be aware that this passage isn't speaking of 'inwardly illuminating' everyone (as we will clearly see in the ensuing verses), but rather the light came to shine 'on' everyone. This is further supported by passages like...
 - ❖ Matthew 28:19--*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,*
 - ❖ Acts 1:8--*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

The Light came that those who receive him would become children of God

- ❖ John 1:10-12--*He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*
 - This passage always brings to mind that old saying, "the same sun that melts the ice, hardens the clay."

This birth into God's family is not something we do, it is a sovereign act of God

- ❖ John 1:13--*who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*
 - The importance of this verse is that it eliminates all boasting. John is ensuring that no one can read this passage and say "I did the smart thing! I did the right thing. I chose of my own free will to receive the light and so now I get to be a child of God and you don't Na-nee-na-nee-boo-boo!" John, in this verse is insisting that the believer say, "There but for the grace of God, go I"

IV. Witness to the Light

- ❖ John 1:6-8--*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

V. Revelation of the Word

The Word became flesh

- ❖ John 1:14--*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*
 - It is significant to point out that the word "*dwelt*" can,, and maybe should be translated "tabernacled." The reason for the significance is that John is knowingly drawing the minds of Hellenistic Jews (Jews who spoke Greek and would be familiar with the Greek O.T. called the Septuagint) to the O.T. tabernacle. He is stirring them to think of the days when the majestic glory of the Lord was a cloud by day and a fire by night. We know this is his intention because he goes on to say...

The Word has a glory that is unlike any other save God himself

- ❖ John 1:14--*...and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*

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- I will close with this last quick point. Maybe you have noticed that I have said the name ‘Jesus’ very much this morning. I have talked a great deal about “the Word” and “the Light” but not so much about Jesus. This was very intentional because I believe that John has also very intentionally refrained from saying the name Jesus. I believe he is using the literary technique known as suspense. He has spoken of a “Word” that is eternal, with God, is God, is God’s agent of creation, is life, is light, and is fulfilling his purpose with omnipotent power. He has spoken of “Light” that shines on everyone, gives life to those who receive him, and does so with complete and total sovereignty. He has told us that there was a witness to this “Light.” It was a fellow by the name of John. He has announced that the Word became flesh, and that the Word has a glory that is unlike any other save God himself. Now he finally comes to it. Now the moment we have all been waiting for. The moment he unveils the identity of this infinitely glorious person.
- ❖ John 1:14-18--*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.) 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*