

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

### *God Is Here!*

This begins our study of the *Gospel of John*. The writer himself gives us his reason for writing his gospel. **John 20:31 (ESV)** <sup>31</sup> *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.* The focus of this gospel is to place emphasis on the deity of Christ.

The first three gospels, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, are called the “The Synoptic Gospels” from a Greek word that means to see together or from the same perspective. These three gospels all view the life of Christ in a similar way. These gospels deal primarily with the events in Christ’s life. *John*, on the other hand, deals more with the **spiritual** meaning of these events. His gospel consists chiefly of Jesus’ discourses and conversations. John goes deeper and emphasizes truths that are not mentioned in the other gospels. For example, all four gospels record the feeding of the 5,000 but only *John* gives the great sermon on the Bread of Life in **John 6** that explains the meaning of the miracle. One of the major themes of John’s gospel is the conflict between faith and unbelief. Since this is a conflict that still rages all around us, it is critical that we be informed regarding the saving truth that Christianity is Christ. I, like John, want you to know in your hearts that **Jesus is God!**

Ancient tradition has recognized John, the disciple, as the author of the book. John identified himself as the author in chapter 21. He does not give his name but refers to himself as he always does in his gospel as the disciple whom Jesus loved! More modern critics like to suggest that it was not John the disciple but John of Ephesus who wrote this gospel. According to Halley’s Handbook first published in 1927, these are the same critics who like to deny the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, and His bodily resurrection. Critics suggest that John the fisherman would not have been well read enough in Greek to write what he did. Of course, we know that John wrote what he did under the power of the Holy Spirit living within Him. **2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*

*John* makes it clear that Jesus is not just a man; He is the eternal Son of God. Jesus is different from all founders of other religions because He died and rose again. The founders of other religions are in the grave. Jesus, the Son of the Living God, sits at the Father’s right hand in heaven and one glorious day, He will return for those who put our faith and trust in Him!

Our existence is tinged with constant uncertainty. Each day we are faced with the possibility of loss, suffering, despair. When we realize that our Lord Jesus Christ is Eternal, we can live in joy and face the uncertainty of tomorrow with Eternal Security. Our Jesus will have the Last Word and one of these days as His children, we will reign in glory with Him and we will no longer be controlled by time.

### The Eternal Word

**Read John 1:1-2 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*  
<sup>2</sup> *He was in the beginning with God...* **John 1:14 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> *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.*

John begins his writing not with the birth of the Messiah but instead begins with the birth of the world. Beginnings and endings are tied to humanity not to God. Because we are human and everything for us has a definite beginning and ending, we tend to ‘feel’ that it must be the same with Jesus but it is not true. God existed before the beginning and John explains that the Word (Jesus) was present in the beginning. The Channel 11 news has a little program they call Verify. They take things we hear and verify whether what we hear is factual. I included verse 14 at this point, because verse 14 verifies that the Word who was present at the beginning of our world is the One who became flesh that we know as Jesus. God in the flesh is the one foretold by Micah: **Micah 5:2 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> *...one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

Word in the Greek is Logos. This was a term already known when our Lord appeared on earth. The great philosopher Plato had spoken of many unsolved mysteries and expressed the hope that someday there would come forth a Logos from God that would make everything clear. John began his gospel by proclaiming that the Word – the Logos from God was here!

We understand thoughts and concepts by using words. Jesus, who is one with the Father, became a Man so that we might in our finite minds know God. Jesus is God’s Word to us. **Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

### The Creative Word

**Read John 1:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

Creation is described in **Genesis** as God speaking the world into place. Time after time in the **Genesis** account, we read the words, *God said*. When God spoke and created, He made something out of nothing. The world likes to diminish the power and authority of Jesus. However, nothing in creation even exists outside of the sovereign power of the Word – that is Jesus.

John who knew Jesus as a Man and as a personal friend found it most significant that Jesus was with God in the beginning although Jesus was born in Bethlehem and spent His ministry of three and a half years along the shores of Galilee. John said of Jesus in **1 John 1:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—* Jesus was the Creator of Life in the Beginning and Jesus is the Creator of Eternal Life for you and for me.

### Light Creates Life

**Read John 1:4-5 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.* <sup>5</sup> *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

When we look at the dark things of our world, it is easy to fret and worry – how can God’s light continue in such a dark world? Don’t worry! Our Jesus is life. He brings Light to us! The darkness can never extinguish God’s light.

Life is a key theme of the gospel of **John**. The four essentials to life are light, air, water and food. I am jumping ahead a bit on our verses but I want to tell what John the disciple reveals about these four essentials to life.

Light – Without the sun, there would be darkness and death. The same truth holds true for a life without Christ. **John 8:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

Air – Without air, we would suffocate. The Holy Spirit is our breath of eternal life. **John 3:8 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

Water – Water is needed to quench our thirst. Christ is the Living Water. **John 4:13-14 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> *Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

Food – Without food, we would be hungry, empty, and eventually die. Christ is the Bread of Life. **John 6:35 (ESV)** <sup>35</sup> *Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

### The Witnesses

**Read John 1:6-9 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

Don't be confused. John the disciple aka John the Apostle is not speaking of himself in verse 6. This is a reference to 'another John' – John the Baptist. Crowds were so fascinated with John the Baptist that they gave him a higher place than they should. A religious sect was putting John the Baptist in the highest place of worship. Even today, we find men worshiping religious leaders more than the Lord. The Apostle John was aware of this attitude about John the Baptist and he was very careful to put him in his rightful place – not to downgrade the Baptist but to put the focus where it belongs that is on Jesus.

John the Baptist was a witness. A witness is a person who gives testimony. All of God's children are called to be witnesses for Him. The point of witnesses in a courtroom is to establish the truth beyond a reasonable doubt. The Baptist's purpose in the story of Jesus was to give witness beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is the Light of God.

Bible.org observes that there are three points to keep in mind when we have an opportunity to share our witness for Christ. (1) Remember, the message is not about us. It's fine to give our testimony, but keep the focus on Jesus. (2) Tell people who Jesus is. John the Baptist said of Jesus in **John 1:29 (ESV)** <sup>29</sup> ... *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* (3) Seek to bring people to faith in Jesus. Don't just have a nice discussion and leave it at that. Encourage people to put their trust in Jesus Christ for salvation before it is too late.

**Read John 1:10-11 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.* <sup>11</sup> *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*

It is sad that the very people chosen by God to prepare the rest of the world for the coming Christ rejected Jesus the Messiah when He came. Their sacred scriptures (our Old Testament) had been pointing to His coming since the beginning (**Gen. 3:15**). When we consider this, it is easy to wonder why the nation of Israel rejected Jesus Christ. Warren Wiersbe writes, “They were spiritually ignorant. Jesus is the ‘*true Light*’—the original of which every other light is a copy—but the Jews were content with the copies. They had Moses and the Law, the temple and the sacrifices; but they did not comprehend that these ‘lights’ pointed to the true Light who was the fulfillment, the completion, of the Old Testament religion.”

**Read John 1:12-13 (ESV)** . <sup>12</sup> *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,* <sup>13</sup> *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Look closely at John’s words: *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.* To *receive* Christ means to welcome Him into our heart for dying on the cross as the substitute for our sins. Those who do so are adopted into the family of God as His children. To *believe* in Jesus’ name is to believe in who He is and the work that He has done. When we receive and believe in Jesus for the free gift of eternal life, we undergo a supernatural birth we are born of God!

John explains that there are three ways by which you **cannot** become a child of God:

1. *Born, not of blood:* Being born through human blood won’t do it! In the ancient world procreation was understood to take place through the mixing of bloods of the father and the mother. Here it is denied that natural birth is the way people become children of God. In fact, our ancestry DNA brings us death.
2. *Nor of the will of the flesh:* To be born of ‘*the will of the flesh*’ means to be born because of the desires of human parents.
3. *Nor of the will of man:* No one on earth can do something to make you a Christian. People imagine some minister or priest can make Christians out of folks through water baptism or church membership or good works. These cannot save you. Jesus said in **John 3:7 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> ... ‘*You must be born again.*’ It is not physical blood, or the flesh, or the will of man, but of God. God alone produces that new life in the soul of every believer in His blessed Son.

It is my prayer that you will be excited about our study in the **Gospel of John** – excited enough to read John’s book for yourself! This book will give you a good understanding of who Jesus is and what His ministry is about. Let’s make the effort to personally encounter Jesus every moment of the day! And when we do that, we cannot help but tell others the Good News of Jesus and His love!