

**THE GOSPEL OF
JOHN**

Part I: Chapter 1

Commentary by Andrew Forrest

ASBURY

WHO WROTE THE GOSPEL OF JOHN?

From its earliest days, the church has always attributed the Fourth Gospel to “John.” John was a popular Jewish name in the time of Jesus; there are at least five distinct Johns that are specifically referenced in the New Testament:

- John the Baptist;
- John, the father of the Apostle Peter;
- John the Apostle, brother of James, son of Zebedee;
- John Mark (often just called Mark);
- John, a member of the high priest’s family;

In addition, the author of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 1:4) identifies himself as “John.” So, which of these Johns—if any—wrote the Gospel of John? Unlike the letters of Paul, e.g., nowhere in the text of the Fourth Gospel does it say “this book was written by John.” The reason the church has always called the Fourth Gospel “John’s Gospel” is because “*The Gospel According to John*” was scrawled as a title atop even the most ancient manuscripts, thereby attributing the Gospel to John. (The other three Gospels are attributed the exact same way—“According to Matthew,” “According to Mark,” “According to Luke.”) Who wrote the Gospel of John? Opinions differ and complete certainty is impossible—our best way forward, therefore, is to read the text itself and see what we can conclude about the author with the information he has provided us.

JOHN HAS WRITTEN HIMSELF INTO THE GOSPEL AT KEY POINTS¹

John never identifies himself by the name “John” in his Gospel—rather, he calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Why does he do this? The Gospel of John is a brilliant work of art, and John has slyly written himself into the story at key points to remind his readers that he was an eyewitness to some of the most crucial events he relates, most importantly at the Crucifixion itself. For example, John is apparently the only male disciple who was an eyewitness of the Crucifixion:

¹ Starting in chapter 13, John calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Chapter 13 is when the narrative has permanently moved to take place in Jerusalem. This detail makes it seem reasonable to conclude that John lived in Jerusalem and not in Galilee.

²⁵ *but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.* ²⁶ *When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"* ²⁷ *Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

THE DEATH OF JESUS

²⁸ *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."* ²⁹ *A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.* ³⁰ *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

JESUS' SIDE IS PIERCED

³¹ *Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.* ³² *So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him.* ³³ *But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.* ³⁴ *But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.* ³⁵ ***He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.*** ³⁶ *For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken."* ³⁷ *And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."*
[John 19:25–37]

By calling himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved" John is making it clear he was in the perfect position to tell the story of the Gospel, but by not specifically naming himself, he ensures that the focus of the story is on Jesus, not on the one telling Jesus's story.

THE CHURCH IN EPHEBUS DEFINITELY KNEW JOHN'S IDENTITY

John is anonymous in the Gospel, but his identity was clearly known in the church community to which he belonged. At the very end of the Gospel, we read this fascinating detail about how the rumor grew that John wouldn't die before the Second Coming:

²⁰ Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" ²¹ When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" ²³ So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

²⁴ This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

[John 21:20–24]

What v. 24 tells us is that the reason the Gospel was treasured was because it came from an eyewitness that everyone knew and trusted. The Gospel of John seems to have come from the city of Ephesus, one of the largest cities of the ancient world and a strategically important center for Christianity in Asia (modern-day Turkey). Whoever John was, the church in Ephesus knew him and trusted him as a disciple of Jesus and eyewitness of the Gospel events.

HOW TO READ THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

The Gospel of John is the work of a lifetime. John has spent decades considering the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and his Gospel is the mature reflection of an old, wise man. John's Gospel is different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in that John relates fewer events and incidents in the life of Jesus, but he spends more time with them. One might say that John has chosen to focus on quality over quantity.

John is also a true artist in that he prefers to *show* instead of *tell*. What I mean is that John arranges his narrative to lead the reader to the truth, but he rarely comes out and specifically states his point—he is much more subtle than that.

HOW JOHN'S GOSPEL WORKS: EXAMPLE #1

In chapter 1, Andrew and an unnamed disciple (John, but because he has not yet met Jesus in the narrative, he just leaves himself anonymous) hear John the Baptist describe Jesus as “the Lamb of God.”

³⁵ *The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [John 1:35–40]*

For the next nineteen chapters, we will read about what Jesus said and did as John works his Gospel to its shocking climax—the Crucifixion of the Son of God. At the cross, John is the only male disciple present when the soldiers take Jesus's body down from the cross:

³¹ *Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. ³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” [John 19:31–36]*

That little scriptural reference “not one of his bones will be broken” is a quotation from the Book of Exodus, specifically the place where the Israelites are given instructions about how to prepare the Passover lamb:

It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. [Exodus 12:46]

So, when John makes sure to tell us that none of Jesus's bones were broken and then quotes from the Book of Exodus, what is he telling us? **Namely that Jesus is the ultimate Lamb of God, the ultimate sacrifice!** Note that John tells us that without telling us. What John heard John the Baptist say way back in chapter 1 now finally has its payoff in chapter 19.

HOW JOHN'S GOSPEL WORKS: EXAMPLE #2

Every single word and detail in John's Gospel is deliberately chosen. John delights in laying a trail of breadcrumbs for attentive readers to follow. For example, consider the way he tells the story of Peter's betrayal of Christ:

*¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, ¹⁶ but Peter stood outside at the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door, and brought Peter in. ¹⁷ The servant girl at the door said to Peter, "You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." ¹⁸ Now the servant and officers had made a **charcoal fire**, because it was cold, and they were standing and warming themselves. Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. [John 18:15–18]*

Note that small little detail I've highlighted in v.18: "charcoal fire."

Peter famously denies Jesus three times in total on the night of Jesus's arrest. It's a heartbreaking scene.

Then, after the Resurrection, Jesus meets with Peter on the beach. The story is recounted in John chapter 21:

21 After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." ⁶ He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and

now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they got out on land, they saw a **charcoal fire** in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

JESUS AND PETER

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” ¹⁹ (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” [John 21:1–19]

Peter denies Jesus three times, and after the Resurrection, Jesus asks Peter three times, “Do you love me?” The scene on the beach is beautiful—you can imagine that poignant moment when Peter realizes that his denial is both known by Jesus and forgiven by Jesus. And to make sure that we make the connection between the threefold denial and the threefold question, John includes that little connecting detail that would have been easy for him to leave out: “**a charcoal fire.**” John is expecting us to catch details like that, which means we need to really pay attention!

HOW WE ARE GOING TO READ JOHN'S GOSPEL

John is a master artist who wants to show rather than tell. John has written his Gospel with the expectation that we will read and reread it over and over and over, paying close attention to every word and detail and finding the connections between them. It is a Gospel that rewards repeated readings with more and more insight into who Jesus is and the meaning of His life, death, and resurrection. Accordingly, we are going to take our time and slowly work our way through this magnificent work over the next several months, bringing our focused attention on what John has given us, namely one of the most breathtakingly profound, subtle, and beautiful literary products in the history of the world.

But this is no ordinary work of literature. In fact, John forthrightly tells us in his conclusion that he has had an agenda in writing his Gospel:

³⁰ 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. [John 20:30–31]

In writing this commentary, I have the same agenda: to help you believe in Jesus, the Light of the World.



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January 2025

P.S. In general, readings are assigned on weekdays only—each day includes that day's Scripture reading, and then below that I've written commentary to help you get the most out of your reading.

P.P.S. In Part 1 of our reading plan, we will only work our way through the first chapter of the Gospel. This is because the first chapter introduces many of the themes that John will repeatedly return to

over subsequent chapters, and I want to be sure that we are familiar with them before we move at a faster pace through the rest of the book. I'm also using the first month to help us develop the habit of reading consistently!

P.P.P.S. Interested in receiving the readings each day in your inbox? Sign up at andrewforrest.org and I'll email you every weekday morning at 4:00 AM Central.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 1

JOHN 1:1-18

IN THE BEGINNING WAS...

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ 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.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ 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, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ 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.

The first eighteen verses of John's Gospel are breathtaking in their simplicity and power. Did you notice how John's language is simple, almost childlike? Look at the basic words John uses:

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| · Word | · Witness |
| · God | · Blood |
| · Life | · Son |
| · Light | · Father |
| · Darkness | · Etc. |
| · World | |

In fact, John's Greek vocabulary is so simple that, as a first-year Greek student in seminary, I was given John's prologue to translate on my final exam!

But it is precisely John's simple language that makes his prologue one of the most influential paragraphs in all human history—the power of the prologue is the way John joins the words together to convey in very simple language the most important event in the history of the universe: the Incarnation, whereby the God who made *everything* became an ordinary human. Each word is like a little LEGO block, and when each block is connected and you stand back and look at the finished structure, there is profundity and beauty to the whole.

As we will see, all the major themes of the entire Gospel are first mentioned in the prologue, and, like a master weaver, John will weave them together as he tells the story of Jesus. Pay attention to these words as they reappear throughout the rest of the book.

We are going to take our time working through the prologue over the next several weeks. Today, on the first day of the year, I'd recommend turning off everything and just sitting and reading these eighteen verses. Of all the things John could have said, why does he begin his Gospel in this way? Is there anything that jumps out at you? Train your eyes to look for reoccurrences of some of the key words from the prologue—light, life, witness, blood, etc.—when they later appear in the narrative.

JANUARY CHALLENGE:

I am going to memorize John 1:1–18 (the prologue) in the month of January. I'll add one verse at a time, culminating in knowing all eighteen verses on Friday, January 24. Who's with me?

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2

JOHN 1:1

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

GENESIS 1:1

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

In his opening verse, John is deliberately echoing the famous opening lines of the Bible. Why? Because from the outset he wants us to understand that Jesus was not simply an ordinary man, but was God Incarnate—God become human. The same God who made everything was the one who—as John will narrate nineteen chapters later—was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

Note that from the very beginning, John is telling us something interesting:

- The Word is God;
- The Word is distinct from God.

Later Christians would describe God’s identity using the Trinity: one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. Here, John does not use trinitarian language (that will come later, especially in chapter 17). Rather, he just makes the simple point that the Word *is* God and also *distinct* from God.

The Greek word *logos* is translated here as “word.” *Logos* means “word,” but it also means “rational, organizing idea” or “message” or “reason.” I like to say that it’s as if John is saying “the mind behind the universe,” as in...

*In the beginning was the Mind-Behind-The-Universe,
and the Mind-Behind-The-Universe was with God,
and the Mind-Behind-The-Universe was God.*

QUESTION OF THE DAY

What else is John trying to convey by beginning his Gospel in this way?

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JOHN 1:2

²He was in the beginning with God.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

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MONDAY, JANUARY 6

JOHN 1:3

ARIUS WAS WRONG

³ All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

Around A.D. 300, there arose a controversy in the ancient church, provoked by a man named Arius. Arius was a priest from Egypt who began to teach that the Son had been created by the Father and was not co-eternal with Him. This controversy became known as the Arian Controversy. Arius's famous phrase was "There was a time when He was not." What he meant was that the Son had a definite beginning, unlike the Father, who had always existed.

The great opponent of Arius was a priest named Athanasius, who stubbornly insisted that the Son had always existed, because He was God. God has no beginning, and if the Son had a beginning the way Arius taught, then the Son was not God.

For Athanasius there could be no higher stakes, because if Jesus were not God, then His death on the cross would not have saved anyone. For decades Athanasius held the line, and ultimately Arius's ideas were defeated at the great Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325.

What's interesting is how Arius just ignored John 1:3 when making his argument, because John clearly tells us that the Word was not created but was ever-existing, and that through the Word everything that was made was made.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

When we try to get away from the Scripture, we always get ourselves in trouble. Arius was a clever man, but he was also a fool who thought he knew better than the Bible. The reason it is so important that the American church reads and loves the Bible is because the more we do that, the more it will protect us from ourselves and our arrogant tendency to think we know better than the Bible.

**JOIN US TONIGHT FOR AN ALL-CHURCH BIBLE STUDY
WED, JAN 8 | 6:30 PM | SANCTUARY**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8

JOHN 1:5

THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Throughout his prologue, John is setting us up to learn what we need to know about what will follow in the rest of his Gospel. Here we learn that the darkness and the light are in opposition. So, we should pay attention to times when darkness appears in the Gospel, because it will mean that something or someone is working in opposition to Jesus. (Pay attention to when events take place in darkness.)

For me, I have always loved the simplicity of the image: a light boldly shining in the darkness, and a darkness that is unable to snuff it out.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Whatever bad thing that happens, it cannot win in the end. Jesus is light, and the light shines forever. Any darkness you experience today is just temporary, like a cloud passing in front of the sun. Don't be discouraged!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9

JOHN 1:6-7

WITNESS

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

John the Baptist is the John referred to in today's verse. Here, we are introduced to another key idea in the Gospel—"witness."

The testimony of witnesses is an important theme in John's Gospel. John the author himself is a witness of the crucifixion (see 19:35), and we will learn later that the entire Gospel is in fact true testimony about Jesus (21:24).

QUESTION OF THE DAY

If you were put on the witness stand today, what testimony could you provide about Jesus?

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 10

JOHN 1:8

JOHN THE BAPTIST WASN'T THE POINT

⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

John the Baptist was an electric figure in 1st century Judea, but as important as he was, John the author wants us to understand that his only job was to testify about the Light of the World.

In some ways, nothing has changed: we all have important work to accomplish, but that work is all in service of pointing people to Jesus, who is the light of the world.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

How could you use the first interaction you have with someone after reading this sentence to point toward Jesus?

P.S. Have you been working on memorizing your verses? We should have learned through verse 8 today. If you're behind, catch up over the weekend. Remember, by January 24 my goal is to have memorized verses 1–18.

MONDAY, JANUARY 13

JOHN 1:9

EVERYONE NEEDS JESUS (BUT NOT EVERYONE KNOWS IT)

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

What does it mean that a man is the true light?

It means (among other things) that the only way to perceive reality clearly and correctly is through Jesus.

QUESTION FOR THE DAY

Take a problem you are currently worried about. What would it look like for you to “see” it in light of Jesus?

[illegible]

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14

JOHN 1:10

THE WORLD IGNORES ITS MAKER

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

It's an astonishing fact: the very mind that made the universe was present in the world as a person, and *yet people ignored Him!*

QUESTION OF THE DAY

What's one action you can take today that clearly acknowledges Jesus as your maker?

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15

JOHN 1:11

EVEN ISRAEL MISSED ITS MESSIAH

¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

One of the themes of John's Gospel is that the Jews missed their Messiah. Why?

Well, John is concerned with showing us the grievous effects of spiritual blindness—you can be so blinded by pride and sin that you miss what is most obvious right in front of you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

“Lord, if there is something in my life I've been blinded to, please make it clear to me today.”

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16

JOHN 1:12–13

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Remember, one of the purposes of the prologue is for John to introduce the main themes of his Gospel. One of those themes is that there are two kinds of people:

1. Those who receive and believe in Jesus and who as a result become part of God's people—with all that entails;
2. Those who don't.

Throughout the rest of the Gospel, we will see this distinction between people play out over and over again.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

This distinction is still playing out in our day. Despite all the ways of dividing people, there is really only one division that matters—those who believe in Jesus, and those who don't.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17

JOHN 1:14

“TABERNACLED”

¹⁴ 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.

The tabernacle was the moveable tent that the Lord had the Israelites construct during their desert wanderings, after the Passover and the parting of the sea but before the Promised Land. At the end of Exodus, the tabernacle is complete, and the glory of God comes and dwells in the tent, right in the midst of the Israelite camp:

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys. [Exodus 40:34–38]

The presence of God is manifested in a cloud of glory. In Exodus, in fact, no one is able to see the “face” of God and live—God’s power is too bright (Exodus 33:20).

But with Jesus, something remarkable has happened.

John, a master artist, has chosen a specific Greek word that is here translated as “dwelt”—it’s the verb form of the word for “tabernacle.” So, here is what John literally says:

*The Word became flesh and **tabernacled** among us.*

In other words, the same glory that was made manifest to Moses and the Israelites in the tent has now come in the person of Jesus!

John says that he has seen the “glory” of the Son.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

How is the glory of God shown in the Crucifixion of the Son? How does that redefine our idea of the glory of God?

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P.S. This month, I am memorizing the prologue of the Gospel of John, 1:1-18. Today, we're up through verse 14. If you are behind, take the weekend and catch up!

P.P.S. Note that Jesus is the Son of the Father. There is no Father without the Son, and vice versa—there has always been Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (though the Spirit has not yet been formally introduced to us in John’s Gospel).

JOHN 1:15

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.’”)

QUESTION FOR THE DAY

In your next interaction today, how can you be more like John the Baptist and point people toward Jesus?

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JOHN 1:16

¹⁶For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

Now, he goes further and tells us that those who know Him don't just know about Him *theologically* and *theoretically*, but that they have actually *received* grace from Him.

It's a beautiful reminder that Jesus doesn't just show us what God is like, but that, to those who trust Him, he actually brings the steadfast love and covenant faithfulness of God into their lives.

QUESTION FOR THE DAY

Do you have a relationship with Jesus?

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22

JOHN 1:17

JESUS IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

The Lord gave the Israelites the Law on Mount Sinai so that they would know how to live—if you obey the Law, you will be blessed. The Law was a guidebook to life and the way to blessing. But the Law, which was good, was unable to fix what was wrong in peoples' hearts, and so all along God's plan to save the world was to send His one and only Son. The Son was perfectly obedient to the Law, thereby releasing blessing into the world, and all who trust in Him receive life and blessing they didn't earn.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Grace is receiving something good you didn't deserve. In light of what God has done for you in Jesus, how can you then show grace to someone else today?

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

JOHN 1:18

WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE?

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

In Exodus, we read that Moses wants to see God, but the Lord tells him that that is an impossibility:

¹⁸ *Moses said, "Please show me your glory."* ¹⁹ *And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."* ²⁰ *But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."* ²¹ *And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,"* ²² *and while my glory passes*

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

JOHN 1:1-18

THE PROLOGUE

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ 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.

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ 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, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ 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.

Today we have completed our reading of the prologue of John's Gospel. I challenged us to memorize these first eighteen verses. How's it coming? Use the weekend to really cement these words into your memory.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The reason we memorize Scripture is because once we have it in our minds, we have stored there something that God can use to shape us. The more Bible we have in our brains, the more material God has to work with!

MONDAY, JANUARY 27

JOHN 1:19–28

WHY DID JOHN BAPTIZE?

¹⁹ And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” ²¹ And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” ²² So they said to him, “Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³ He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”

²⁴ (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) ²⁵ They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” ²⁶ John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, ²⁷ even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” ²⁸ These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

John is out baptizing people in the River Jordan, and a delegation of religious officials comes to question him. In Judaism at the time, converts to Judaism were baptized as a way of showing their spiritual cleansing as they became part of Israel. So, by baptizing people who were *already* Jews, John is implying that all of Israel needs to be cleansed to get ready for the new thing that is going to happen.

The Israelites had to cross the Jordan River when they first entered the Promised Land, so the location John chose for his baptisms is significant—he is implying that God is about to do something new for His people.

But, to make it clear, John says that he is just someone God is using to prepare the way.

QUESTION FOR THE DAY

John is preparing the people for Jesus. How can you smooth out the path in front of someone today to make it easier for them to come to the Lord?

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TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

JOHN 1:29–34

WHY DOES JOHN CALL JESUS A “LAMB?”

²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³² And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³ I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

Each Israelite family sacrificed a lamb during the Passover holiday, as a way of formally remembering the way the Lord rescued the Hebrews from Egypt. During the Exodus, the Lord commanded each family to take the blood from the sacrifice and mark the doorway into their houses so the terrible tenth plague—the death of the firstborn—would “pass over” each house that was marked with the blood of the lamb.

By calling Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” John the Baptist is saying that Jesus is the true sacrifice who will once and for all take away sin.

We’ll have to wait nineteen chapters in John’s Gospel to see this idea finally pay off in the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross.

QUESTION FOR THE DAY

How was the death of Jesus on the cross like that of a Passover lamb?

P.S. Note the language of “witness” in today’s passage. John the author wants us to understand that John the Baptist was a trustworthy witness to Jesus.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29

JOHN 1:35-42

JESUS CALLS THE FIRST DISCIPLES

³⁵ The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, ³⁶ and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. ⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). ⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

Every word John the author has written is deliberately chosen and deliberately placed. John wants us to see that the thing that first got the attention of Andrew and the unknown disciple (whom we will later conclude is John the author himself) is John the Baptist’s remark that Jesus is the Lamb of God.

(That little detail “it was about the tenth hour” is a great example of eyewitness detail dropped into the story.)

Simon was a traditional Jewish name, and we know from archeological evidence that it was one of the most popular Jewish male names at

the time of Jesus. Jesus gives Simon, Andrew's brother, the nickname "Rocky." (*Cephas* means "rock" in Aramaic, and *Peter* means "rock" in Greek, and because most of the early Christians spoke Greek, *Peter* became the name by which Simon Peter was known in the early church.)

What I love about this little story is how Andrew brings his brother to Jesus, who then speaks to Peter in a way that is personal to him.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

This is how it always is with Jesus—it is our privilege to bring other people to Him, but then He takes over and speaks to them in a way that is personal and meaningful to them.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

JOHN 1:43–51

"COME AND SEE"

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" ⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." ⁵¹ And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Nathanael is skeptical of Jesus, but Phillip doesn't try and argue with him—rather, he just simply invites him to "come and see." I think there is a lot of wisdom in those three little words.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

Who can you invite to church this weekend? Your hairdresser? Uber driver? UPS deliveryman? Neighbor across the street?

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31
JOHN 1:1-51

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 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.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 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, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 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.

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

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BEHOLD, THE LAMB OF GOD

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JESUS CALLS THE FIRST DISCIPLES

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JESUS CALLS PHILIP AND NATHANAEAL

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” ⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” ⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” ⁵¹ And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

For the past month, we have been slowly walking our way through the first chapter of John’s Gospel—the pace is about to pick up in the months to follow!

What John has done is introduce us to the key themes that he wants

us to pay attention to as we work through the rest of his account of Jesus. Here, in this final story, we see Jesus describing Himself as a ladder between heaven and earth. He is referencing the story of the Old Testament patriarch Jacob in Genesis 28:

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸ So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹ He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, ²¹ so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, ²² and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you." [Genesis 28:10–22]

Later on in the Gospel, Jesus will specifically call Himself "the way" (John 14:6). What he is telling Nathanael is that Jesus is the connection between heaven and earth.

In the rest of the Gospel, we will learn what that means.

QUESTION OF THE DAY

What do you think it means that Jesus describes Himself as the ladder or staircase connecting heaven and earth?

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CHAPTER ONE
The Word Became Flesh

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