

Overview of John's Gospel

John – Chapter 1

As we start our study of the fourth gospel, we need to understand John's gospel is different and unique. The Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke are very similar. They provide the same general outline of Christ's life; they record similar events; they describe Christ's ministry, His death, and His resurrection. The Gospel of John however, does not include several events recorded in the Synoptic Gospels; there is no record of Jesus' birth, no description of Jesus' baptism, no description of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, no information on Christ's transfiguration, no Sermon on the Mount, no "Lord's Prayer", no casting out or confrontations with demons, no description of the last supper as a remembrance of Christ, no information about His agony in Gethsemane, and no ascension into heaven. However, the Gospel of John contains a significant amount of material about Jesus life that cannot be found in the other gospels. Whereas the synoptics tell us of what Jesus said and did, John brings the deity of Christ to the center stage.

John was the brother of James, the younger son of Zebedee, and identified by Jesus as one of "The Sons of Thunder". He was the youngest apostle, the disciple "whom Jesus loved", lived a long life and is the only apostle to have died a peaceful death. John is also the author of 1st, 2nd, 3rd John and Revelation. He gives the reason for writing the gospel that bears his name in chapter 20 verses 31-32, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

John opens his gospel by addressing the incarnation of God, how He existed from all eternity, that He was God, became flesh, and bore witness of God. John continues to present John the Baptist as a witness, one crying out in the wilderness, one looking for the Christ. As Jesus approaches John, he recognized Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"; the one that out ranked him and existed before him. He sees "the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and remained upon Him". John the Baptist had been told, "He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit", "...this is the Son of God". John leaves out the dialog between Jesus and John the Baptist along with a description of Jesus actual baptism possibly to avoid any detraction from the point Jesus is the Son of God. In chapters 2 through 12, John chooses specific events to highlight Jesus' public ministry, he lists seven signs. Even though Jesus accomplished many miracles, John chose seven of them to build a convincing case that Jesus is in indeed the Son of God. John takes the next five chapters to describe the events of Jesus' last week on earth. The amount of information Jesus relays to His disciples in these chapters, is mind boggling. Even though they did not understand, Jesus provided them with information that would serve them well after He left. John closes out this time of teaching with Christ's High Priestly Prayer (John 17). It is an amazing prayer the Son of God prays to the Father. It contains a depth of truth that could keep the most educated theologian busy for a lifetime but is simple enough for the new believer to recognize who Jesus is, what He had accomplished, and what He desired. Interestingly, after Jesus' prayer is complete, John says they left of the garden of Gethsemane but he does not record Jesus' prayer in the garden. Chapter 18 describes Jesus arrest and trials. Chapter 19 covers Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial. Chapter 20 provides details about Christ's resurrection and accounts of His appearance.

Everyone who has taken a Greek class, or was discipled as a new Christian is familiar with the prologue of John's gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." These verses, along with the sixteen that follow, captivated the minds of the early church for centuries. R.C. Sproul said this in his commentary, "In attempting to understand the person of Christ, the early church became virtually preoccupied with the high view of Christ that is expressed in the prologue. From this foundation, those early believers developed what is called '*Logos Christology*'. John starts his gospel with a series of direct statements concerning the Word. The Word was in the beginning, the Word was also "with God", which means more than the Word existed with God. It reflects an intelligent conversation or discourse, many have suggested it best translated as face to face. And the "Word was God" is probably the simplest, most forthright, and clear statement, used by John, to declare the deity of Christ in the Bible. John gospel contains more material, some say 90% more information about Jesus' life than any other gospel. It's exciting! The next few weeks should prove to be interesting, enlightening and rewarding.

1. What do we learn about the “Word” from verses 1-5? How is life described? Explain verse 5, What is John’s point in this verse (“the darkness not comprehend it”)?

2. What do verses 6-13 tell us about John the Baptist and Jesus? What role did John the Baptist fulfill? What do we learn about Jesus in verses 11-13? Explain verses 12 and 13.

3. What do we learn about the incarnation and John the Baptist in verses 14-18? Rewrite verses 16-18 in your own words. What do we learn about grace, Christ and His purpose in these verses?

4. Verses 19 thru 34 describe John the Baptist’s testimony. Make a list of the things we learn about John the Baptist and Jesus in these verses. How did John know Jesus was the one? what did he see? Why do you think the exchange between Jesus and John the Baptist, or Jesus actual baptism is not recorded in John’s gospel?

5. What did John’s disciples hear John the Baptist say and what did they do when they heard his words? Verses 35-51 tell of the first conversions and the selection of the disciples. What do we learn about Jesus first converts, disciples and His amazing abilities? Was there any event in these closing verses that caught your attention or surprised you? If so, what?