

The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John was probably the last of the four written, and written in view of what the previous three had already said. This is one reason why John's account of the life of Jesus is, in many ways, different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Written likely between 90–100 AD in Ephesus, it was composed to help readers believe that Jesus is the Messiah and they can have life in His Name (John 20:31).

There are significant events in the ministry of Jesus that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all include yet John leaves out, including: Jesus' birth, Jesus' baptism, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, confrontations with demons, Jesus teaching in parables, the Last Supper, the agony in Gethsemane and the Ascension.

While the first three Gospels center on Jesus' ministry in Galilee, John centers his Gospel on what Jesus said and did in Jerusalem.

Each of the Gospels emphasizes a different origin of Jesus.

- Matthew shows Jesus came from Abraham through David, and demonstrates that He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament (Matthew 1:1-17).
- Mark shows Jesus came from Nazareth, demonstrating that Jesus is a Servant (Mark 1:9).
- Luke shows Jesus came from Adam, demonstrating that Jesus is the Perfect Man (Luke 3:23-38).
- John shows Jesus came from heaven, demonstrating that Jesus is God.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the three synoptic gospels. The word synoptic means "see-together" and the first three Gospels present the life of Jesus in pretty much the same format. The first three Gospels focus more on what Jesus taught and did; where John focused more on who Jesus is by highlighting seven signs (miracles) of Jesus. Six of these miracles are not mentioned in the first three gospels. John shows us who Jesus is by giving us Jesus' own words about Himself, expressed in seven dramatic I AM statements (Bread of life John 6:35,48,51, light of the world John 8:12, door of the sheep John 10:7,9, good shepherd John 10:11,14, resurrection & life John 11:25, the way, truth & light John 14:6, the true vine John 15:1,5). These seven I AM statements were not included in the first three gospels. John shows us who Jesus is by giving the testimony of witnesses who testify about the identity of Jesus. Four of these witnesses speak in the first chapter alone.

John is a Gospel written for the specific purpose that we might believe Jesus is the Son of God, given to pay for our sin and thus reconcile us to God. A key verse for understanding the Gospel of John is found at the end of the book. John 20:31.

Who was John? His father was Zebedee (John 21:2) and his mother was Salome (Matt 27:56), one of the women who went to the tomb early on the morning the resurrection of Jesus was discovered. John's brother was James. He was a partner with Peter in a fishing business. Together they were referred to as "the sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17).

Read John 1:1-13

Vs 1 What 3 amazing truths are stated in this verse about the Word? The Word was there before the beginning, the Word was with God and the Word was God. When was "the beginning"? Gen 1:1 This is talking about the beginning of Time, or God's creation. John essentially wrote, "When the beginning began, the Word was already there". What/who is "the Word"? "Word" translates the ancient Greek word *Logos*. The idea of the logos had deep and rich roots in both Jewish and Greek thinking.

Jewish rabbis often referred to God (especially in His more personal aspects) in terms of His word. They spoke of God Himself as "the word of God." For example, ancient Hebrew editions of the Old Testament read Exodus 19:17 to be "Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet the word of God." In the mind of the ancient Jews, the phrase "the word of God" could be used to refer to God Himself.

The Greek philosophers saw the logos as the power that puts sense into the world, making the world orderly instead of chaotic. The logos was the power that set the world in perfect order and kept it going in perfect order. They saw the logos as the "Ultimate Reason" that controlled all things.

In this opening John said to both Jews and Greeks: "For centuries you've been talking, thinking, and writing about the Word (the logos). Now I will tell you who He is." John met both Jews and Greeks where they were, and explained Jesus in terms they already understood.

What else can we learn from this verse? There is a Being known as the Word. This Being is God, because He is eternal (in the beginning). This Being is God, because He is plainly called God (the Word was God). At the same time, this Being

does not encompass all that God is. God the Father is a distinct Person from the Word (the Word was with God). Jesus is The Word. John 1:14.

Vs 2 How does this verse further define what we inferred in verse 1? This makes the point that the Father is distinct from the Son, and the Son distinct from the Father. They are equally God, yet they are separate Persons.

Vs 3 What unique role did Jesus have in creation, according to this verse? He was the one that created everything. Col 1:16. You have heard me say God is the architect (Rom 1:20, Heb 11:3, Ps 104:24, Prov 3:19-20), Jesus is the creator and the Holy Spirit provides the power (Gen 1:2, Job 26:13). All three were involved in creation. John clearly states Jesus' role here. Col 1:16-17

Vs 4 John affirms The Word is a Man. What else does it say about Jesus? Life was (is) in Him. The word translated "life" is *Zoë* in the Greek and means *life real and genuine, a life active and vigorous, devoted to God, blessed, the state of one who is animate, the principle of life*. What does it say about this life in man? This life is the light of men, speaking of spiritual light as well as natural light. It isn't that the Word "contains" life and light; He **is** life and light. You can conclude, then, that without Jesus, a person is dead and in darkness. 1 John 5:11

Vs 5 What does this light do? Since those without Jesus are in darkness, when they experience Jesus, the darkness is replaced by light. Which is stronger, light or darkness? The light cannot lose against the darkness; the darkness will never overcome, or overpower, it. The Greek verb is not easy to translate. It contains the idea of laying hold on something so as to make it one's own. This can lead to meanings like 'lay hold with the mind', and thus 'comprehend'. The verb has a rarer meaning, 'overcome'. The context makes this meaning appropriate. Note this; in Gen 1:2 'darkness was upon the face of the deep' until God called light into being, so the new creation (being born-again) involves the banishing of spiritual darkness by the light which shines in the Word. John 3:19

Vs 6 Where did John (the Baptist) come from, according to this verse? God sent him. Luke 1:5-80, Acts 13:24-25, 18:25. See Matt 3:1-17

Vs 7 What was John's purpose? To be a witness to the light, which we learned above is Jesus. What is the ultimate result of this witness? That through John they would come to believe in Jesus. He was the first evangelist.

Vs 8 Why did John write this verse? To make John the Baptist's role clear. What was he sent to do? Bear witness. The matter of witness is a serious thing, establishing truth and giving ground for faith. Yet, witness does more. It commits. If I take my stand in the witness box and testify that such-and-such is the truth of the matter, I am no longer neutral. I have committed myself. John lets us see that there are those like John the Baptist who have committed themselves by their witness to Christ.

Vs 9 John further defines the light. What new information is revealed? The true light (Jesus) gives light to every man coming into the world. John did not mean that the Word gives this light to everyone in the ultimate, saving sense (although it is available to any man, and God's will that all be saved 1 Tim 2:4). He meant that the reason why anyone is born into a world with any love or care or goodness at all is because of the true Light and the light He gives to the world. Isa 49:6

Vs 10 What very sad truth do we see here? He was in the world, meaning God became a Man and lived in the earth. We know the world was made through Him (vs 3). Yet the world did not know (*ginosko*, which means *an intimate knowing*) Him. God, in the form of a man, came to the same world He created, to the creatures made in His image, and yet the world did not know Him. This shows how deeply fallen human nature rejects God, and that many reject (do not receive) God's word and Light.

Vs 11 Who did He come to? His own. This may have several layers of meaning. "His own" could mean Israel but it could also mean all of mankind. How did his own react? They did not receive (*to take to oneself*) Him. In other words, they rejected Him. Luke 19:12-14

Vs 12 What glorious thing happens to those who DO receive Him? He gives them the right to be called children of God Gal 3:26. What do you have to do? Believe on His Name.

Vs 13 Those who receive Him are born not of what? Not of blood (kin), not of the will of flesh, not of the will of man. What are they born of? God! John reminds us of the nature of the birth. Those who received Him are born (again) of God, not of human effort or achievement. 1 Pet 1:23