

John 1:1-34

The Word at Creation; The Word Became Flesh;
John the Baptist's Ministry and Witness

Day 1

Read John 1:1-5

1. How does the author of the gospel of John identify himself? John 21:20-24 (Read the article at the end of the lesson for more information on the apostle John.)

For Your Information: "The author of the Gospel of John does not identify himself by name, but his identity can be learned from the dialogue recorded in 21:1-24. The author calls himself 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'...This was the same 'disciple who...wrote these things' (21:24). The author had to be one of the twelve apostles because he is described as leaning on Jesus' bosom at the Last Supper, an event to which only the apostles were invited (13:23; see Mark 14:17). These details imply that he was one of the three disciples closest to Jesus: Peter, James or John (see Matthew 17:1). He could not be Peter, because 21:20 states that Peter looked back and saw this one Jesus loved, and in another place asked a question of him (13:23,24). On the other hand, James was martyred too early to be the author of the Gospel (see Acts 12:1,2). Thus it is reasonable to conclude that this book was written by the apostle John. This conclusion is supported by early Christians such as Polycarp (A.D. 60-155), who was a follower of John."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1754)

2. What was John's purpose in writing this gospel? John 20:31

3. What does John say about his "testimony/record?" John 19:35 (Compare 1 John 1:1-3)

For Your Information: "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. *Synoptic* means 'see-together' and the first three gospels present Jesus' life in pretty much the same format. The first three gospels focus more on what *Jesus taught and did*; John focuses more on *who Jesus is*. John shows us who Jesus is by highlighting seven signs (miracles) of Jesus. Six of these miracles are not mentioned in the first three gospels."
- David Guzik

The Eternal Word

4. Record the phrases that describe "the Word" in John 1:1-2. (Note: Who is the Word? 1:14,17)

- 1:1

- 1:2

For Your Information:

"In the beginning"

"The Greek phrase can mean the moment of beginning (of history) or the root cause (of everything). John's Gospel is full of phrases that can have more than one meaning."
- John (Life Change Series) (20)

"The word '**was**' indicates that the Word already existed at that point in the past labelled 'the beginning'...John is saying that the Word has existed from eternity."
- Africa Bible Commentary (1252)

"The literal rendering of John's first sentence is, 'In beginning was existing the Word.'" - Charles Swindoll (24)

5. From 1:3-4, list the phrases that describe what the Word does.

Optional Digging Deeper

For other verses describing Christ as the creator, see 1 Corinthians 8:6, Colossians 1:15-17 and Hebrews 1:2.

6. Compare John 1:3 with Genesis 1:1. What conclusion do you draw about the Word?

For Your Information: "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 which 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.

Therefore, in this opening, John says 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.'"
 – David Guzik

7. Underline how Jesus' deity is described in the following verses.

- Philippians 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, NIV
- Philippians 2:6 Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped NASU
- Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. NASU
- Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word... NIV

8. What does Christ's "life" bring into our lives? 1:4

- How does Acts 26:18 define light and darkness?

9. How does the power of the light compare to darkness? 1:5

For Your Information: "The word translated 'comprehend' (1:5) can mean (1) to take hold of; (2) to overpower; or (3) to understand. Therefore, this verse may mean that darkness did not positively take hold of or understand the light, or that darkness did not negatively overcome the light. Both statements are true. Humans did not appropriate or understand the light, nor did they overtake or over power it. Although Satan and his forces resist the light, they cannot thwart its power."
 – The Nelson Study Bible (1755)

Applying the Word: How does the description of the Word in 1:1-5, impact your understanding of God?

Day 2**Read John 1:6-13****John the Baptist's Ministry**

10. What was John's role concerning the light? 1:6-8 (Compare the prophecy in Luke 1:76-77.)

11. What does the "true light" do for us? 1:9 (Compare John 8:12, Luke 1:77-79)

12. Summarize what John teaches about the light.

- It's origin (1:4)
- It's relationship to darkness (1:5)
- It's nature (1:9a)
- It's availability (1:9b)

13. What phrases in 1:10-11 describe mankind's reaction to the Word?

Optional Digging Deeper

What do you learn about John the Baptist's birth and early years from Luke 1:5-25, 39-41?

For Your Information: "Depending on the context, **world** can refer to (1) the universe; (2) the earth; (3) humanity; or (4) the human system opposed to God."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1757)

"The world did not know Him "Here [world] applies to the material and spiritual environment in which men live...The world as a system had no comprehension of the manifested Word, and no place for Him...This ignorance was the basis of the conflict, for what the world did not appreciate it rejected, and what it rejected, it hated."
- Merrill C. Tenney (67-68)

14. List the phrases in 1:12,13b that describe how a person becomes a child of God.

- List the three phrases that describe how a person doesn't become a child of God? 1:13

IT'S GREEK TO ME "believe"(1:7,12) Strong's #4100 *pisteuo*; to have faith (in, upon, or with respect to, a person or thing), i.e. credit; by implication, to entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ).
- Strong's Concordance

"The Greek term *pisteuo* means "to acknowledge the truth as truth.' To believe in Christ is, first, to accept what He says as truth. Second, and more importantly, *pisteuo* means 'to trust, to rely upon, to derive confidence in something or someone. When I say I believe in Jesus Christ, I declare that I trust Him, I rely on Him, I have placed my complete confidence in Him."
- Charles Swindoll (17)

"believe in His name (1:12) To the ancients, someone's name represented the essence of his character. To believe 'on the name' (literally) of the Word means to trust who the Word really is...In Greek accounting documents, 'on the name of' has the sense of 'to the possession of.' So, John may also be saying that believing means yielding ourselves to be owned by Him whom we believe in."
- John (Life Change Series) (23.24)

Applying the Word: Think back on a time when you were walking in darkness. How did God's truth bring "light" to help you? Where do you need to ask for His light and truth to guide you?

Day 3

Read John 1:14-18

The Incarnation

15. Compare John 1:14a to 1:1. What does this add to the account of the "baby in Bethlehem?" (Luke 2:6,7)

IT'S GREEK TO ME "dwelt" (1:14) Strong's #4637 *skenoō*; to tent or encamp, (figuratively) to occupy or (specifically) to reside (as God did in the Tabernacle of old, a symbol of protection and communion) – Strong's Concordance

16. When Jesus manifested Himself in the flesh, what was He revealing to us? 1:14 (Compare 2 Corinthians 4:6)

IT'S GREEK TO ME "glory" *doxa* NT:1391, "glory" (from *dokeō*, "to seem"), primarily signifies an opinion, estimate, and hence, the honor resulting from a good opinion. – Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

"The glory of God must mean His unchanging essence. Giving glory to God is ascribing to Him His full recognition." – Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament

"**Only Begotten** (3:16,18) means unique, one of a kind...All those who trust Christ are born of God. In the Gospel of John these 'born ones' are called children of God (3:12,13), but Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God. He is the only Son who is fully God." – The Nelson Study Bible (1757)

"**Grace and truth**": "Grace and truth are primary traits of God. Grace is His unmerited favor and gifts for His creatures. But it is not a wishy-washy...favor, for it harmonizes with God's truth – His integrity, His commitment to moral and factual reality. In fact, God is the only true reality, and everything else is measured by Him." – John (Life Change Series) (24)

17. Underline the words that describe Jesus' incarnation (becoming flesh) in the following:

- Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil- NIV
- Romans 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. NIV
- Philippians 2:5-8 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, NASU
- 1 Timothy 3:16 Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body NIV
- 1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh NKJV

18. What did John the Baptist understand about Jesus? 1:15 (Compare Colossians 1:17)

19. What does Christ's life mean for us? 1:16 (Compare Ephesians 1:6,7)

- How does this surpass the revelation given in the Old Testament? 1:17 (Compare Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:17)

For Your Information: "The law was a shadow of the real thing that was to come, even though it was the will of God and was based on the grace of God. The fuller revelation of God through Jesus Christ reveals further grace. That is why John speaks of our receiving *one blessing after another* (1:16). The true thing foreshadowed in the law has now come."

- Africa Bible Commentary (1253)

"These verses suggest that what has now been revealed in Christ is much better, as it constitutes the full revelation of God, in contrast to the incomplete picture that the human race previously had, expressed in the law. In fact, in 1:18, John says that for the first time God Himself has truly been made known – in reality...The Lord Jesus never came to introduce a new religion called 'Christianity.' He came to introduce Himself and His Father in an open, direct way, as had never before been experienced."

- W. M. Henry (8,9)

"It is an inexhaustible supply of grace (grace for grace) and truth, contrasting with an order of rigid laws and regulations given through Moses."

- David Guzik

20. What else did Jesus' life on earth bring? 1:18 (Compare John 17:26; Hebrews 1:1,2)

21. List the titles given to Jesus in 1:14-18.

For Your Information: Romans 1:18 NIV Translation: "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

"John has carefully presented his evidence and shown that this Jesus of Nazareth, this carpenter's son, could be none other than the Son of God – because He's eternal (vv. 1-2), because He's the Creator (v. 3), because He's the source of life (vv.4-13), because He's God's manifested glory (vv.14-17) and because He's the unique explanation of God (v.18)."

- Charles Swindoll (EC 14)

"God is Spirit (4:24) and is invisible (see Col. 1:15; I Timothy 1:17) unless God choose to reveal Himself. Humans cannot look at God and live (Ex. 33:20)...God became visible to human eyes in the man Jesus. It is through seeing the Son that we see God. We cannot see Him today, but we know Him through His word."

- The Nelson Study Bible (1758)

Applying the Word: How would you explain why God became "flesh?"

Day 4

Read John 1:19-34

John's Ministry

For Your Information:

"The Period of Consideration" John 1:19-4:54

"The first main section of the Gospel of John comprises the *Period of Consideration*, so named because it narrates certain events by means of which Jesus was presented to the public for their consideration and acceptance. These events or appearances of Jesus were selected as representative, in order that His method of appeal to various classes might be plainly seen, and that the reader might be influenced by at least one of them." - Merrill Tenney (77)

22. Why do you think the religious leaders in Jerusalem (1:19,24) were interested in John's ministry? See Mark 1:5

For Your Information: The Pharisees were an influential sect that numbered about six thousand. As strict interpreters of the Law in Israel, they were extremely zealous for ritual and traditions." - The Nelson Study Bible (1758)

23. Why would the leaders have thought John might be the Christ, or Elijah, or "the prophet" (1:20,21)? See Malachi 3:1, 4:5; Deuteronomy 18:15

Optional Digging Deeper

What characterized John's ministry and lifestyle? Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6-8.

24. How did John portray his ministry? 1:23 (See Isaiah 40:3)

For Your Information: "The reference to Isaiah...uses the figure of preparing a road for the king through open and uneven territory so that he may travel over a smooth highway. John the Baptist called himself the 'roadbuilder' for one greater than he who would follow him with a fuller revelation." - The Expositor's Bible Commentary (36)

25. Instead of defending his authority (1:25), how did John answer? 1:26,27

- How did John's baptisms differ from Jesus'? Compare 1:26 with 1:33b (See also Matthew 3:11)

For Your Information: "The Jews of that time typically reserved baptism for Gentiles who wanted to become Jews. So to submit to John's baptism, a Jew had to identify with the Gentiles. This was a genuine sign of repentance." - David Guzik

"The amazing thing about John's baptism was that he was a Jew who was asking fellow Jews to submit to something expected only of Gentiles, whom they despised. But he preached that even Jews need to have lives which were cleansed and belonged to God...He was asking them to change their minds, to repent in preparation for the coming of the messiah, and to be bathed as a public demonstration of that change. He wanted them to examine their attitude concerning the Messiah who was on the horizon, just about to present the message of His kingdom...In essence [John] was telling them, 'All I have done is touched you with water, when He comes, He will transform you from within.'" - Charles Swindoll (JB 8)

"Whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose" (1:27) "Untying the strap of a sandal (before foot washing) was the duty of the lowest slave in the house...One of the things which was considered 'too low' for a Rabbi to expect from his disciples was the untying of the Rabbi's sandal strap. John says he is unworthy to do even this." - David Guzik

26. List the titles and roles John the Baptist used to describe Jesus.

- 1:29

For Your Information: "In the Old Testament, the Israelites sacrificed lambs at the Passover feast (see Ex. 12:21) and as offerings (see Lev. 14:10-25. Jesus Christ is the lamb that God would give as a sacrifice for the sins not only of Israel, but of the whole world (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1759)

- 1:30
- 1:33
- 1:34

27. What was the purpose of John's baptisms?

- John 1:31
- Mark 1:4

Optional Digging Deeper
Memorize John 1:1

28. How did John come to know Jesus? 1:32-34 (Compare Isaiah 11:1,2; 61:1)

Optional Digging Deeper

From Matthew 3:13-17, how did John feel about baptizing Jesus?

Why did Jesus want John to baptize him?

What significant event happened after Jesus' baptism that is not recorded in John?

For Your Information: "John and Jesus were cousins, so they probably knew each other. But John apparently did not know that Jesus was the Messiah. All John knew was that he was to baptize with water and that the Messiah would be made known to Israel through him."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1759)

Applying the Word: *In what ways has the Lord called you to serve Him at this time of your life? How content are you in doing these things? What does John's example teach you?*

JOHN THE APOSTLE

One of Jesus' twelve disciples, the son of Zebedee, and the brother of James. Before his call by Jesus, John was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, along with his father and brother (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20). His mother was probably Salome (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40), who may have been a sister of Mary (John 19:25), the mother of Jesus.

Although it is not certain that Salome and Mary were sisters, if it were so it would make James and John cousins of Jesus. This would help explain Salome's forward request of Jesus on behalf of her sons (Matt 20:20-28). The Zebedee family apparently lived in Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 1:21). The family must have been prosperous, because the father owned a boat and hired servants (Mark 1:19-20). Salome the mother provided for Jesus out of her substance (Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:3). John must have been the younger of the two brothers, for he is always mentioned second to James in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The brothers Zebedee were the first disciples called by Jesus after His baptism (Mark 1:19-20). This happened immediately after the call of two other brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew (Mark 1:16-18), with whom they may have been in partnership (Luke 5:10). Three of the four—Peter, James, and John—eventually became Jesus' most intimate disciples. They were present when Jesus healed the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51). They witnessed His TRANSFIGURATION (Matt 17:1-2; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28-29), as well as His agony in Gethsemane (Matt 26:37; Mark 14:33). Along with Peter, John was entrusted by Jesus with preparations for the Passover supper (Luke 22:8).

James and John must have contributed a headstrong element to Jesus' band of followers, because Jesus nicknamed them "Sons of Thunder" (Mark 3:17). On one occasion (Luke 9:51-56), when a Samaritan village refused to accept Jesus, the two offered to call down fire in revenge, as the prophet Elijah had once done (2 Kings 1:10,12). On another occasion, they earned the anger of their fellow disciples by asking if they could sit on Jesus' right and left hands in glory (Mark 10:35-45).

Following the ascension of Jesus, John continued in a prominent position of leadership among the disciples (Acts 1:13). He was present when Peter healed the lame man in the Temple. Together with Peter he bore witness before the Sanhedrin to his faith in Jesus Christ. The boldness of their testimony brought the hostility of the Sanhedrin (Acts 3-4). When the apostles in Jerusalem received word of the evangelization of Samaria, they sent Peter and John to investigate whether the conversions were genuine (Acts 8:14-25). This was a curious thing to do. The Samaritans had long been suspect in the eyes of the Jews (John 4:9). John himself had once favored the destruction of a Samaritan village (Luke 9:51-56). That he was present on this mission suggests he had experienced a remarkable change.

In these episodes Peter appears as the leader and spokesman for the pair, but John's presence on such errands indicates his esteem by the growing circle of disciples. After the execution of his brother James by Herod Agrippa I, between A.D. 42-44 (Acts 12:1-2), John is not heard of again in Acts. Paul's testimony to John as one of the "pillars," along with Peter and James (the Lord's brother, Gal 2:9), however, reveals that John continued to hold a position of respect and leadership in the early church. As might be expected of one of Jesus' three closest disciples, John became the subject of an active and varied church tradition. Tertullian (about A.D. 160-220) said that John ended up in Rome, where he was "plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil." A much later tradition believed that both James and John were martyred. The dominant tradition, however, was that the apostle John moved to Ephesus in Asia Minor, and that from there he was banished to the Island of Patmos (during Domitian's reign, A.D. 81-96). Tradition also held that he returned later to Ephesus, where he died some time after Trajan became emperor in A.D. 98...

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