

The Gospel of John, an Introduction

Beginning with the first verse, John's Gospel has numerous differences from the other three Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In the words of one author, 'John stretches his readers minds by taking them beyond the horizon of creation where the Word has always existed [Compare Matthew and Luke who begin with Jesus' birth]. In fact, the Word was not only with God; the Word was and is God'.

In John the language is simple, but the truths presented are profound. It is the place where spiritual babes find the food they need to grow; and the place where the more mature – spiritually, that is - discover new insights, develop greater and greater spiritual strength, and find in its pages truth that endlessly delights. Thus, it is a book for young children to read and enjoy; and, for the aged to read and marvel, time and again, at life's greatest truths.

Although pinned by the apostle John, it is sourced in the infinite mind of God's Spirit, the "*Spirit of Truth*" (v.15:26).

General Introductory Information:

Its chronological place among the 4 Gospels:

1. Matthew – A.D. 50-55
2. Mark – A.D. 65-70
3. Luke – A.D. 59-63
4. John – A.D. 85-95

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>John</u>
50-55	59-63	65-70	85-95

John the apostle refers to himself in his Gospel as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." However, by this John "does NOT mean Jesus did not love the other disciples as well" Rather, John had an intense love and devotion for Jesus Christ, his Lord. And it is obvious from his writings that John never lost of the *wonder* of his own salvation and of Jesus' initiating and overwhelming love for him!

"John is NOT mentioned by name in his Gospel, even though he was prominent in the early church." (NIV-Study Bible)

Distinctive Features of John's Gospel:

1. Most of John's Gospel covers material NOT present in the other 3 Gospels (Synoptic)

Especially:

- Jesus' early ministry in **Judea and Samaria** (chapters 1 – 4)
- Jesus' extensive "**Upper Room**" teaching time with His apostles (chapters 13-16)
- Jesus' **Highly Priestly prayer** for His disciples and all who would believe thereafter (ch. 17)

2. John develops the movement of Jesus' ministry around the **Feasts of Israel** (2:10; 5:1 (*unnamed*); 6:4; 10:22; 11:56 and 12:1). "Of the 879 verses found in John's Gospel, more than 660 are directly related to events occurring at these feasts." (Elwood McQuaid)

3. The many "**I am**" designations that Jesus Christ takes upon Himself in John. (These are references to the LORD's name in Exodus 3:14)

4. John recounts **only 7 miracles** of Jesus, plus 1 more after His resurrection (i.e., the disciple's catch of fish). John only refers to miracles in His Gospel as "signs."

John's Purposes in His Writing

John has multiple purposes in writing this record of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

1. John is very deliberate in the selection of his content. In fact, John specifically informs the reader of the purpose of his writing in chapter 20:30,31.

(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."

2. John wants to show the unquestionable **deity of Jesus Christ** (But how is this mystery of the divine nature to be explained?).

- John records a *fuller revelation* of the GOD of Old Testament Scripture!
- Jesus Christ is NOT a different God; there is only *ONE true and living God!*
- So, Jesus Christ as God is NOT another God, but the *SAME* God.
- Jesus Christ is the *SAME* God of Holy Scripture as revealed in *Genesis 1:1!*
- Jesus Christ is God the Son *sent* from God the Father by the *will* of the Father.
- The truth of the Monotheism of Isaiah is *perfectly preserved!* (Isa. 45:18,21,22)

- “*In the beginning God created ... everything!!*, that is, “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!”
- *Before* the God of Genesis 1:1, there was ONLY God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, as now more fully revealed (see, Genesis 1:1,2,3, 26)
- There is a *divine order* within the nature of GOD: God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit (John 5:18,19-20,26-27; 14:15-17,26; 16:7).
(NOTE: In Isaiah all are referred to as *Jehovah*: Jehovah the Spirit, the Son, the Father.)

The movement, then, of John’s Gospel climaxes in Thomas’ affirmation and confession: “My Lord and My God!” And in Jesus Christ’s *blessing* immediately afterward (20:28,29). It is the movement that begins in John’s first words (1:1), it is repeated in 5:18; 8:53,58; 10:33; 14:9; 20:28.

The message of Jesus included His claim of being the Son of God (Son of Man) sent from God the Father in Heaven. In doing so, Jesus also revealed in a far greater way the true nature of the God of Genesis 1:1.

3. God’s Salvation in Jesus Christ alone is John’s stated purpose in writing. John tells readers this in chapter 20 verses 30,31. In John’s Gospel he wants all to know that:

- Salvation was God perfect plan from the beginning
- God has only one plan of salvation
- God’s plan of salvation is in Jesus Christ, His Son, alone
- God salvation is His gift of love to a fallen world, it is the gift God gave in sending His Son.
- His beloved Son finished God’s plan; God’s Salvation is His gift for all, for everyone.
- It is God’s gift available for ALL, but only benefits those who receive God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith.

Jesus Christ is God’s Son sent from the Father, sent from heaven, sent from above, sent into the world! This is **repeated in nearly every chapter** and often multiple times with a chapter.

Major Themes in John’s Gospel

The major themes that fill the pages of John’s Gospel include: Light, Everlasting Life, Truth, the World, Love, God the *Father*, and more.