

## Grangetown Baptist Church; Gospel of John Study Guide; John 1-4 Part 1 of 4

The Gospel of John can be broken down into 4 simple parts:

- 1) The Prologue [Introduction] (1:1-18)
- 2) Jesus' Ministry (1:19-11:57)
- 3) The Passion [Easter] Week (12:1-20:29)
- 4) The Epilogue [Ending] (20:30-21:25)

John gives us the purpose of the book:

“<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup>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).

John organized his whole Gospel around eight “signs” or proofs that reinforce Jesus’ true identity, leading to faith. This week you will read the first two of these signs: (1) turning water into wine (2:1–11); (2) healing the royal official’s son (4:46–54);

Unique aspects of John’s gospel:

1. John supplies much information that is not present in Matthew, Mark and Luke.
2. Second, he often supplied information that helps the understanding of the events in the other three gospels. For example, while Matthew, Mark and Luke begin with Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, they imply that Jesus had a ministry prior to that (for example, Matthew 4:12; Mark 1:14). John supplies the answer with information on Jesus’ prior ministry in Judea (chapter 3) and Samaria (chapter 4).
3. Third, John is the most theological of the Gospels, containing, for example, a heavily theological prologue (1:1–18), larger amounts of teaching material in proportion to narrative (for example, 3:13–17), and the largest amount of teaching on the Holy Spirit (for example, 14:16–17, 26; 16:7–14).<sup>1</sup>

Think about it:

Lots of people have lots of differing ideas about who Jesus was and is. What are some of the more common ideas about who Jesus is among people who you know?

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### John 1:1-18 Prologue

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J. (2000). *John: Jesus - The Word, the Messiah, the Son of God* (pp. 3–4). Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group.

This rich theological passage constitutes what is known as the prologue (or Introduction) to John's Gospel. It introduces many of the major themes that John will treat, especially the main theme that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (vv. 12–14; cf. 20:31).

Several key words repeated throughout the Gospel (for example, life, light, witness, glory) appear here. The remainder of the Gospel develops the theme of the prologue as to how the eternal "Word" of God, Jesus the Messiah and Son of God, became flesh and ministered among people so that all who believe in Him would be saved.

Although John wrote the prologue with very simple vocabulary, the truths that the prologue conveys are the most profound. The prologue features six basic truths about Christ as the Son of God:

The eternal Christ (vv. 1–3)

The incarnate Christ (vv. 4–5)

The forerunner of Christ (vv. 6–8)

The unrecognized Christ (vv. 9–11), that is, His rejection

The omnipotent (or all powerful) Christ (vv. 12–13)

The glorious Christ (vv. 14–18), that is, he is God.

As you begin, ask God to give you insight, to open the spiritual eyes of your heart to the truth He wants you to see in this lesson.

### **Think about it-**

2) What descriptions (titles and terms) does John use in his prologue to introduce the person of Jesus Christ?

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"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about [Christ]: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—or on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool; you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great moral teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."<sup>2</sup>

Based on John's prologue, how would you answer the person who claimed that Jesus was just a good man or a wise teacher?

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<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis (1960) *Mere Christianity*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1960, pp. 40–41.

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Describe the time in your life when you “received” Christ or believed in His name.

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Which of your friends and neighbors need to know the grace and truth that come only through Jesus Christ? Commit to pray for these individuals.

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**Think about it:** What do people say about Jesus in John 1:19-51?

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### **John 3:1-36 You must be born again**

The beloved and familiar story of Jesus’ nighttime encounter with Nicodemus reinforces John’s themes that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God and that He came to offer salvation to people.

In gently confronting Nicodemus with his need to be saved, Jesus demonstrated His identity as God’s messenger.

The chapter may be divided into three sections: (1) Jesus talking with Nicodemus; (2) Jesus' explaining God's plan of salvation; (3) John the Baptist's last testimony regarding Jesus.

As John's ministry faded, Jesus' ministry moved to the forefront. Despite the fact that John the Baptist received widespread fame in Israel and was generally accepted by the common people of the land as well as by those who were social outcasts, his testimony regarding Jesus was rejected, especially by the leaders of Israel.

What facts from Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus lead you to believe that he was open to the truth about Jesus?

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Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (or "born from above"). What does this concept mean? How would you explain it to someone from another culture?

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**Think about it:** Describe the events that led to your being "born again." What people, situations, and tools did God use?

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NOTE: If you are not sure whether you've ever experienced the new birth, turn to God in prayer right now to confess your need for forgiveness, your inability to change yourself, as well as your faith in the fact that Christ alone can forgive sin and impart eternal life. By turning from sin and self and calling on Jesus Christ, you can be saved today! That's the good news!

#### **JOHN 4:1-54**

Can you think of someone who you never expected would be converted, but is now, in fact, a fervent follower of Jesus Christ?

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The story of the Samaritan woman (chapter 4) reinforces John's main theme that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. The thrust of these verses is not so much the woman's conversion but that Jesus is Messiah (v. 26). While her conversion is clearly implied, the apostle's focus centers on Jesus' declaration foretold in the Scriptures (v. 25). Important also is the fact that this chapter demonstrates Jesus' love and understanding of people. His love for humankind knows no boundaries, for He lovingly and compassionately reached out to a woman who was a social outcast. In contrast to the limitations of human love, Christ exhibits the character of divine love that is indiscriminate and all-encompassing (3:16).

By recording Jesus' explanation of this encounter to His disciples, John gives five genuine, but subtle, proofs that Jesus was truly Messiah and Son of God:

1. proof from His immediate control of everything (v. 27)
2. proof from His impact on the woman (vv. 28–30)
3. proof from His intimacy with the Father (vv. 31–34)
4. proof from His insight into human souls (vv. 35–38)
5. proof from His impression on the Samaritans (vv. 39–42)

The episode of Jesus' healing the official's son at the end of the chapter is the second major sign of eight that John uses to reinforce Jesus' true identity.

**Think about it:** What does Jesus mean by living water? (4:10)

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What do you think Jesus meant when He spoke of never thirsting again?

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