

## The Gospel of John – an Introduction

Today I would like to begin a rather lengthy study on one of the most powerful of the four gospels – the Gospel According to St. John. Due to the length of this series of lessons there may be times when we will break away for a lesson of particular importance related to current events. I do invite your comments and questions about any of the lessons at [john@intotheword.org](mailto:john@intotheword.org).

Let's begin by talking just a little about who John was. John is referred to as the “disciple who Jesus loved.” It was John who was leaning upon his breast at the Last Supper. Now I realize that there are those who would try to claim a homosexual relationship here, but there's no indication of such love, and indeed could not be since homosexuality is an abomination to God. Some have suggested that John and his brother James were cousins to Jesus. There's no Biblical record to either prove or disprove this. Some have even claimed that he was a stepbrother to Jesus – that Joseph had children by a previous marriage. I think this comes about due to the erroneous teaching of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of Christ, and indeed appears to have had other children.

The Gospel according to St. John appears to be focused upon the divine nature of Christ, and thus was likely written to refute the heresy of the Gnostics who denied the virgin birth and total divinity of Christ, who also wrote most of the oldest manuscripts of Scripture.

Let's look now at the John 1:1-14. This scripture says:

- (1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- (2) The same was in the beginning with God.
- (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- (4) In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
- (5) And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
- (6) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
- (7) The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.
- (8) He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.
- (9) That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

- (10) He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- (11) He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- (12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
- (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- (14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

This book starts out with a clear indication of the theme of the book. Jesus Christ is presented as the Word, the Creator of all things, the giver of Life, and light to a fallen world.

This Scripture also introduces the character of John the Baptist, and clearly makes a distinction between the ministry of John and the ministry of Christ. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ – the one who would prepare Christ's way. He was the one who would bear witness to the Light. We'll talk more about the ministry of John the Baptist in our next lesson.

John also introduces in verses 11 and 12 some keys that I would like to take a few moments to talk about. First of all he makes a bold statement that the world did not recognize Christ as the Creator God. I believe this to be true through all generations, and key to true Christianity. If Christ is not God then all is in vain. If Christ is not God then he must die for his own sins. The world, though, has come to look upon nature as supreme rather than Nature's God. The world has devised all sorts of mechanisms to take God out of the equation – even claiming that nature bears witness against God. You see, people want to look in terms of evolutionary (human centered) thinking.

Verse 12 then continues this theme by saying that Christ was not received by those to whom he came – the Jews. You see, Christ's purpose was to be the Messiah, but the Jews as a whole would not receive him as such. Instead they persecuted him and delivered him to the gruesome death on the cross. Christ himself told the Jewish leaders they would one day believe on a false Messiah (John 5:43).

Jesus, then, must be received as the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

John next introduces one of the great doctrines of the Church, the new birth. In order to enter into Heaven one must be born of God. We'll talk more about this Spiritual birth as we go through this series of lessons, and especially when we get to John 3.

Finally, in this introduction John once again introduces another great doctrine of the Church – the dual nature of Christ. You see, Christ (the Word) was fully God as

introduced in the opening verses, but he is also fully man, taking upon himself the form of sinful flesh. He understands our problems because he's been there. He proved that it's possible to overcome the lusts of the flesh that lead us astray. Even in his fleshly state, though, the glory of the omnipotent God shone through to all who would look.

I believe this series of lessons will be insightful as the Gospel According to St. John is full of great doctrine – the kinds of things that need to be taught in church today. I encourage you to study this book for yourself as we go through these lessons.

Yours in Christ,

Bro. John Rich