

In the Beginning...

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

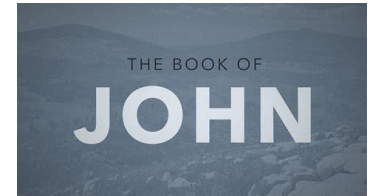
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

October 10, 2021

Text: John 1:1-18

Purpose: The Prologue to the Book of John reveals to us who Jesus Christ is. He came as the Light in a dark world. He came to offer Himself to others so they may become the children of God. He came to reveal the Father to us – full of grace and truth. In Him we find life everlasting.

To me, the Book of John is one of the most compelling books found in all of the New Testament. There is something in the writing of the text that attracts me like a magnet to the refrigerator.



Over the next few months, it is my desire that we all travel down the road together in the revelation of John's account of Jesus' life. I want to challenge you, when you go home, to dust off your bible and read the account of John. You don't have to read it in one setting, but if you do, it will take you about forty-five minutes.

In preparing for this series on the Book of John, I have poured over numerous books, commentaries, notes, and outlines from many expositors. What I want to bring to



you is the best of each of these without bogging you down with all the minor theological arguments. I want us as a church, together to have a better understanding of who Jesus is, why He came, what His message is, and what our challenge is in living out our faith.

As I have mentioned before in previous sermons, the New Testament was written in the Greek language. All four of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written for a different purpose and to a different audience. **What is the purpose and audience of these Gospels?**

The Book of Matthew was written to the Jewish audience. The style of writing has been described by my New Testament Professor, Dr. Andy Wakefield as the “Readers Digest” style of writing.

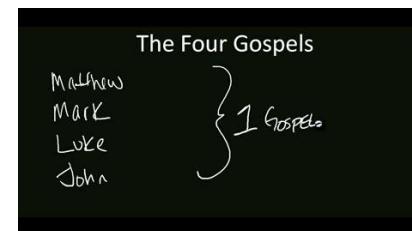
The Book of Mark was written to the Roman audience. It has been described as “Taxi Cab” Greek. It is short, quick, on the go. Mark is a book on the go.

The Book of Luke was written by a physician. His attention to detail is vital to understanding the culture and the times. My professor described this Greek as “Sophisticated” Greek. These three are VERY similar in their accounts of the life and times of Jesus. That is why they are called the Synoptic Gospels - or, “as seen from one view.” You may be surprised to learn there are five hundred verses of scripture that are exactly the same in all three gospels.

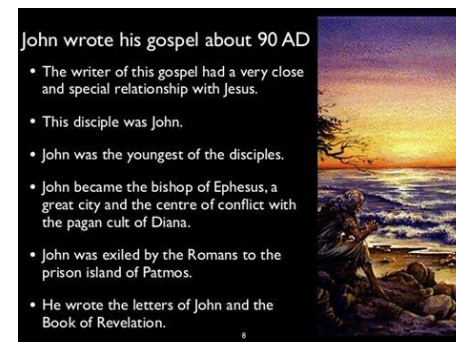
But the Book of John has been described as a Spiritual Gospel. Some have said that the book of John was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Roman army came upon Jerusalem in 70 AD and destroyed and demolished the

whole city. Some theologians have placed the writing of this book as late as 80 AD to 100AD. We could spend hours discussing why they think that is the date, but this is their best estimate.

Before we move forward and focus on the book of John, I want you to understand that all four of the gospels are in harmony with one another and present to us the one gospel – the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each author, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has utilized their language, words, thoughts, to communicate the truth of what they have seen and experienced. Their words are a true and accurate record of Jesus Christ.

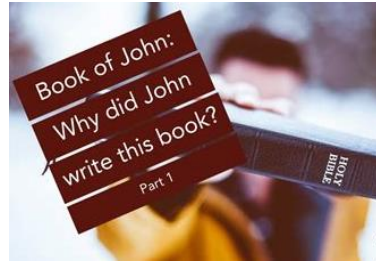


Another question students of the bible often ask is “**Who wrote the Book of John?**” You would think it is as simple as the title, but often things are not as they seem. Tradition gives the authorship to John the Apostle. Clemet of Alexander attributes the Book of John, I John, II John, III John, and the Book of the Revelation to the Apostle John. Papias also agreed and said that John wrote these books.



Internally in the text we find in John 21:22-24, that the writer is identified as the witness of these events. In my opinion it is John the Beloved disciple.

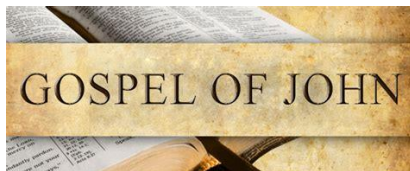
Another question that often is answered before beginning a study of this kind is **“Why was this book written?”** Some have insisted that it was written to refute the teachings of the Gnostics of that day that said that Jesus never came in the flesh, but that he appeared to be in the flesh. John, in this prologue, chapter one, verses one through eighteen attacks this teaching head on.



Some say that the church encouraged John to write a Gospel from a Spiritual perspective. That is why it is often called a Spiritual Gospel. I really think the answer is found in John 20:31. *“But these things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in his name.”*

Maybe John wanted to tell the world Jesus’ mission statement. This is to be found in John 16:28, *“I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father.”*

It is worth noting that there are several significant features in the Book of John that are not in the other three gospels.



- There are no parables
- There is no birth narrative
- Word miracle is not used; the word “sign” is used.
- Jesus’ baptism is not mentioned
- There is no genealogy

- We see very little compassion or pity in Jesus, with the exception of Lazareth’s death. Even then it was only two words, “Jesus Wept.” (John 11:35)
- No Sadducees are mentioned. Only Pharisees.

In the Book of John, we see three trips to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. John gives us a chronological time line for His ministry. If we did not have the Book of John, we could assume only one year of ministry for Jesus. There is attention given to places and cities during Jesus’ ministry.

There are also some features that are only found in the Book of John.

- The story of the wedding at Cana – turning water into wine
- Nicodemus’ conversation with Jesus
- The Woman at the Well
- The Woman caught in adultery
- Doubting Thomas
- The three questions to Peter, “Do you love me?”

The synoptic Gospels show the humanity of Jesus, while John shows us the divinity of Jesus. It is interesting to note that the word Jesus is used primarily instead of the word, Christ.

In the book of John, we have the seven “I AM” statements of Jesus. We have seven “Signs” of Jesus’ divinity. We have seven “Word” statements from Jesus. And we have numerous individuals or groups that Jesus appeared to after his resurrection.

With all that background set in place, let us turn to the text this morning.

“In the beginning...” (John 1:1)



Let us stop right there. I want you to think back as far in time as you can. Now, before that time was, God was there in the beginning. Where else in the bible can you find that same phrase? That’s right. In the book of Genesis. It starts out in the same manner.

In the beginning was what? The Word.





In the Greek, it is the word, Logos. To the various philosophies of that day, they understood the concept

λόγος

of Logos. The Word. For John, it was important to begin on common ground. If you have ever tried to reach out to another person and share the gospel with them, you had to find some common ground with which to begin the conversation. John does the same thing.

The Jehovah Witnesses have taken this first verse and translated it in a different way. The New World Translation states, “In the Beginning was a

Word, and a Word was with God.” They use the little article “a” instead of the article “the.” When you study the Greek, you will find that the only way to translate it is to

A/AN	THE
 a ball	 The ball
 an apple	 The apple

say, “The Word.” There was only one Word with God. He was not one of many Words. He was not separated from God, like the phrase, “a Word” implies. Such a little difference can make all the difference in the world.

READ John 1:1-5 again

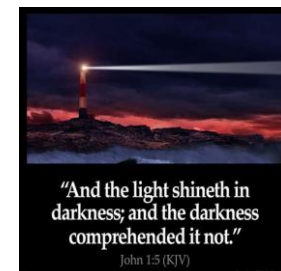
55	719	58	70	373	31	70	373	58
5,50	1,100,600,8,10	8,50	70	30,70,3,70,200	20,1,10	70	30,70,3,70,200	8,50
In [the]	beginning	was	the	Word,	and	the	Word	was
Εν	αρχῇ	ἦν	ο	λογος	καὶ	ο	λογος	ἦν
450	420	134	31	284	58	70	373	
80,100,70,200	300,70,50	9,5,70,50	20,1,10	9,5,70,200	8,50	70	30,70,3,70,200	
with	the	God	and	God	was	the	Word,	
προς	τον	θεον,	καὶ	θεος	ἦν	ο	λογος	

The first four verses form what is called a “kiasm.” They interweave ideas and concepts together in a tight compact statement. It is a deliberate format.

Beginning – Word
Word – God
God – Word

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

Within this prologue, we are introduced to contrasting ideas. Words with double meanings. Light – Darkness are simple words to speak, but difficult concepts to grasp.



Jesus was the light that had come into the world. Jesus came to shine among us.

Many of you know individuals that are still walking in darkness. They have not accepted Jesus as God's Son. They live a life of godliness but do not know Jesus as their Savior. They are walking in darkness and do not know it. If you will remember this phrase, "*And the darkness did not comprehend it,*" you will see as the Book of John unfolds, Jesus encounters people that are still in darkness. Their answer to Jesus' questions shows that they do not understand.

We then turn to a person we have come to know as John the Baptist.

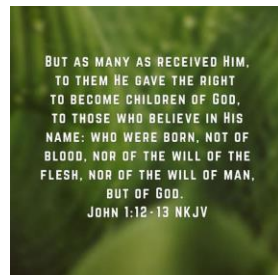
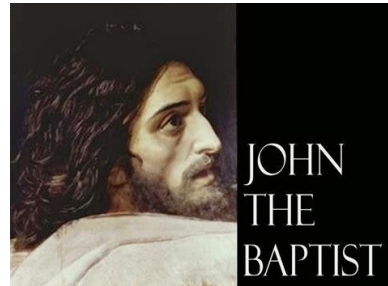
READ John 1:6-8

If you remember from our reading of Zacharias during the Christmas season this man John was born special. The angel Gabriel came and prophesied that John the Baptist would drink no wine or liquor, that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit, that he would turn many back to God, and that he would be the forerunner before Jesus came. He would turn their hearts back to God in preparation for Jesus' message. (Luke 1)

John the Baptist was not the light, but was one that came to bear witness to the Light.

READ John 1:9-13

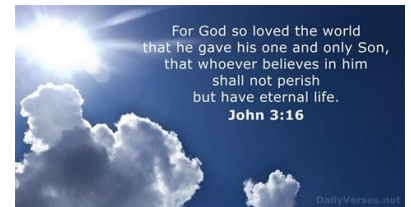
Jesus came as the Light, to lead us to God, and the world rejects the light.



Even today, people are not flocking to God. They say they trust God with their words, but they do not honor Him by their actions. Jesus came to his own people, Israel, and they rejected Him. God has extended the gift of salvation to everyone. Verse twelve and thirteen says, "*As many as receive Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even those that believe on His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*"

It is extended to everyone – but only those that take the gift and receive it. God desires that none perish, but that all come unto the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

When you think about the book of John, what one verse of scripture comes to your mind? Probably the most familiar verse in the Book of John is found in John 3:16. If you know it, say it along with me.



"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

This passage is in a response that Jesus had to Nicodemus in chapter three. Jesus told him that evening that in order to experience salvation, you must be born again. What exactly does that phrase "born again" mean?

Let us think about our salvation for a few moments. When you were physically born into this world, what did you do to get born? Nothing!

All you had to do was just show up! Your mother and father had a part in bringing you into this world. Your mother carried you in her womb for about nine months and then one day, she, not you, went into labor. There was nothing you could do to be born. Your mother endured the pain, your mother provided the nourishment, your mother had to push at the right time, but you, all you had to do was nothing.

When I was born in South Boston Virginia, they issued a birth certificate with my name, weight, color of my skin, who my mother was, who my father was, and when I was born. As I have grown older, I have taken on some of the physical characteristics of my father. We have a similar hair line, and a similar waist line.

To be born into the family of God, requires only a choice. God is extending an invitation to you and me to join Him and His family. When we get to heaven, we need to ask to see that birth certificate! To be born again, means we are born “from above.” Wouldn’t it be great if as we live here on this earth, that people would say, that we are like Christ? – one born spiritually from above.

We do have a choice. We do have two options. We can choose to accept God’s offer of salvation and become born again. Those that are born of the flesh will die. Those that are born of the spirit will live again. What a great divide is presented to us today. To live eternally, is to choose Christ. Failure to say, “Yes” to God’s invitation is to continue on the path towards eternal separation from God.



We are born sinners. We can be the best neighbor, the most honest businessman, or just a good ordinary person. None of those will merit salvation. Salvation comes from God. We need to turn to Him and accept the invitation.

READ John 1:14-18

In just a few months, we will celebrate the first advent, God coming in the flesh – Immanuel, God with us.

Jesus came in the flesh. He was not some spirit. John the Apostle, the writer of this text says that “*We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” This is the word of an eye witness. John saw Jesus at the mount of Transfiguration, John saw Jesus on the cross, John ate with Jesus at the Last Supper table, and John was there when Lazareth was called back from the dead after being in the grave four days. John was an eye witness!

John the Baptist declared Jesus existed before John the Baptist was born. Why did he say that? John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus. Because Jesus was with God in the beginning. John the Baptist mentions Moses as the giver of the Law. As students of God’s word, we know in Exodus, chapter 20, Moses received the Ten Commandments from God which point us to the coming Christ. The Law is like a mirror. When we look in the mirror, we see our dirt and grime. We cannot rub our face on the mirror and expect to get clean. We must take the water in the sink below and wash away the dirt. When Jesus came, he brought us grace and truth. Jesus is the only one that can take away that sin in your life.



If you have never taken that step towards God, today is the day to hear His voice calling you, and accept it.



The Book of John is a powerful book. The Book of John may be written in simple Greek words, but they profoundly affect you if you take time to ponder the implications. Over the next few months, we will examine the life of Jesus and see His signs, His words, His death on the cross, and His story. There is no way to cover every verse in this entire book without taking a year or more. I may focus on a few verses or take a whole passage.

What I have learned in my life is that God is faithful. God provides us hope when there seems to be no hope. God came to meet us where we are.



We are in need of a Savior. Thank God He came for me! How about you? Have you claimed Him as your own?

LET US PRAY