

Weekly Bible Studies—The Gospel According to John

Introduction

The Gospel of John comes to us with a wonderful, straightforward clarity. The apostle John wrote with such beautiful simplicity that the deepest truths of eternity are made accessible to every single reader. That simplicity is vital because this is a saving gospel. It was written so that anyone, anywhere, could encounter the living God. John states his heart and purpose plainly: "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30–31).

For countless believers throughout church history, John's account is the most precious book in the entire Bible. It is the first place we send someone who is seeking to know who Jesus is or a young believer wanting to grow in their new walk. Of all the New Testament writers, John has a remarkably deep gaze into the eternal mysteries, the heart of God, and the beauty of the Savior.

Understanding John Among the Gospels

When you look at the four Gospels, you notice quickly that John stands apart. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the Synoptics—meaning "to see together"—because they share a similar outline, structure, and perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus.

John, however, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives us a distinct view. While all four Gospels mix historical narrative with the teachings of Christ, John focuses heavily on the long, intimate discourses of Jesus. You won't find narrative parables, demon exorcisms, or the healing of lepers in John. Nor does he record the birth, baptism, transfiguration, or the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

Instead, over 90 percent of John's Gospel is unique material not found in the Synoptics:

- The Prologue: The breathtaking declaration of Christ's pre-existence and incarnation in John 1:1–18.
- Early Ministry & Conversations: Jesus' early work in Judea and Samaria, His first miracle at Cana in John 2:1–11, His late-night discussion with Nicodemus in John 3:1–21, and His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:5–42.
- Miracles & Teachings in Jerusalem: The healing of the lame man at Bethesda in John 5:1–15 and the man born blind in John 9:1–41.
- Great Discourses: The Bread of Life teaching in John 6:22–71, the offer of Living Water in John 7:37–38, and the Good Shepherd passage in John 10:1–39.
- The Raising of Lazarus: The glorious preview of resurrection power in John 11:1–46.
- The Upper Room: The tender moments of foot-washing, the Upper Room Discourse in John 13–16, and Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in John 17.

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- Post-Resurrection Appearances: The miraculous catch of fish and the restoration of Peter in John 21:1–19.

It is important to remember that these differences are not contradictions; they are harmonious complementations. The Holy Spirit orchestrated the Gospels to interlock seamlessly. For instance, when Jesus was falsely accused at His trial of saying He would destroy the temple (Mark 14:58), the Synoptics don't record when He said that—but John 2:19 gives us the context. When the Synoptics note that Jesus sent the crowds away immediately after feeding the five thousand (Matthew 14:22), John 6:15 tells us why: the people were about to force Him to be an earthly king.

The early church historian Eusebius noted that John, writing later in his life, acknowledged the truth of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and was led by God to fill in details—particularly Christ's early Judean ministry before the imprisonment of John the Baptist—so the Church would have a complete, rich picture of the Lord.

John wrote with intimate, eye-witness precision. Writing decades after Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70, he still remembered the city like the back of his hand—the Sheep Gate pool (John 5:2), the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7), Solomon's Porch (John 10:23), the Brook Kidron (John 18:1), and the Stone Pavement called Gabbatha (John 19:13).

Bridging the Truth to Every Heart

By the time John wrote from Ephesus late in the first century, the gospel had spread far beyond Judea into the Gentile world. John faced a practical shepherd's challenge: how to communicate the eternal truth of Jesus to people who didn't grow up with Old Testament categories, Hebrew genealogies, or a background in Jewish prophecy.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, John used concepts every Greek thinker cared about:

1. The Logos (The Word): To the Hebrew mind, God's word was His creative power ("God said, 'Let there be light'"). To the Greek mind, the Logos was the divine reason and mind of God that held the vast universe in perfect order. John bridged both worlds with one glorious truth: The divine Mind and Word that created and upholds all things has stepped into human history as a real man—Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14).
2. True Reality (Alethinos): Greek philosophers like Plato talked constantly about this world being a world of shadowy, temporary copies, while real, eternal truth existed somewhere above. John tells the world that real life and ultimate reality are found in a Person. Jesus is the true Light (John 1:9), the true Bread (John 6:32), and the true Vine (John 15:1).

When Jesus performed miracles, John called them "signs." They were not just isolated acts of power; they were windows into the very character of God. When Jesus fed the five thousand, He was showing that He is the eternal Bread who satisfies the human soul. When He opened blind

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eyes, He was showing He is the Light of the World. When He raised Lazarus, He revealed that He holds ultimate power over physical and spiritual death.

The Apostle Behind the Pen

Who was this writer? John was the younger son of Zebedee, a fisherman from Galilee who worked alongside his brother James and their partners, Peter and Andrew. In his youth, John was fiery, ambitious, and quick-tempered. Jesus nicknamed James and John the "Sons of Thunder." On one occasion, when a Samaritan village rejected Jesus, John wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume them (Luke 9:54)!

Yet, look at what the grace of God does with a yielded heart. The young man who once wanted to blast his enemies became the seasoned, loving apostle who penned the deepest truths of God's love. In the Book of Acts, we see him standing boldly with Peter before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:13). In Galatians 2:9, Paul refers to him as a pillar of the early church.

Jerome records that in John's final days as an old man in Ephesus, when he was too weak to preach long sermons, his disciples would ask for a final word of wisdom. He would simply repeat: "Little children, love one another." When asked why he said only that, he replied, "It is the Lord's command, and if this only is done, it is enough."

What This Means for Us Today

John's Gospel was written with a single, clear purpose: that you may believe, and that by believing, you may have life.

1. A Challenge for the Believer:

If you already belong to Jesus, John's Gospel is a daily call to move beyond surface-level religion and abide in Him. Jesus doesn't offer us a list of rules; He offers us Himself. Are you walking in the light daily? Are you feeding on Him, the true Bread of Life, through His Word? Don't settle for living in the spiritual shadows of this passing world. The apostle John challenges us to know Christ deeply, to hold fast to the truth without compromise, and to love one another with a self-sacrificing heart.

2. An Invitation to Receive Eternal Life:

If you are reading this today and you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, this Gospel was written specifically for you.

The Bible tells us plainly that every one of us has sinned and fallen short of God's holy standard. We cannot save ourselves, clean ourselves up, or earn our way into heaven. But God loved you so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world.

Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life. Then, out of boundless love for you, He went to the cross at Calvary. On that cross, Jesus shed His precious blood to pay the full price for your sins. He took

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the punishment you and I deserved, dying in our place. He was buried, but three days later, He rose triumphantly from the dead. His resurrection declares beyond all doubt that He is God, the Savior of the world, and the Lord over life and death.

Salvation is not about joining a religious system or trying harder. It is a gift received through faith. John uses the word "believe" nearly a hundred times because salvation comes when you put your total trust in who Jesus is and what He did for you on the cross.

Right now, right where you are, you can turn from your sin and place your trust in Jesus Christ. If you want to accept Him as your Savior and Lord, you can pray a prayer like this from your heart:

"Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and that I cannot save myself. I believe that You are the Son of God, that You died on the cross and shed Your blood to pay for my sins, and that You rose again from the dead. Today, I turn from my sin and I place my trust in You alone. Forgive me, come into my heart, and give me the gift of eternal life. Teach me to follow You as my Savior and my Lord. In Your holy name I pray, Amen."

If you made that decision today, the Bible promises that you have passed from death into eternal life. Begin reading the Gospel of John, talk to God daily in prayer, and find a solid, Bible-teaching study group where you can grow in His grace!