

John 1:1-36

Let me welcome you to our study of the Gospel of John.

Before we start, there are a couple of things that I should mention that might help keep things straight.

I'll be talking about two *Johns* today.

First of all, there's John the Apostle who was the author of this book, under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

And then we have John the Baptist, the herald of Christ, who figures quite prominently in this first lesson.

I hope with this little explanation that the context of the lesson and the Scriptures will help you to keep these two men apart.

Also, another very interesting thing is the fact that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the cousin of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist.

We find that information in the book of Luke.

So that would make John the Baptist and Jesus second cousins, a fact that becomes quite interesting in this first lesson.

So with this brief introduction, I'd like to begin this lesson with a trivia question.

Are you ready?

What book in the Bible begins in the same time period as the beginning of the Gospel of John?

Be careful now. I didn't say what book is in the same time period.

I said what book in the Bible begins in the same time period as the beginning of the Gospel of John?

Let's read the beginning of the Gospel of John:

John 1:1-3 **"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."

Does that sound familiar?

That's right, these verses contain about the same information that we find in Gen.

1:1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Yes, they both start out **"In the beginning."**

And you can't get beyond the fourth word in Genesis before you are brought face to face with God.

And not just God in a general sense, but God the Creator of **"heaven and earth."**

No, that ridiculous godless theory that says everything created itself has no place in the life of a believer.

But the point we're making here is the Holy Spirit saw fit to begin the book of Genesis and the Gospel of John in much the same way.

Why did He do that?

Well, He certainly wasn't interested in my trivia question.

In fact, I don't believe God is greatly interested in trivial things at all, especially when it comes to the Bible.

No, God had a good reason for what He did.

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However, before I get into that, I would like to go back in time to when I was about 18 years old, and, by the way, that's not ancient history.

The Lord had impressed a couple of thoughts on my mind.

I had grown up in the United Church of Canada, and even though I had no idea what the real message of salvation was, I thought I was a Christian.

So I said to myself, here I am a Christian, and I have never read the Bible myself. Also, I was hoping to find some formula, or set of rules, that would assure me a place in heaven.

Now back when I was in grade 3, some faithful soul had distributed Gideon New Testaments, which included Psalms,

to every child in my class, and, of course, I got one.

So there it was, after so many years, still lying in my dresser drawer just waiting to be read.

Naturally I began in Matthew.

In Sunday school, I had learned about the miracles of Christ, so I was somewhat familiar with the text.

However, when I got to Mark, I was surprised to find out that it seemed like a duplicate.

The same thing happened in Luke and John. However, God doesn't write the same book four times, and there is a very important reason why He wrote four Gospels.

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I'm sure you all know that a person can be more accurately identified if you have two pictures of him, one from the front and one from the side.

And, I suppose if you really wanted to be thorough, you could take a picture on all four sides.

In a sense, that's exactly what God has done.

Yes, it took all four gospels to properly portray Christ's unique character.

To be perfectly correct, it has taken all 66 books of the Bible to portray Christ properly.

Someone has observed that Matthew, which was written from the Jewish perspective, reveals Christ as the Son of David, Israel's promised King or Messiah.

Mark reveals Jesus as the suffering Servant,
while Luke emphasizes His perfect
manhood.

And John, that we are beginning tonight,
reveals Christ as the Son of God, and
the One who is literally God in the
flesh.

Yes, Jesus Christ is Deity.

And just as the first book of the Bible
brings us face to face with God in His
role as the Creator, when we begin the
Gospel of John, we find the very same
thing.

Let's take other look.

John 1:1-3 **"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."

Here, the Holy Spirit draws our attention to one of the most important doctrines in Scripture.

Not only is Jesus the Son of God, but He is God Himself.

First of all, John makes it clear that "**the Word**" is God.

Notice the statement in V 1, "**and the Word was God.**"

And then, in the very same verse, he makes it clear that the one true God is actually more than one ---"**and the Word was with God**".

The Trinity is not actually mentioned here, but the concept, that God can be with God, certainly gives us a broad hint.

And the Trinity is a fundamental truth that most, if not all, of the cults deny.

So let's spend a moment here.

Those who do not believe that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one, and co-equal, will find it impossible to put Genesis and John together.

For instance, Genesis says that God (assumed the Father) **"--- created the heaven and the earth."**

Also, in Gen. 1:2, the Holy Spirit is included in the creation process.

"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

However, there is no mention made of **"the Word,"** or in other words, the Son of God.

On the other hand, in the Gospel of John, only **"the Word"** gets the credit for creation, and there is no mention made of the Father or the Holy Spirit.

And you can't divide up the work of creation between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, for John 1:3 clearly states, **"All things were made by him; (referring to the Son) and without him was not any thing made that was made."**

So here we have a situation where Genesis tells us that the Father and the Holy Spirit did all the work, while John says **"the Word"** created **"All things."**

So what about it?

If you don't accept the fact that the Three are One, you'll just have to scrap one of these books.

And, unfortunately, some people have done just that.

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And, as I have already mentioned, there's another very important truth found here, and that is the fact that Jesus is God.

And by the way, Jesus was never bashful about proclaiming His Deity.

Actually, that's one of the main reasons why the Pharisees hated Him so.

I'm sure we would all agree that Jesus is the Son of God, but do we actually realize that Jesus, the One who walked the dusty roads of Galilee, is God the Creator of all things?

It's a very important truth, and also one that the false cults deny.

Yes, Jesus is God.

That's why Math. 1:23 says, "**Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.**"

So He is God, both in nature and in name. And while we're on the subject, there's another heresy that denies Jesus' manhood.

We're warned about that in 1 John 4:2-3

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

So all these truths are important, and the Holy Spirit has carefully guarded them in the Word of God.

Just as Genesis brings us face to face with God the Creator, so John brings us face to face with **"the Word,"** the Creator of all things.

But someone will say, How do we know that **"the Word"** is God?

Well it says so in John 1:1 - **"and the Word was God."**

Okay, but how do we know that **"the Word"** is Jesus?

Again, it says so in John 1:14 **"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."**

And only Jesus did that.

Yes, one night long ago, the Son of God took His place in a lowly manger.

Deity had never done it before, and Deity will never do it again.

What a blessed thought that the Creator of all things is also the architect of our salvation.

John 1:4-5 **"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."

In Gen. 1:1, **"God created the heaven and the earth."**

But it was an earth devoid of life and light.

"And the earth was without form, and void; (or empty) and darkness was upon the face of the deep."

And then God visited His world and immediately said, -- **"Let there be light:"**

In six days He created a wonderful world, a world without sickness or death.

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But then, because of man's sin, this world was plunged, not into physical darkness, but into spiritual darkness.

In the place where man had once enjoyed sweet fellowship with his Creator, now there was darkness and emptiness.

However, in the process of time, God visited His world once again, this time in the flesh, this time as one of us.

John 1:14 says **"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."**

Yes, light had invaded the darkness.

The Creator of physical life was to be the source of eternal life.

So in a very real way, the Gospel of John is a Genesis No. 2, ushering in a new creation.

John 1:4 **"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."**

Isaiah 42:5-7 foretold His coming. **"Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: (then speaking of His Son, God said)**

6: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a

light of the Gentiles;

7: To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

Yes, He would be the light to lighten the Gentiles; but first of all, He must keep His Father's promise to Israel. And like any other king, He must have a herald to go before Him.

John the Baptist was that herald.

John 1:6-8 **"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."

700 years before Christ's coming, John's ministry was foretold in Isaiah 40:3. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for (for whom?) a highway for our God."

Yes, Christ is God.

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John 1:8-10 "He (that is John the Baptist) 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."

"-- **the world was made by him,**" again Christ is identified as the Creator.

However, it was a world that "**knew him not.**"

Yes, the unthinkable happened.

His own creation, and even His own nation, rejected Him.

V 11 "**He came unto his own, and his own received him not.**"

That was the bad news, but here's the good news.

V 12-14 "**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."

So that's John's central theme.

Jesus is both God and man.

And in his first epistle, John went even
further.

1 John 1:1-2 "That which was from the
beginning, which we have heard, which
we have seen with our eyes, which we
have looked upon, and our hands have
handled, of the Word of life;
2: (For the life was manifested, and we
have seen it, and bear witness, and
shew unto you that eternal life, which
was with the Father, and was manifested
unto us;)"

---"That which was from the beginning,"
which of course could only refer to

God, was the One they had seen with their eyes.

In fact, they had seen Him, heard Him, and touched Him.

That's three of the five senses, is it not?

Yes, God was really here.

John 1:15 **"John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me."**

John's name means "God is gracious," and, really, that was his message also.

And John never had any illusions about Christ's Deity.

For instance, even though, humanly speaking, John was about six months older than his cousin Jesus, he still said, **"he was before me."**

Certainly Christ was before him in importance, but He was also the Eternal One.

And John recognized that.

V 16-18 **"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.**

17: For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

18: No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

And that statement also alludes to Christ's Deity.

V 19-25 **"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?**

20: And he confessed, and denied not;

but confessed, I am not the Christ.

21: And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.

22: Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?

23: He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.

24: And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.

25: And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?"

What's really going on here?

I think they were checking out his
credentials.

Let me paraphrase their words just a little.
If you are from God, then where do you fit
into Scripture?

You have already admitted that you're not
the Messiah, so who are you?

Are you "**Elias**" returned from the dead?

Actually, that was quite a reasonable
question.

The last two verses of the Old Testament
promised that Elijah would come again.

We see that in Malachi 4:5-6. "**Behold, I
will send you Elijah the prophet before
the coming of the great and dreadful
day of the LORD:**

**6: And he shall turn the heart of the
fathers to the children, and the heart
of the children to their fathers, lest**

**I come and smite the earth with a
curse."**

So that was a good question.

However, John answered *no*.

Then they asked him if he was "**that
prophet?**"

Again this was based on God's Word.

In Deut.18:15 God had said, "**The LORD thy
God will raise up unto thee a Prophet
from the midst of thee, of thy
brethren, like unto me; unto him ye
shall hearken**".

Of course this passage refers to Christ, who
was born a Jew, but was "**like unto**"
God.

Again John answered *no*.

By this time I think they were getting a
little impatient.

They had been sent by the Jews, and they weren't getting the answers they wanted.

Actually John did tell them who he was, but they weren't listening.

He pointed them to Isaiah 40:3, and told them that his credentials were there.

He was **"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."**

That was clear enough, wasn't it, but it didn't fit into their criteria.

If you're not Christ, or Elijah, or that prophet, then you're not qualified to baptize.

Have you ever met people like that?

So, faced with their narrow views on the subject, John simply pointed them to Christ.

V26-29 **"John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27: He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 28: These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29: The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."**

Now, everyone was familiar with the Passover lamb. However, it could only cover sin.

You might say sin in the Old Testament was handled somewhat like we handle our nuclear waste.

We know it's dangerous, but we don't know how to get rid of it.

So we just bury it, and hope nobody will dig it up.

Now that's irresponsible, isn't it?

To keep on creating a problem that you can't deal with is simply irresponsible!

However, unlike man, God never works in an irresponsible manner.

Yes, God did cover sin in the Old Testament, but He knew exactly what He was going to do with it.

And that was what John was talking about.

Jesus was **the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**"

Yes, the time had come: "--- but now once
in the end of the world hath he
appeared to put away sin by the
sacrifice of himself." Heb. 9:26

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John 1:30-34 "This is he of whom I said,
After me cometh a man which is
preferred before me: for he was before
me.

31: And I knew him not: but that he
should be made manifest to Israel,
therefore am I come baptizing with
water.

32: And John bare record, saying, I saw
the Spirit descending from heaven like
a dove, and it abode upon him.

33: And I knew him not: but he that
sent me to baptize with water, the same
said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see

the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34: And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

What a man of faith he was!

John had gone forth boldly announcing Israel's Messiah, with no idea who He was or where He was.

He only knew that when the time was right, God would reveal Him by the sign of a dove.

And then one day it happened.

While he was baptizing, the dove came down, and to his great surprise, I'm sure, it landed on his cousin! But you know what? There's something even more surprising than that.

The surprising thing is that Jesus needed to
be identified at all!

Couldn't everyone see that He was the Son of
God?

Well, apparently not.

It appears that, physically speaking, Christ
just blended into the crowd.

As a result, John needed a sign to identify
Him, and Israel needed John to tell
them who He was.

No, He didn't have a halo over His head.

And Jesus wasn't head and shoulders above
the crowd like Saul had been.

And He wasn't like Absalom, who was praised
in all Israel for his beauty.

No, it appears that Isaiah's description of
the Son of God was absolutely accurate.

Isaiah 53:2 "--- **he hath no form nor
comeliness; and when we shall see him,**

**there is no beauty that we should
desire him."**

Yes, physically speaking, Christ was just like the tabernacle in the wilderness, which foreshadowed Him so well.

All the gold and brilliant colours were on the inside, for God's appreciation, while the outside was covered with badgers' skins.

In fact, John even had to point Him out to his own disciples as **"the Lamb of God!"**

V 35-36 **"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;
36: And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"** --- and that's the last that John saw of his disciples.

Next week, Lord willing, we will find out how they made out.