

Blank Paper

Introduction

We have spent several weeks looking forward to this book. We have studied John and his unique perspective. Reviewed the key moments in John's life that shaped his perspective and understanding. John is looking back on the most incredible years of his life. Jesus gave him everything. This son of thunder was transformed by the love of His Savior.

This book was likely written in 85AD...that is 50 years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. His story is bathed in hindsight and perspective. Matthew, Mark and Luke had finished their gospels some twenty years earlier.

Those gospels read like a reporter who is doing a documentary on the ministry of Jesus. But John wants to add to that record for all who follow. Some events, some miracles, but mostly the underlying significance of what they have seen. In addition, he now has the stories of Mary who has been at his side for years. He has a perspective none of the other disciples shared.

Let me put in in perspective. The Vietnam War ended 50 years ago. Many wrote about that day during the first few days and years to follow. But if someone were to look back today and write, they might give us new information but mostly they would give you wisdom, perspective and significance that can only be appreciated in time.

That is the Gospel of John. Unique in its perspective. Written by a man leaving a legacy. A young adult at the time but now likely in his late 70's. He will write other books, but he does not know that when writing this one. By this time he is the last one standing.....This gospel must inspire and move people to understand what he has learned. God came to earth and revealed to us a love we have never seen. And the Jewish people for the most part missed Him and worse crucified Him.

So it is to them that he writes. He is writing to appeal to the Jews that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah promised by God through the prophets and it was not too late for those who remain to accept Him as their Savior. John's gospel assumes knowledge of the Old Testament, Jewish religion, and the concept of Messiah. He wants the Jews to repent and turn back to Jesus.

By now false teachers were rampant throughout the new churches. Paul is gone. All the disciples are gone. Once this gospel is finished, John would write the Revelation and 1,2,3 John likely within the next 5 years.

IMAGE 1

So, for just a moment, put yourself in John's sandals. You have prayed and prayed. You are sitting in front of a blank sheet of papyrus with pen in hand. Everything about John's experience with Jesus over the last 60 years likely floods his mind. All of it is important. How do you ever get started?

Fortunately, this relatively uneducated fisherman had a pen guided by the Holy Spirit of God. There is no doubt in my mind that the first verse of this gospel came straight from God. John is not that good. Thus God begins the last gospel through John. Let's dive in.

John tends to write in examples of three. I want to look at three different passages each grouped in three. Nine claims that John makes in the first chapter of this book.

Baseball Scripture....in the Big inning..

John 1:1 (ESV) 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Gospel of John introduces the Lord Jesus Christ with three tremendous statements: "In the beginning was the Word," "And the Word was with God," "And the Word was God."

In the beginning was the Word.

In the first week we spoke a great deal about the Greek word logos. The same word in Hebrew is DAVAR

To the Greeks, the Word..logos....represented..The Greek philosophers saw the logos as the collective power which puts sense into the world, making the world orderly instead of chaotic. The logos was the power that set the world in perfect order and kept it going in perfect order. They saw the logos as the "Ultimate Reason" that controlled all things

But the Jews had a slightly different perspective. The Collective Power of the universe held by the Greeks was not the same as the God of Israel. They held the name of God in such high esteem that they did not say it. Instead of saying God, they deferred to saying The Word of God.

It is one of the highest and most profound titles of the God and John applies it here the Christ Jesus...saying that they are one in the same.

For example, ancient Hebrew editions of the Old Testament change Exodus 19:17 (Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God) to "Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet the word of God." In the mind of the ancient Jews, the phrase "the word of God" could be used to refer to God Himself. You could say the Word of God instead of God, but you could not refer to God by name.

John says to both Jews and Greeks: "For centuries you've been talking, thinking, and writing about the Word . Now I will tell you who He is." John meets both Jews and Greeks where they are at, and explains Jesus in terms they already understood.

In the Beginning....

I want us to reflect upon that which is crazy to us. The concept of eternity. God is not limited by time. He is not limited by past, present or future. He states that He has always existed.

Isaiah 57:15 (ESV) 15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place,

Psalms 90:2 (ESV) 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

Jesus himself confirms His deity and relationship with the Father before creation..

John 17:5 (ESV) 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

John 17:24 (ESV) 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Others confirm it as well.

1 Peter 1:19–21 (ESV) 20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you 21 who through him are believers in God,

Let that sink in for a moment. John starts this gospel with a very real truth...in the beginning was the Word....the verb here is durative imperative. Which means one of ongoing action.

Pick a beginning....any one will do...and He was already there.

Go back as far as you like....As far back as you wish to go....Billions of years? Ok He was there. Trillions of years....He was already there. 4000 years....He was already there. No matter which beginning you want to choose....He was already there.

John essentially says, "When the beginning began, the Word was already there." That is, that the Word predates time or creation. John makes it clear that the Word is not just the beginning, but the beginning of the beginning. He was there in the beginning, before anything was

To a Jewish audience, in the beginning was the title of the Book of Genesis. They often referred to the books of Scripture by the first few lines. As soon as John said in the beginning, they were immediately tuned into the creation record.

And the Word was with God.

This is a clear, emphatic declaration that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. In fact, the Greek is more specific than this, because in the Greek language the important word is placed at the beginning of the sentence and it reads, "God was the Word." That is emphatic; you cannot get it more emphatic than that

This makes it abundantly clear that He is separate and distinct from God the Father. You cannot identify Him as God the Father because He is with God. "But," someone says, "if He is with God, He is not God." That leads us to John's third declaration.

The Word was God

In one verse...John has introduced and defined the Trinity. They say that the word Trinity is not in the Bible....and it is not. It is a word that theologians came up with to explain what John is telling us in John 1:1

- There is a Being known as the Word.
- This Being is God, because He is eternal (In the beginning)
- This Being is God, because He is plainly called God (the Word was God).
- At the same time, this Being does not encompass all that God is. God the Father is a distinct Person from the Word (the Word was with God).

He was in the beginning with God again makes the point that the Father is distinct from the Son, and the Son distinct from the Father. They are equally God, yet they are separate Persons.

So, the Father and the Son (the Son is known here as the Word) are equally God, yet distinct in their Person. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Father. Yet they are equally God, with God the Holy Spirit, introduced in the beginning as hovering over the waters, in the Old Testament empowering for a time, and given by Jesus to all believers.. making one God in three Persons

1. Jesus Christ shares God's eternity. He was In the beginning.... By definition, God has no beginning

Although he lived within time as a human being he is not bound by time. He predates all existence; 'there never was when he was not However far back we set the beginning of things, and whatever model we employ to describe that origin, according to John, Jesus was present as the presiding Lord of that moment and event

This is important for the way we read the Old Testament. The significance of this opening phrase of John is that the God who speaks in the Old Testament, who entered into covenant with his people Israel, and inspired and moved the prophets, was none other than the God known in Jesus Christ. God has not changed or evolved. Jesus Christ was always at the heart of God.

2. Jesus Christ was eternally with God

3. Jesus Christ is one with God This phrase unambiguously affirms the deity of Jesus Christ. He is God the Son, one in Godhead with the Father.

What does this tremendous opening verse imply for our approach to Jesus Christ?

1. The finality of Christ. Jesus' place in the being of God is changeless. He has always been and always will be.

He alone is God come to us. No other can stand alongside him or take his place. The revelation in Jesus Christ is the final revelation

2. The mystery of Jesus Christ

Since Jesus Christ is one with God in his being, he shares in the infinity and limitlessness of God. It means that we do not have an exhaustive knowledge of him. We know only what He revealed in the Scriptures.

We therefore know him, and yet there is always more to know, more to experience. This is why worship is fundamental to understanding, and why love and knowledge are inseparable.

3. The centrality of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ is God himself come to us, he must always be in the center of our approach to God, our thinking about God, and our relating to God

4. The supremacy of Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ shares the nature of God, we are called to worship him without cessation, obey him without hesitation, love him without reservation and serve him without interruption. To him be all glory for ever

All of that in one verse....

They say that if you can believe the first verse of the Bible...In the beginning God created....then the rest of the Bible is easy.

I believe that if you understand the first verse of the Gospel of John, then surrendering to Jesus is easy. As I said a few weeks ago, this truth completely changed my life. Jesus is God. The Father is God. The Holy Spirit is God. They have all always existed...in the beginning.

1) In the Beginning was the Word 2) The Word was with God 3) the Word was God.

Allow me to skip down to verse 14 and explore another series of 3 truths from God through John

John 1:14 (ESV) 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

In this verse we see three more statements of Truth about Jesus...“And the Word was made flesh,” “And the Word dwelt among us,” “He was full of grace and truth.”

The Word was made flesh

The Greek philosopher probably would have stayed with us through verse one, but he leaves us here. He would never agree that the Word was made flesh. The Greek language allows us to put it more specifically and, I think, more accurately: “The Word was born flesh.” Turn this over in your mind for a moment.

Here comes God out of eternity, already the Ancient of Days; but He also came to Bethlehem, as a dependent helpless little baby. And notice that John’s Gospel does not even mention His birth in Bethlehem. Do you know why? He is talking about One who is

too big for Bethlehem. Out of eternity, the Word became flesh and we will see that flesh could not hold, define or limit Him.

The Word dwelt among us.

“Dwelt” is from skenoo; it means “He pitched His tent among us.” Our human bodies are merely little tents in which we live.

This house in which we live is a tabernacle, a tent, that can be blown over in a night; it can be snuffed out in an instant. Because you and I live in these little tents, the God of eternity took upon Himself a human body and thus pitched His tent down here among us. This separates the Jewish God from all other gods. Other so called gods lived in Olympia or in the Heavens. They did not have a relationship with man. These gods caused calamity on men. Man was constantly trying to appease them.

Yet John tells us that God loves us and wants to be with us. He is going to come to earth to share the human experience with us. He is not just visiting...he is dwelling. And for those who believe, He will never leave them.

Jesus...the Word became flesh and moved into our neighborhood. We don't always seem to understand what a limit that placed upon Him. Yet the unique thing is that being human did not deny Him His Deity.

John tells us that Jesus was fully man and fully God. He surrendered His independent will to the Father for this mission, but He never stopped being God. John says that yes He was flesh, yes He came to be with us...but...now the third point....

And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John says, “Wait a minute—He was full of grace and truth and we have seen His Glory...We have seen the shekinah glory radiate from this God man. He is full of everything of God. He has the same glory as the Father because He is the only Son. The word “full” means that you just could not have any more. He brought all the deity with Him, and He was full of glory, grace and full of truth when He came down here

And John would add .I am a witness to His glory.

4) The Word was born flesh 5) The Word dwelt amongst us 6) The Word was full of grace, truth and glory.

Now lets move down to verse 18 and pick up three more truths about Jesus.

John 1:18 (NASB95) 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

No man has seen God at any time, The only begotten son who is in the bosom of the Father, and God has now made Him known. Jesus was the only begotten Son, but the scriptures more accurately tell us that He was the only begotten God.

No man has seen God at any time.

Why? He will explain it in this Gospel; God exists as Spirit...like the wind. We see the impact and feel the presence of God, but no one can see God and live..The Lord Jesus will tell the woman at the well,

John 4:24 (ESV) 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

No man has seen God at any time. What about the appearances in the Old Testament? God never revealed Himself in the Old Testament to the eyes of man. What, then, did they see? For instance, Jacob said that he saw God, but what he saw was the angel of the Lord who wrestled with him. That was a manifestation, but he did not see God because God is a spirit. "No man hath seen God at any time."

The only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father

Jesus resides in the bosom or heart of the Father.

John 6:37–38 (ESV) 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

He did not come from the feet to be the Father's servant; He did not come from the head just to share the Father's wisdom; it was from the bosom or heart of the Father that He came. He came to reveal the heart of God: He was "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." He came to show the love of God...straight from God's heart to ours.

God has made Him known...He explained Him

The original Greek says it this way....To lead out..

It means that what Jesus Christ did was to lead God out into the open. This is huge. Here He comes out of eternity past, the God of this universe, the Creator of everything, taking upon Himself human flesh, and bringing God out into the open so that men can know Him. He came to reveal God to men who naturally reject Him.

Colossians 1:15–17 (ESV) 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV) 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

1 Timothy 3:16 (ESV) 16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Colossians 2:9 (ESV) 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

7) No man has seen God 8) He comes from the Father's heart 9) God has revealed Himself to us.

So John tells us 9 key truths about Jesus in this first chapter.

1) In the Beginning was the Word 2) The Word was with God 3) The Word was God 4) The Word became flesh 5) The Word dwelt among us 6) He was fully of Glory, Grace and Truth 7) No one has seen God 8) He came from God's heart 9) To show us God

Let's go a bit deeper and look at the first line of each of these statements. In the beginning was the Word, The Word became flesh, and No one has seen God.

You could not see God—God is spirit. He had to become flesh; He had to become one of us in order for us to know Him. We could not go up there to understand Him; He had to come down here and bring God down where we are.

Look at each second statement. The Word was with God, The Word dwelt among us, He came from the Father's heart.

Consider this One for a moment—the angels bowed before Him, He was with God, on an equality with God. He did not go to school to become God; it was not something He worked overtime to attain. It was not a degree that He earned. He did not try to be God; He was God.

Philippians 2:5–8 (ESV) 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

He was God. Here He comes: born in Bethlehem, a few little shepherds there, not many; He goes up to Nazareth, thirty years hidden away in Nazareth. God, out of eternity coming down and going to Nazareth, working in a carpenter shop. Why? So you can know God. The only way you will ever know Him, my friend, is to know this One. “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father” is the only One who can reveal God to us.

Look at each last statement. The Word was God, He was fully of glory, grace and truth, and He came to show us God.

When He was down here, He was still God, full of grace and truth. And He declared Him; He is the only one who can lead Him out in the open where we can get acquainted with Him.

These statements are bigger than any of us, and yet they are so simple. We have read them, probably memorized them, yet no man can comprehend the depths of them

John then continues to add to our understanding of Jesus.

John 1:3 (ESV) 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

The Word created all created things. Therefore He Himself is an uncreated Being. Let's look at this verse again.

Colossians 1:16–17 (ESV) 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator. Not only did He exist before Bethlehem, but He created the vast universe including the material out of which man constructed Bethlehem. All things were made by Him; He is the instrument of creation. Nothing came into existence without Him.

John is correcting some first-century notions of the origin of the universe which taught that it was shaped by God out of some pre-existing primeval 'stuff', which was in turn the explanation of the presence of evil in the universe.

John 1:4 (ESV) 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Two of the simplest things in the world: light and life. Zoe and phos are the two words in the original language. From zoe we get zoology, the study of life; The Word is the source of all life. The ancient Greek word translated life is zoe, which means "the life principle," not bios, which is mere biological life. and from phos we get photo or anything that is built on it, such as photograph—it is light.

These two things are so common that we take them for granted. Life—we see it everywhere. Take a walk outside, go to a social event, look in the forest, look at the ground and see insects, dig and see worms, dive in the water and see fish, look up at the birds, look at a plant, now look at it under a microscope, then look at it on an electron microscope...Life is everywhere. Jesus created all of it. His creation reflects Him. Man often speaks of finding the source of life in Science....but John revealed the truth in this passage...In Him was life. He is the source of it all.

The Life was the light of men

This life is the light of men, speaking of spiritual light as well as natural light. It isn't that the Word "contains" life and light; He is life and light. Therefore, without Jesus, we are dead and in darkness. We are lost. Significantly, man has an inborn fear towards both death and darkness.

Two things whose source is previously unknown to us. We see life and we see light....but how do you explain them? Man cannot identify the source of life or the source of light...God must reveal that truth to us...and so He came....life and light of men.

You and I live in a universe that is spiritually dark. The fact of the matter is, it is physically dark to a certain degree. But God said, "... Let there be light ..." (Gen. 1:3) and the Sun existed and the moon reflected that light. Likewise. Jesus is the light of the world spiritually...Here to shine in the darkness and reveal God's love and truth.

Our little globe is out in a dark universe, yet that is nothing compared to the spiritual darkness that envelops it. When the sun disappears, there is physical darkness over the land; but twenty-four hours a day there is spiritual darkness here, awful spiritual darkness. Man does not know God; man is in rebellion against God; man is in sin that blinds him to God

In the Lord Jesus Christ there is life, and the life that He gives is the light of men. In fact, His life is the only thing that can kindle light in the heart of an individual. An unregenerate man has no spiritual life within him. This is the reason that when you present to him Jesus Christ, he says, "I don't get it. I don't understand that at all."

This world today is in spiritual darkness, and the Lord Jesus Christ has brought the only light there is in the world. He is the light. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

John 1:5 (ESV) 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The light shines in darkness and the darkness is not able to take it in. That is it exactly. all of us were groping in the darkness before we received Christ Nothing about Him made sense to us. I remember my dark years before Christ. I just could not see spiritually what was going on. That is what John means by the darkness could not take it in.

If you go into a dark room, and the minute you switch on the light, the darkness leaves, it disappears. Darkness and light cannot exist together physically. The moment you bring light in, darkness is gone. The minute light is taken out, darkness will come right back in.

But spiritual light and darkness exist together. There you have light and darkness side by side and the darkness just cannot take it in. Without the illumination Spiritually of Jesus from the Holy Spirit, those who don't yet know Jesus as their Savior are living in darkness. They just don't understand it. And that is where John's audience has been. The Jews have been living in darkness for 60 years. God told the apostle Paul that He was being sent to the Gentiles.

Acts 26:17–18 (ESV) 17To whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

John 1:10 (ESV) 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

That was the tragedy—the world was in darkness, spiritual darkness, and did not know Him. Even today we are seeing the rise of atheism and unbelief, and we will see it more and more in

the days that lie ahead. A great many people do not seem to recognize that unbelief and atheism go naturally with the natural man.

I believe that this verse was covered with John's tears as he wrote. He is soon to leave us....and the truth is that 60 years later....The Gentile World rejected Him too.....Just like the Jews...

John 1:11 (ESV) 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

He came to the Jews....their long promised Messiah.... but His own people did not receive Him. Instead they crucified Him and now 60 years later most still reject Him.

I don't think John fully understood how many people and how many years remain where people reject Jesus. I think he began to understand it when he saw God's revelation of end times.

However, despite the pain of that rejection....there has been a remnant of Jews and Gentiles who believed.

John 1:12 (ESV) 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power." The word power is not dunamis power like dynamite, physical power, but exousian power which is delegated power, authority. "But as many as received him, to them gave he the authority to become the sons of God [children, tekna of God], even to them that believe on his name."

This believe is not just head knowledge. With the verb "to believe" there is always a preposition—sometimes en (in), sometimes eis (into), or sometimes epi (upon). You must believe into, in, or upon Jesus Christ.

Let me illustrate with a chair. I am standing beside a chair and I believe it will hold me up, but it is not holding me up. Why? Because I have only a head knowledge. I just say, "Yes, it will hold me up." Now suppose I believe into the chair by sitting in it. See what I mean? I am committing my entire weight to it and it is holding me up.

Is Christ holding you up? Is He your Savior? It is not a question of standing to the side and saying, "Oh, yes, I believe Jesus is the Son of God." The question is have you trusted Him, have you believed into Him, are you resting in Him? This chair is holding me up completely. And at this moment Christ is my complete Savior. I am depending on Him; I am resting in Him.

Those of us who have truly trusted Jesus must heed the words of God through Peter.

1 Peter 3:15 (ESV) 15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

We are commanded to always be ready to share the reason why we have hope. Those of us who have trusted...not just believed....Jesus have a story to tell. Jesus told us to become His witnesses. We are not able to speak of something that we have not seen. We are not expected to be theologians. Just witnesses.

That is what John did...He told the story of Jesus through his experiences. He prayed and asked God to guide his hand as he testified to what Jesus had done in his life. To tell the truth so help me God.

Because John was a witness....millions have believed. Including me. John was a faithful witness to what Jesus did in his life. John wrote history....His...Story... and like John, all believers have a history with Christ.

No one else can tell his story. And no one but you can tell your story. God has shaped you and your experiences to be the key that unlocks salvation for others. You and your witness will reach people that I and others may not.

Don't waste all that God has done in your life.....He didn't put you through all of that just for you. He uses our experience to shape our story for others to hear. The experiences of your life may have been at times, painful, horrible and shameful, or they could have been wonderful and spectacular, but God never wastes any experience with Him. Your redemption comes, just like Christ, when you use your wounds and your wonder to help others find Jesus.

Why are we told to be ready to share the reason we have hope? Because no one else can tell your story and God doesn't want to waste all that He has done in your life. We only know John's story because he shared it. So like John, God has given each of us a blank piece of paper...this week begin writing your Gospel...your Good News of Jesus Christ. When your story is ready....God will bring the audience. Let's Pray.