

Well, tonight marks a significant move in our studies. We have finished our series on the Faces of Love and we are now going to move into a verse by verse study of the Gospel of John. I know that in these topical studies many of you have been content to rely heavily on the PowerPoint slides, but I think for this kind of book study it will be very important that everyone bring their Bibles for I think you are going to want to start taking notes in your bible and connecting thoughts, ideas across this book. It is a very practical way for the contents of this book to come alive and to be planted deep in your heart.

As a matter of practice, before you start studying any passage of scripture, it is a good idea to attempt to answer the fundamental who, what, where, when and why questions. You may not be able to answer them all, but if you start off with answers to at least a few of these questions, it helps frame the context and intended purpose of the text. Tonight we are going to explore just that, the background and overall dynamic of this book. I think you will find that the Gospel of John is so much more than just a story, but God has supernaturally revealed Himself in how the story is told, what details are included, and in the significance of numbers and names. It is almost magical and undeniably extraordinary.

Let's start with the author. To our surprise, this book never identifies its author by name, but makes many references to the author as being the "disciple that Jesus loved." We know for sure that the author was an eye-witness of the events he wrote about for the detail he provides could only be provided by an actual participant. Besides, at the end of the book the author clearly states that he was an eye-witness.

***John 21:24***

This is that disciple who saw these events and recorded them here. And we know that his account of these things is accurate.

It is interesting to note that the letters of 1, 2, and 3<sup>rd</sup> John also never identify the author by name. But the earliest church fathers uniformly attributed all this material to the disciple named John, the son of Zebedee – one of the original 12 apostles and part of Jesus' inner circle of three: Peter, James (John's brother), and John.

A little bit of background about John. He was a Jew and a native of Galilee. He was a disciple of John the Baptist prior to meeting Jesus (***John 1:37***). His brother, James, was also a disciple of Jesus and when their names are listed together, James name is always listed first so James is presumed to be the older of the two. They were both apparently pretty emotional and hotheaded. In ***Luke 9:54*** we are told that once they asked Jesus if they should pray that fire rain down from heaven and destroy a Samaritan village because they did not welcome Jesus. That is why Jesus nicknamed them the "Sons of Thunder." We are told that James and John both worked in their Father's business as fisherman and they were probably pretty successful for the ***Mark 1:20*** tells us that they had hired servants. John was probably only between the age of 15-18 and yet despite his youth he and probably his family was well known by the High Priest (***John 18:15***).

John's is the only gospel writer who explicitly stated the reasons why he wrote. In reading Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we can presume their intentions based on what they said, how they said it, the differences between the various perspectives

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of events, and so on. But John was straight up and told us that his purpose was two-fold.

***John 20:30-31***

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

John wrote this book in order that unbelievers might have the evidence to believe that Jesus is the Christ; and, in so believing, have eternal life in His name. For if John did accurately record the events that transpired, it is impossible to walk away and conclude that Jesus was just a good man, a good teacher, or a spiritual person. Based on the evidence, He has to be divine; for since the beginning of time it has never been recorded that a mere man could do the kind of miracles that Jesus did over and over again.

John also wrote it for believers so we might have the evidence to believe that Jesus being the Christ must also our Lord; thus, we should be totally surrendered and yielded to His will for our life. And, in so doing, we will find our true life – here and now – in His name.

As far as the “when,” the opinions are split. Some believe it was written around 85 AD (approximately 50 years after Jesus died) and others believe it was written around 50 AD (just 20 years after Jesus’ death). But we are not sure and honestly it really does not matter when because the key is for us to remember that everything

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John wrote he did under the influence, direction, and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told His disciples:

***John 14:26***

But when the Father sends the Counselor as my representative—and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I myself have told you.

This is the reason why John was able to declare with such confidence that all that he wrote was an accurate account of certain events in the life of Jesus. The Holy Spirit brought back to his remembrance the things that Jesus said and did and he accurately conveyed them to us.

You will find that the style of John's writing is very simple, relying over and over on contrasting figures to emphasize his points, for example he contrasts:

- Light vs. Darkness
- Belief vs. Unbelief
- Life vs. Death
- Truth vs. Lies
- Love vs. Hate
- Law vs. Mercy
- Obedience vs. Duty
- Evidence and Testimony vs. Ignorance and Blindness

- Knowing and Recognizing Him vs. Not knowing and Rejecting Him
- The Will of God and the Work of God
- Jesus being fully man and fully God
- Jesus being the Messiah and the Christ

All these contrasts evoke not only powerful images, but powerful emotion, and John wants the reader to be impacted every time he makes use of one of these contrasts. In fact, they are so obvious throughout the text that he wants the reader to pay attention and not miss a single comparison. Through these contrasts, He wants everyone to know how there is no middle ground. You are on one side or the other, you are either you are for Him or you are against Him. As Jesus Himself said:

***Matthew 12:30***

"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

These contrasts make this point vividly clear without John ever having to say it. The contrasts also show us how unique and splendid Jesus was, especially when compared to the religious elite of the day.

John also records for us the many times that Jesus uses the phrase "***I am***" which is a direct correlation to the name of God as given to us in Exodus 3:13-14 where God was talking to Moses.

*Exodus 3:13-14*

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ' I AM has sent me to you.'

God was declaring to Moses that anything He could ever imagine God is. Anything He could ever need, God is the very provision. Anything he could ever hope for, God is. The culmination of all that could ever be, God is.

Then lo and behold, Jesus walks around and uses this same name over and over again in making reference to Himself in order to communicate in no uncertain terms that He is the living God, the Christ – the Messiah. This so angered the religious elite of the day that they were always trying to kill Him for making such claims. To them it was blasphemy of the highest order.

Jesus used this name directly 20 times, sometimes it was used in connection with a metaphor that was unique to the Jewish experience with God. This was obviously done in an attempt to make a connection, in their minds, between Jesus and all the amazing stories that their mother and father taught them of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, and how God supernaturally intervened in their lives and provided for their very needs. In other words, all of those miracles were just a mere illustration of how Jesus Himself would be the ultimate supernatural provision for all that we would ever need.

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Jesus also used the name “I am” to make certain claims regarding who He really is; and, to boldly declare, in no uncertain terms, that as God He pre-existed before all things.

Metaphors:

1. Jesus said to them, "**I am** the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty (John 6:35).
2. Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, "**I am** the bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:41).
3. **I am** the bread of life (John 6:48).
4. **I am** the living bread that came down from heaven (John 6:51).
5. Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "**I am** the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).
6. As long as I am in the world, **I am** the light of the world" (John 9:5).
7. **I am** the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:11).
8. Jesus said to her, "**I am** the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, (John 11:25).
9. Jesus said to him, "**I am** the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).
10. **I am** the true vine, and my Father is the vine gardener (John 15:1).

Who He is:

1. Jesus said to her, "**I am** he, the one who is speaking to you" [referring to the Messiah] (John 4:26).
2. He said to them, "You are from below, **I am** from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world (John 8:23).
3. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that **I am** he" (John 8:24).
4. So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that **I am** he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me (John 8:28).
5. Can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, '**I am** God's Son'? (John 10:36).
6. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and **I am** in the Father" (John 10:38).
7. I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that **I am** he (John 13:19).
8. They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "**I am** he" (John 18:5).
9. Jesus answered, "I told you that **I am** he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go" (John 18:8).



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Statement of Pre-existence:

1. Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, **I am**" (John 8:58).

These are all powerful statements of Jesus' claim to be God and the Christ. To the mind of a Jew, the claim was not masked; they all knew exactly what He was saying. This is why Jesus was hated with such intensity. And then, as if that was not enough, John hammers this point home to the experts in religious studies – of Jesus being God – by showing us only 8 of the 37 miracles that we have recorded in all the gospels. Keep in mind, the number of miracles John could have reported on were limitless.

***John 20:30***

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book

But John decided to tell us just 8 – 6 of which were are unique to John; in fact the only two found in the other gospels is the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on water. Now, this number 8 is very important because in Biblical numerology, it is the number of Jesus' name; but, before we get to the number, it is also significant to understand a bit about these 8 miracles.

1. Water to wine (John 2:1)
2. Roman Officer's Son at Capernaum (John 4:46)

3. Sick man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1)
4. Fed the 5,000 (John 6:6)
5. Walked on water (John 6:19)
6. Healed the blind man (John 9:1)
7. Raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1)
8. Extraordinary catch of fish (John 21:1)

In choosing to tell us about these 8 miracles, John demonstrates: (1) Jesus' dominance over nature (He arranged the miraculous catch of 153 large fish and He walked on water); (2) His dominance over religious tradition and even the Jewish Law itself (His healing the blind man and the sick man at the pool of Bethesda on the Holy Sabbath, the one day in which no work was to be done); (3) His dominance over the power of death (Jesus raised Lazarus after he had been dead and entombed for 4-days); (4) His powers of creation (Jesus changed water to wine, and He fed 5,000 men, in addition to all the women and children that were following Him, with just 5 barley loafs and 2 fish) and (5) His ability to defy all speculation and doubt of His absolute power by merely speaking a word (Jesus healed the Roman officer's son who was sick at home in Capernaum – about 16-18 miles away – while Jesus was in Cana).

I mentioned before that 8 is also the number of Jesus' name. I don't think it is a mistake that John only refers to 8 miracles. In Greek, just like in Hebrew, there is no number system per se, but instead they use letters as numbers. Thus, it is possible to add up letters and get a numerical value. This is called the gammatria. In the Bible there are certain patterns of how these numbers have been used which give us an understanding of the mathematical way God communicates.

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For example, the number 40 is important and indicates a time of trial or testing. The flood lasted 40 days and 40 nights. The Jews wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Jesus was in the desert for 40 days. The number 3 is also of extreme significance and it represents divine perfection. The Godhead consists of 3 parts: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father spoke from heaven 3 times regarding His Son. The tabernacle and the temple consisted of 3 parts: the court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In the Tabernacle, the Holy Of Holies was a cube (10x10x10) and in the Temple, the Holy of Holies was a cube (20x20x20).

Now as far as Jesus name goes, because the New Testament was originally written in Greek, we know the Greek translation of the Hebrew name of Jesus Christ: it is "Iasous". In English we have translated this word to mean "Savior." The letters and their number equivalent are as follows:

I = 10 A = 8 S = 200 O = 70 U = 400 S = 200 adds up to 888.

Using the Biblical patterns, it has been determined that 8 is the number that represents "new beginnings" hence the octave in music – eight is a new first; and the days of the week – Jesus rose on the 8<sup>th</sup> day or the new "first-day" of the week. It represents the "new covenant," the "new creation," or a "new life" (as in the resurrection). There were 8 people on Noah's ark (which is a metaphor for new life for those who have been delivered from judgment). Circumcision was to be done on the 8<sup>th</sup> day (which correlates to being filled with the Spirit of God); and God made 8 covenants or promises to Abraham. In addition, the fact that the 8 is repeated 3 times represents divine perfection.

I told you that everywhere you look in this book there is evidence of supernatural design and a declaration that Jesus is not only the Son of God but God Himself.

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Now about His name, John refers to Jesus by various names so that no one reading the text would ever confuse Jesus with any other man, any other prophet, or any other religious leader. Jesus is referred to as:

Christ, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, the Lamb of God, the Only Begotten Son, the Word – or the very breath of all that is God.

Each of these names are of not to be just read over because of how used you are to seeing them. It is important to stop and grasp what is really being communicated.

- Christ: this is not really a name but a title. *John 1:41* and *4:25* use this title synonymous with the Messiah. Then comparing *Psalms 2:2* and *Acts 4:26*, this title is also synonymous with the Lord's Anointed. The Hebrew word in *Psalms 2:2* also happens to be the same word translated *Messiah* in the prophecies of *Daniel 9:25-26*. Why is this distinction so important? Because the life of Jesus, His death, His return, and ultimate reign on this earth are all captured in the idea of the Messiah.
  - *Daniel 9:25*: he would appear on earth at an appointed time in history.
  - *Daniel 9:26*: He would die but not for himself, or he would die for others.
  - *Psalms 2:1-2*: the nations, people, kings, and rulers would be in rebellion against Him and the Lord that sent Him.

- *Psalm 2:6*: He would be made King in Zion
- *Psalm 2:7*: He would be called the Son of God by the Lord
- *Psalm 2:8*: He would inherit the nations and possess the whole world
- *Psalm 2:9*: He would break the nations with a rod of iron
- *Psalm 2:12*: He is called God's royal Son. His anger and wrath will one day be kindled and many will perish; yet, He will bless all those who trust in Him.
- Lord: this is also a title and denotes mastery of all. A slave would call his master Lord. A king was called Lord. The Imperial ruler was called Lord. Jesus is Lord.
- Son of God / Only Begotten Son: *John 5:18* says that the Jews were trying to kill Jesus for using this title because not only was He saying He came from God – was God's only Son – but He was making Himself equal to God; and, in effect, claiming that *Psalm 2* was written about Him.
- Son of Man: first of all the name means just what it sounds like, Jesus was a man – a human being. For example, God referred to the prophet Ezekiel as a Son of Man 93 times and was merely referring to his humanity. But it also is a reference to a messianic vision in Daniel 7:13-14.

### ***Daniel 7:13-14***

I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a *Son of Man* was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. "And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom,

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that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

So the name “Son of Man” declares that Jesus was not only 100% man but also 100% God. By the way, Jesus is referred to as the Son of Man 88 times in the New Testament. Do you think it’s a coincidence?

- Son of David: in *2 Samuel 7:14-16* it was prophesied that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah and be a direct descendent of King David. Tracing Jesus’ genealogy in *Matthew 1* and *Luke 3*, we find that Jesus was a descendent by blood through His mother Mary, and a descendent by adoption through His Father, Joseph.
- Lamb of God: is a direct reference to the lamb used in the Jewish sacrificial system. It brings to mind the Passover lamb in *Exodus 12* and how the blood of the lamb protected the Israelites from the Angel of Death. It also brings to mind the daily sacrifice for the sins of the people (*Exodus 29:38-42*). The claim of this title is that Jesus is to be the ultimate sacrificial lamb and die for the sins of all mankind as referenced in *Isaiah 58*.
- The Word of God: the summation of all that is God in the person of Jesus Christ.

I hope that it is clear to you that even the names that Jesus is given in this book declare undeniably, to even the most casual reader, that Jesus fulfills the ancient scriptures and the prophecies about the coming Christ.

It is also fascinating to note that 1/3 of the book represents the last 24 hours in Jesus’ life and only a totally of 28 days of Jesus’ entire life are accounted for in the

gospel of John. When we are done studying this book and you come to realize how much Jesus did and said in those 28-days, you can start to understand why John claimed that if all the other things that Jesus did were written down, the whole world could not contain the books (*John 21:25*).

Finally, I also want you to get a feel for where all this happened. Most of the stories in John are divided between the region around Galilee and Jerusalem. The region of Galilee was Jesus' base for pretty much all of His ministry. Take a look at this map.

Jesus was raised in Nazareth, performed His first miracle in Cana and conducted most of His ministry around Capernaum (which is where most of the disciples were from). Mt. Tabor is the traditional site for the transfiguration. Nain is where He raised a widow's son from the dead. Chorazin and Bethsaida were the towns that Jesus cursed for their unbelief. And on the far side of the Sea of Galilee, that is where Jesus had an encounter with the two men who were demon possessed. So this is the primary territory where Jesus conducted His ministry; however, He also made a couple of trips down to Jerusalem which always created a stir.





Now, in closing, let's turn to the first chapter of John and let's read verses 1-18. I want us to just read this introduction as these first 18-verses lay out what you can expect to discover in the rest of the book. Next week we will start studying this text, but for now, just listen and be amazed.

### *John 1:1-18*

In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was with **God**, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing **came into being** that has come into being. In Him was **life**, and the life was the **Light** of men. The Light shines in the **darkness**, and the darkness **did not comprehend** it.

There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a **witness**, to **testify** about the Light, so that all might **believe** through him. He was not the Light, but he came to **testify** about the Light.

There was the **true** Light which, coming into the world, **enlightens** every man. He was in the world, and the world **was made** through Him, and the world **did not know Him**. He came to His **own**, and those who were His own **did not receive** Him. But as many as **received** Him, to them He gave the right to **become children** of God, even to those who **believe** in **His name**, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the **will of man, but of God**.

And the Word **became flesh**, and **dwelt** among us, and we saw His **glory**, glory as of the only begotten **from the Father**, full of **grace** and **truth**. John **testified** about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, ' He who comes after me has a **higher rank** than I, for He **existed before** me.'" For of His

**fullness** we have all **received**, and grace upon grace. For the **Law** was given through Moses; grace and **truth** were **realized** through **Jesus Christ**. No one has **seen** God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the **bosom** of the Father, He has **explained** Him.

What a powerful introduction. I cannot wait for us to get into it and start exploring the depth of this dynamic book. I encourage you to start reading in advance and next Sunday we will start with verse 1.

Let's Pray