

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Ch. 1-A

John is one of Christ's disciples who followed Him along the dusty trails of Judea, Samaria and Galilee. Many doubted that John wrote this book whose plainly-stated theme is that Jesus is God.

The discovery in Egypt of the Rylands Papyrus 52 contained portions of John's 18th chapter, dated circa A.D. 135. Scholars peg John as written by A.D. 90.

John's other books (I, II and III John and Revelation) were written *after* his gospel. Before A.D. 70 Matthew sees Jesus as King; Mark has Him as Servant; Luke as the Son of Man; John has Jesus as God.

The Bible answers life's two key questions: #1 Who is Jesus? #2 What does He want from me?

John's Ringside Seat

Jesus was the most remarkable person in human history. After His birth in a Bethlehem cow stall, the Son of God was taken by Joseph and Mary to Egypt to escape the killing fields of King Herod and his son and successor Archelaus. From Egypt they returned to their hometown, Nazareth, 55 miles north of Jerusalem where Jesus grew up learning Joseph's carpentry trade.

In the 1st century "Nazarene" meant a crude, despised person. Posted by Pilate above Jesus' thorn-pierced head on the cross was a sign of derision that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (**John 19:20**).

Here's how the four gospel writers describe Jesus:

1. He was born to a virgin.
2. He performed legitimate miracles.
3. He said He was the true Messiah. He was so believable and effective that the Jewish religious leaders targeted Him as a threat to their power and influence.
4. His message was radical. He taught that God didn't just want people to *obey* the 10 Commandments; He wanted their *hearts*!
5. He never sinned, never did or said anything wrong.
6. Many of His contemporaries believed -- and gave their lives to prove it -- that He was the long-awaited Messiah.
7. He was crucified (a form of capital punishment for criminals in the Roman Empire), although He did nothing wrong. When Jesus called Himself "Son of God" (meaning "God's equal"), the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees were furious, charging Him with blasphemy. Roman authorities found Him innocent of the Jews' trumped-up charges.

8. As He'd promised, He came back to life on the third day after being buried in a tomb behind a huge stone door. This was the defining, incontrovertible proof that He was all of who He claimed to be.
9. He ascended back to heaven, seen by many.

Jesus was all God, all man, totally sinless. Our sin demanded a *perfect* sacrifice if we're to be restored to a right relationship with God. Jesus was, hands down, the *only perfect Sacrifice*.

In John 3, its key chapter, is the most-quoted of the Bible's 33,173 verses. The Bible's macro-message appears here in micro form, declaring that a one-to-one relationship with God is possible only by accepting the gift of His forgiveness which was purchased by Christ's death on the cross. We receive that gift only by believing, in faith, that it is ours -- not by inheriting it or living clean enough to earn it. Jesus Himself calls this process of believing being "born again."

The most incredible event in history was God's coming to earth in the person of Jesus. God in an earth suit. Let's read **John 3:16**.

DISCUSS:

God's Journal

- 63 B.C. Pompey conquers Palestine.
- 44 B.C. Julius Caesar assassinated
- 37 B.C. Herod appointed to govern Palestine.
- 31 B.C. Augustus Caesar becomes ruler of Roman Empire.
- 5 B.C. Jesus is born.
- A.D. 4 Herod dies.
- A.D. 7 Jesus visits temple at age 12.
- A.D. 14 Tiberius becomes ruler of Roman Empire.
- A.D. 26 Jesus starts His three year "career."
- A.D. 27 Jesus chooses 12 disciples.
- A.D. 30 Jesus is crucified, resurrects, ascends back into heaven.

He-e-e-e-e-e-r-e-e-e-'s JOHNNY!

John's dad was a well-off fisherman named Zebedee married to Salome, a devoted follower of Christ who, some believe, was a sister of Mary, Jesus' mom. John's brother James was also one of Jesus' "devoted dozen."

The no-frills point John makes in his gospel is that Jesus is the Messiah OT prophets foretold. He cites seven of Jesus' "I am" statements and seven of His miracles, or signs, to persuade his reader to walk with Christ. There have been many bogus messiahs, but only Jesus perfectly fulfills each of the 40+ predictions in the OT about His birth, life and death. He's the Son of God. No man can see God the Father, so Jesus came to show us what God is like.

John says God wants to reside in the core of our lives, and that the *only* way to be assured of spending eternity with Him in heaven as opposed to a place the Bible calls hell is to *believe* in His Son Jesus.

John's purpose in writing is in **20:30-31**:

"Jesus' disciples saw him do many other miraculous signs besides the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life."

DISCUSS:

John, the Baptizer

John the Baptist was hand-picked by God to be Jesus' personal advance man on earth! Seven centuries before John's birth the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 40:5**) predicted that out of the wilderness the glory of the Lord would be revealed for all to see.

Four centuries before Christ, the prophet Malachi (**Malachi 3:1**) also predicted one like the ancient prophet Elijah would come prior to God's judgment upon the earth. Wearing camel's hair and a leather belt, and eating only bugs and wild honey, his wild-man persona and powerful messages magnetize crowds from all over.

He warns the religious and political elite that Messiah is coming to pronounce judgment on sin, then to set up his kingdom on earth. By announcing that "Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised in the Old Testament," John was confronting head-on the hottest issue of his day, the issue that divided the Jews who, trust me, *knew* Messiah was coming. (**Malachi 4:2,5**)

Fearlessly, John rips into hypocrisy. After hearing John, many believe his message and are baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Even John's birth was bizarre. Zechariah the priest and Elizabeth his wife (cousin of Mary, Jesus' mom) were both very old. And childless. The angel Gabriel (**Luke 1:5-80**) appears to "Z" and says Liz will get pregnant! Further, the kid's name will be John (Hebrew for "God has been gracious"). And his career would be spent as front man for Israel's Messiah. Defying all medical odds, Elizabeth delivers John well into her AARP years.

In our first glimpse of Jesus as an adult, He shows up at the Jordan, insisting that John baptize Him (**Luke 3:21-22**). Suddenly a dove rests on Jesus' shoulder, and a clearly audible voice from heaven says, "You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well-pleased." (**Mark 1:10-11, Matthew 3:17**)

Now some of John's own understudies, and the great audiences he's been drawing, drop John and start following Jesus. Was John bummed? Au contraire. He even says (**John**

3:29-30) that Jesus must now increase and that he, John, must decrease. John knows that he exists for one reason: to point others to Christ, to be a living signpost. Each of us is a signpost.

John's exit from earth is as odd as his entrance. When King Herod divorces his wife and marries his brother's wife Herodias, John tells him this doesn't thrill God (**Matthew 14:3-5, Mark 6:18**). New to having people critique him, Herod tosses John in the jug -- but won't harm him because he likes to hear this crazy hippie speak.

In prison John learns (**Matthew 11:2-3**) that Jesus is performing miracles like turning water into wine at a wedding, giving sight to the blind, feeding the hungry, raising the dead.

Jesus assures John that He's the long-expected King (**Matthew 11:4-6, Isaiah 35:5-6, 61:1**). John just hadn't gotten the message that Jesus was to come the *first* time as the Lamb of God (to be sacrificed on the cross for the sins of the world) -- and a *second* time later to judge the world as King of Kings.

Jesus concludes his note to John saying, "Happy is the man who never loses faith in Me" (Matt.11:6). In effect, "John, can you trust Me and My plan for your life? Can you put your faith and hope in Me, the way I do things, and in My timing?"

DISCUSS:

Let's dive into this most popular book in history and see what happens. Millions have done it before us, with profound results.

Let's read John 1:1-51.

His Deal

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