

## **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN**

### **Ch. 1-B**

**P**erhaps you've wondered, "God, what are You like? Are You there? Do You know that I exist? Do You care?" You can make pilgrimages to Tibet or Tupelo. Only one resource reliably answers life's biggest questions -- it's God's love letter to us, the Bible.

### **Jesus' BFF**

John was born into a comfortable life as the son of Zebedee the fisherman. Zeb's wife was Salome, a sincere follower of Christ who, may have been a sister of Mary, Jesus' mother. We know she was present at Christ's crucifixion. John's brother was James, also one of Christ's twelve disciples and a fellow member of Jesus' inner circle.

Jesus' best bud wrote his "gospel" about A.D. 85-95. John was the last surviving disciple of the twelve. In this "fourth gospel" he shines on seven of Jesus' miracles and seven of His sayings.

### **Gray Line Tour**

In ch. 1 John makes his case that Jesus is the living "Word," God-come-to-earth in human form. Jesus' advance guy is an odd duck known as "John the Baptist" -- not John who wrote this gospel.

In chs. 2-4 Jesus begins His 3-year teaching and miracle-working career.

In chs. 5-12 Jesus faces testy opposition which morphs into a plot by religious leaders to snuff Him out. Ironically, He enters Jerusalem, receiving a Hero's welcome.

In chs. 13-17 Jesus prepares for His imminent death.

In chs. 18-21 He's cuffed, tried, crucified and buried. He then pulls off history's grandest act, His own resurrection, followed by His in-person appearance before 500 witnesses.

John insists that Jesus is not *a* god but God in the flesh! Back then a blasphemer was stoned. Since Jesus claimed to *be* God, Jewish authorities considered Him guilty of blasphemy. (John 10:33)

## **John rolls a pair of 7's**

Rather than do a play-by-play of Jesus' brief career, John writes about seven "miracles" or "signs" that Jesus performed -- and seven of His key statements. First, the seven signs:

1. He **changes water into wine**, symbolizing the way He turns our ordinary existences into extraordinary lives filled with joy and hope.
2. He **heals the dying son** of a royal official, demonstrating that He came to heal the broken-hearted.
3. He **heals a man paralyzed** for 38 years, a sign that He came to set free those who've been oppressed.
4. He **feeds 5,000 people**, using only a sack lunch of five biscuits and two small fish, underscoring His desire to meet our deepest need, our hunger to know and have a one-to-one relationship with God.
5. He **walks on water**, representing His mission to free mankind from our greatest enemy, fear.
6. He **gives sight to a man blind** from birth, highlighting His mission to open our spiritual eyes which have been blind from birth.
7. He **brings back to life a man**, His friend Lazarus, who'd been buried for three days, illustrating His powerful victory over death.

These super-feats validate that Jesus *is* the wonder-working Messiah, foretold by the Old Testament prophets.

In Exodus about 1,400 years before Christ, God encounters a shepherd boy named Moses. Speaking to him from a burning bush that incredibly would not burn up, God reveals to this kid from the sticks His monumental plan to free His chosen people, the Jews, from slavery in Egypt and lead them into Canaan, "a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." God tells young

Mo, "I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt." Moses replies, "What do I tell the Israelites when I say that You've sent me to be their leader? They'll ask me for Your name. What do I say?" God fields this one handily in one of the most powerful statements in the entire Bible. **Let's read Exodus 3:14.**

### **DISCUSS:**

God calls Himself "I am." He is self-consistent, self-perpetuating and self-existent. During His three-year tour in Palestine Jesus self-identifies:

1. **"I am the bread of life."** He permanently satisfies our spiritual hunger.
2. **"I am the light of the world."** He leads us out of spiritual darkness into eternal light.
3. **"I am the gate for the sheep."** He's the *only* way to eternal life.
4. **"I am the good shepherd."** He's the one who can safely lead us through dangers and death into the green pastures of His presence.
5. **"I am the resurrection and the life."** His miraculous power gives and restores life itself, when all other hope has been exhausted.
6. **"I am the way, the truth and the life."** He is ultimate reality, the substance behind all of life's smoke.
7. **"I am the vine; you are the branches."** He's the Source of life itself, giving meaning to our otherwise parched existence.

Thanks to John, we have these vivid word pictures to help us understand that Jesus is God.

### **"Who Do You Trust" is NOT a game show.**

Jesus paid the debt we owe, reserving for us a place in heaven for all eternity! The other option is "eternal death" in hell, tormented forever in the "lake of fire" which God created for satan and his fallen angels. Jesus did the heavy lifting; all we have to do is to *believe* and receive His gift. It's our choice. **Let's read John 1:12 and John 3:16-18 and 36.**

**DISCUSS:**

## **Why This Gospel?**

John clearly tells us *why* he wrote this book. Let's read John 20:30-31.

700 years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 40:3**) announced that a voice would rise from the desert to welcome "God-come-to-earth."

Long past child-bearing years, Zechariah, the priest, and his barren bride Elizabeth (cousin of Mary, Jesus' mother) were told by the angel Gabriel (**Luke 1:5-80**) that Zechariah's old juices will flow one more time.

When John was 31-ish, about A.D. 27, he emerges from the Judean desert, dressed in camel's hair, eating insects and wild honey. He was sent by God to confront sin, attracting crowds from miles around. John insisted there was but one Christ, one Messiah, and that He was to be accepted, believed and embraced for who He is, the Son of God.

"Turn from your sins and be baptized and God will forgive you. Get ready for the coming of the Lord, our Messiah," he shouted. John didn't even know he was talking about Jesus 'til the Son of God appears one day at the Jordan River, insisting that John baptize Him (**Luke 3:21-22**). Suddenly a dove rests on Jesus' shoulder, and an audible voice from heaven says, "You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well-pleased." (**Mark 1:10-11, Matt. 3:17**)

Jesus cites John as "greater than any who ever lived." When John calls King Herod for marrying his (Herod's) sister-in-law, he's beheaded.

**DISCUSS:** What are your convictions about Christ? Would you risk your neck for those convictions? The Gospel of John was written to move us from ambiguity to total commitment to Jesus.

His Deal

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