

**NEW HOPE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
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2025 ANNUAL THEME: “HOPE IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTY”

BIBLE STUDY

April Theme: The Gospel Truth

Lesson One: “Prologue: The Incarnation” (John 1:1-18)

Topics

- Reflection Questions
- Important Emphasis
- Key Terms
- Scripture Reference
- Outline
- Introduction
- Background and Context
- Exploring The Text
- Check For Understanding
- Life Application

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

A. Who pointed you to Jesus Christ and when?

B. Have you ever been criticized by a fellow Christian for being too “preachy?” If so, how did you respond?

C. Are you interested in taking an evangelism class to learn how to more effectively “defend your faith?”

IMPORTANT EMPHASIS

The Gospel of John

A Strong early church tradition places the location of John's ministry in Ephesus.

This is known as the **Fourth Gospel** (FG)

This is known as the **Fourth Evangelist** (FE)

What is a Gospel = "The Good news"

This is not the Good news of John but this is the Good news of Jesus Christ delivered by John.

The Fourth Gospel is described as: "The Fourth Gospel is a work of great literary artistry, full of dramatic irony (deliberately contrary to what one expects) and poetic beauty". *Eerdmans commentary of the Bible*.

"The Gospel of John is a careful retelling of Jesus life that takes us deeper into the meaning of **his life** and **work**". *The New Testament in Antiquity*

"John is both broadly similar to the synoptics and quite distinctive in features of contents, style and arrangement".

John illustrates how Jesus arrival fulfills and upends major Jewish festivals and institutions of worship.

These natural divisions are often labeled the **Book of Signs** (chapters 1-12)

The **Book of Glory** (chapters 13-21). John interprets the cross as a place of Jesus glorification (13:31)

John was a valued eyewitness to the life of Jesus (**John19:35**)

- Persecution
- Conflict

John at a Glimpse

- Jesus work in public, showing signs and teaching diverse public audiences John 1-12
- Jesus is in private speaking to his followers almost saying farewell. John 13-17
- Jesus passion/ resurrection account John18-21

Deity of Christ

Time is important to our understanding of the very existence of Christ. The key word in the beginning of the Gospel according to John is the word “**was**”. This is in the **imperfect tense** which means repeated past action. It happens over and over again, it is like putting a song on repeat and not turning it off. Jesus was already present before the beginning.

John the evangelist who takes the most creative step of describing Jesus as the Word of God through whom all creation came into being.

Title is significant Jesus is the Word, He is the logos. Which the word is God= Theos. These endings are important in the original languages of the Bible or the Text it shows the **God** John is speaking of is the **Word**. There is a distinct difference between the Father and the Son of God.

Tangible Evidence is presented. Creation reveals his divine fingerprints or his Divine impact on the World.

John also provides astounding affirmations of Jesus divine nature and origin: **John 8:58; John 10:30**.

Divine Impact

Life is in Him- I am the way the truth and the life. **John 14:6**. The same word used in **John 1:4** are also used by Jesus in **John 14:6**. *Zoe in the Greek* which means **substance**.

Light is in Him- John 8:12 Then Jesus said again unto them saying I am the light of the world. Contrast is provided between darkness and light.

Link in Him- John 1:3 All things came into being through Him. Words that are important that are associated with Christ. *In Him, by Him, from Him, with Him, through Him*.

There is a prophetic connection that is presented through the personality of John the Baptist or baptizer. The Old Testament personality that is connected to John is **Elijah**. **Malachi 4:4-6**.

John 1:21. He is a type of Elijah **John 1:29**.

John came as a *witness* this foreshadows his fate. **John 3:28-30**. There is a question that is raised in the synoptic Gospels that is not found in John. **Matthew 11:1-6** and **Luke 7: 18-23**.

We are immensely blessed to have this Gospel to deliver to us the “**Gospel Truth**” let us explore it further!

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KEY TERMS

Authority
Baptism
Believe
Believers
Chaos
Cosmos
Creation
Darkness
Deity
Divine Nature

Epilogue
Glory
God
Grace,
Holy Spirit
Incarnate
Incarnation
Jesus Christ
John the Baptist
John the Gospel Writer

Law
Preexistence
Prologue
Revelation
Right
Spiritual Rebirth
Synoptic Gospels
Temptation
Transfiguration
Word

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

John 1:1-18 NASB

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. ⁵And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it. ⁶A man came, *one* sent from God, *and* his name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light. ⁹*This* was the true Light that, coming into the world, enlightens every person. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and *yet* the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own, and His own people did not accept Him. ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only *Son* from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵John **testified* about Him and called out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who is coming after me has proved to be my superior, because He existed before me.'" ¹⁶For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has seen God at any time; God the only *Son*, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

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OUTLINE

Prologue: The Incarnation (John 1:1-18)

- I. The Word's Wonder (John 1:1-5)
 - A. Preexistence: The eternal nature of the Word (John 1:1-2).
 - B. Power: The Word's role in creation (John 1:3).
 - C. Presence: The light and life the Word brings (John 1:4-5).
- II. The Word's Witness (John 1:6-9, 15)
 - A. Proclamation: John the Baptist's testimony (John 1:6-8).
 - B. Pointing: John the Baptist directs others to the true light (John 1:9).
 - C. Purpose: The mission to prepare the way (John 1:15).
- III. The Word's Welcome (John 1:10-18)
 - A. Rejection: The world's response to the Word (John 1:10-11).
 - B. Reception: The gift of becoming children of God (John 1:12-13).
 - C. Revelation: The Word made flesh and His glory (John 1:14-18).

INTRODUCTION

He [God] spoke, and galaxies whirled into place, stars burned the heavens, and planets began orbiting their suns—the words of awesome, unlimited, unleashing power. He spoke again, and the waters and lands were filled with plants and creatures, running, swimming, growing, and multiplying—words of animating, breathing, pulsing life. Again he spoke, and man and woman were formed, thinking, speaking, and loving words of personal and creative glory. (**Genesis 1:1-27**).

Eternal, infinite, unlimited—he was, is, and always will be the Maker and Lord of all that exists. And then he came in the flesh to a tiny spot in the universe called planet Earth—the mighty Creator becoming part of his creation, limited by time and space and susceptible to age, sickness, and death (**Philippians 2:5-8**). Propelled by love, he came to rescue and save, offering forgiveness and life. He is the Word: he is Jesus Christ. It is this truth that the apostle John presents in this book. John's Gospel is not a life of Christ; it is a powerful argument for the incarnation, a conclusive demonstration that Jesus was, and is, the very heaven-sent Son of God and the only source of eternal life (**John 3:16; 10:28; 14:6; 17:3; 1 John 5:11-12**).

BACKGROUND AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Most scholars agree that the Gospel of John can be divided into four main sections: the Prologue (John 1:1-18), the Book of Signs (John 1:19-12:50), the Book of Glory (John 13:1-20:31), and the Epilogue (John 21:1-25). This structure reflects the unique theological and literary style of the Gospel, which emphasizes the divinity of Jesus and His role as the incarnate [embodied deity, physical, in the flesh] Word of God (**Colossians 2:9**). The Prologue introduces key themes such as the preexistence of the Word, the incarnation, and the revelation of God's glory through Jesus. The Gospel is distinct from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) in its focus on the spiritual and symbolic aspects of Jesus' life and teachings, aiming to deepen the understanding of His divine nature and mission.

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Additionally, the Gospel of John is distinct because it introduces Jesus as the "Logos" or "Word" from the start, focusing on themes like eternal life and resurrection. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), John omits events such as Jesus' baptism and the Lord's Supper, and emphasizes teachings about the Holy Spirit. The term "Logos" in **John 1:1-14** highlights Jesus' divine nature, pre-existence, and role in creation, connecting Jewish and Greek ideas. In Jewish tradition, the Word is a creative force, while in Greek thought, the Logos is the rational principle of the *cosmos*. John portrays Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God, essential to the divine plan of salvation.

The term *cosmos* refers to the universe as a complex and orderly system, encompassing all matter, energy, planets, stars, galaxies, and the interconnecting space. It is often used to describe the universe as an organized and harmonious entity, contrasting with *chaos*. In philosophical and scientific contexts, the cosmos is seen as the totality of existence, governed by natural laws and principles.

The concept of the *cosmos* as an orderly and harmonious system provides an impressive backdrop for exploring the themes of creation and divine order found in **John 1:1-18**, where the Word is described as being with God from the beginning, bringing light and life to the universe.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

I. The Word's Wonder (John 1:1-5)

- A. Preexistence: The eternal nature of the Word (John 1:1-2).
- B. Power: The Word's role in creation (John 1:3).
- C. Presence: The light and life the Word brings (John 1:4-5).

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind. ⁵And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it.

John starts at the "beginning," with the first eighteen verses of John, called the **prologue**. Many commentators consider the prologue to be a poem or, at least, rhythmical prose. Some commentators suggest that verses 1-5, 10-12, and 14-18 may have been parts of one or several early Christian hymns. Others have thought that verses 14-18 were used as an early church confessional statement, to which John added his stamp of approval. John's goal and guiding purpose in writing can be found in almost every phrase of his work. In the rest of the Gospel, John expanded and illustrated each of these from Jesus' life and ministry.

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Preexistence (John 1:1-2)

The concept of preexistence in John 1:1-2 emphasizes the eternal nature of the Word, identifying the Word as existing before the beginning with God and being God. This passage highlights the divine and timeless existence of the Word, underscoring his central role in creation and unity with God.

Power (John 1:3)

The New Testament portrays the Son of God as the agent of creation, for all things were created through him (**1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2**). Everything came into being through Christ and ultimately depends upon him.

Presence (John 1:4-5)

Creation receives life from Christ, who provides both physical and eternal life to believers. The Greek word *zoe* refers to this divine, eternal life. Jesus, as the embodiment of life, **brings light, revealing truth and exposing sin**. His light offers understanding and spiritual insight, penetrating hearts and minds. Those who accept this light are enlightened, gaining God's perspective and guidance. Despite resistance from a darkened world influenced by evil, Christ's light remains unextinguished, overcoming any darkness.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What does it mean that "the Word was with God, and the Word was God" in John 1:1-2?

2. What does Jesus being described as "the light of all mankind" do for us? (John 1:3-5)

EXPLORING THE TEXT

II. The Word's Witness (John 1:6-15)

- A. Proclamation: John the Baptist's testimony (John 1:6-8).
- B. Pointing: John the Baptist directs others to the true light (John 1:9).
- C. Purpose: The mission to prepare the way (John 1:15).

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⁶ *A man came, one sent from God, and his name was John.*

⁷ *He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.* ⁸ *He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.* ⁹ *This was the true Light that, coming into the world, enlightens every person.*

¹⁵ *John *testified about Him and called out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who is coming after me has proved to be my superior, because He existed before me.’”*

Proclamation (John 1:6-8)

John [the Gospel writer] abruptly introduces Jesus’ forerunner and herald, **John the Baptist**. God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for the Messiah. John the Baptist has a prominent position in the prologue because his ministry prepared the way for the Messiah—he pointed people to Jesus. John the Baptist’s function was to tell everyone about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. He was the first to point people to Christ, so in a very real sense, all who have come to believe have done so because of his witness. John himself was not the light, but he came as a witness to the light. He was first in a line of witnesses that stretches through the centuries to this day.

Pointing (John 1:9)

The word **everyone** here could be nationalistically inclusive, referring to both Jews and Gentiles, or it could refer to all individuals. Every person has life from God, thus they have *some* light; creation reveals God’s power and divinity (**1:3; Acts 14:17; Romans 1:19-20; 2:14-16**); and our conscience also bears witness to God’s existence. The Gospel writer’s description captures the transition between the ministry of John the Baptist as herald and the ministry of Jesus, **the true light**. Jesus, as opposed to any other “luminaries,” is the true and exclusive revelation of God to man. Because of this, we can count on him.

Purpose (John 1:15)

John 1:15 describes John the Baptist's testimony that Jesus, who started his ministry after John, is greater because He existed before him. This highlights Jesus' preexistence and superiority. D. A. Carson notes that this verse connects John's witness to the glory of Jesus as the incarnate Word. The testimony underscores Jesus' primacy, anticipating His identification as the Word-made-flesh: “*He who comes after me is my superior because He existed before me.*”

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CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

3. How does John 1:6-8 describe the relationship between John and Jesus?

EXPLORING THE TEXT

III. The Word's Welcome (John 1:10-18)

- A. Rejection: The world's response to the Word (John 1:10-11).
- B. Reception: The gift of becoming children of God (John 1:12-13).
- C. Revelation: The Word made flesh and His glory (John 1:14-18).

*¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and yet the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own people did not accept Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John *testified about Him and called out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who is coming after me has proved to be my superior, because He existed before me.'"¹⁶ For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time; God the only Son, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained Him.*

In this passage, the Word, who is Jesus, is described as being in the world that was created through Him, yet the world did not recognize Him. He came to His own people, but they did not accept Him. However, those who did receive Him were given the right to become children of God, born not of natural descent but of God. The Word became flesh and lived among us, revealing His glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John the Baptist testified about Him, affirming His preexistence and superiority. Through Jesus, we receive grace upon grace, as the Law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God, but the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.

Rejection (John 1:10-11)

John notes one of the greatest tragedies: the world—humankind—didn't recognize its own Creator. They were blinded and could not see his light. Although Christ created the world, the people he created didn't recognize him. He was denied the general acknowledgment that should have been his as Creator. In Greek this reads, "He came to his own things"—that is, he came to that which belonged to him. The expression can even be used to describe a homecoming. This phrase intensifies the description of Christ's rejection. Jesus was not welcome in the world, or even his home. His own land and his own people refer to God's chosen nation, Israel, which was particularly Christ's. He was not accepted by those who should have been most eager to welcome him. As a nation, they rejected their Messiah. This rejection is further described at the end of Jesus' ministry (**12:37-41**). Isaiah had foreseen this unbelief (**Isaiah 53:1-3**). In spite of the rejection described here, John steers clear of passing sentence on the world. Instead, he turns our attention on those who did welcome Christ in sincere faith.

Reception (John 1:12-13)

Though the rejection of Christ was universal, individuals did respond personally—some believed him and accepted him as the Son of God, the Savior. To them he gave the right to become children of God. In Greek *right* means "**authority or permission.**" In this context, it speaks of God granting the right or giving the privilege for the new birth. No one can attain this new birth by his or her own power, merit, or ability. Only God can grant it. One is not in God's family because he or she is a Jew by physical birth (or even born into a Christian family). The new birth cannot be attained by an act of human passion, and it has absolutely nothing to do with any human plan. It is a gift of God. (**Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:26; Galatians 4:4-7; 1 John 3:1**)

Many believed superficially in Jesus when they saw his miracles, but they did not believe in Jesus as the Son of God. They "believed" in him while he fulfilled their expectations of what the Messiah should be, but they left him when he defied their preconceived notions. We must believe in Jesus as Jesus, the Son of God; we must wholeheartedly believe in Jesus, not limiting him to our ideas and misconceptions; we must regard Jesus as the Bible truly presents him.

Revelation (John 1:14-18)

In John 1:14-18, the passage describes the Word becoming flesh and living among us, revealing His glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John the Baptist testified about Him, affirming His preexistence and superiority. Through Jesus, we receive **grace upon grace**, as the Law was given through Moses, but **grace and truth** came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God, but the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.

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The phrase "grace upon grace" in **John 1:16** signifies the abundant and continuous outpouring of God's grace through Jesus Christ. It suggests that believers receive an ongoing supply of grace, one blessing after another, highlighting the richness and fullness of God's favor and kindness. This expression emphasizes the inexhaustible nature of divine grace available to those who believe in Jesus.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

4. What does it mean to be given the "right to become children of God"?

5. How does the concept of "grace upon grace" impact your understanding of God's favor?

LIFE APPLICATION

Think about it—

- Do you have a plan or strategy for defending your faith among believers and non-believers? Briefly explain.
- What will you do this week to better enjoy your status as a child of God?

RESOURCES

Adult Questions for LESSONMaker, LOGOS Bible Software
The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary
Baker's Bible Dictionary
Barnes' Notes on the New Testament
Carson, D. A. 1991. *The Gospel According to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary.
Life Application New Testament Commentary