

THE GOSPEL OF —
JOHN



INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of John is the fourth and final gospel, among the four gospel writings. The author doesn't reveal his name but only refers to himself as *"the disciple whom Jesus loved"* (John 13:23; John 19:26; John 21:10). Church tradition identifies the *"Beloved Disciple"* as John the apostle, the son of Zebedee and the brother of James. John was a part of Jesus' inner circle, along with Peter and James.

Church tradition tells us John went to Ephesus where he ministered for several years. It was there that he wrote his Gospel and the letters (1-3 John) that bear his name. As the last surviving apostle, he saw his role as an upholder of the truth against those who would deny it. (see 1 John 1:1–3, 2:18–27). He remained passionate about proclaiming the One who is *"the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6). He even authored the book of Revelation to show that Christ Jesus is the risen reigning King over the church and His people.



Although John is the final Gospel, its narrative begins much earlier than the other three. While Mark begins with Jesus' adult ministry, and Matthew and Luke begin with His physical birth, John opens with the beginning of all creation: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* The Gospel of John emphasizes Jesus as the 'WORD' who spoke all life into existence. He is the light of the world. **By repeating words and metaphors from the first pages of Genesis, John compares Jesus' ministry to the very beginning of all creation and helps readers see how Jesus is the creator of new life.**

John has a clear statement of purpose for writing the gospel: *"Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that were not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."* (John 20:30-31)



THE BIG IDEAS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

■ Jesus is God's "Word"

The gospel of John has the most exalted description of Christ (or Christology) in the Bible. Jesus is identified as God's "Word" (logos). In Greek philosophy, logos could refer to divine reason, the force that brings unity and order to the cosmos. In Judaism, God's Word represents the dynamic power of God to accomplish His will. In the beginning, God merely speaks the universe into existence; with a word, He judges and destroys, redeems and saves. That Jesus is God's "Word" means He is God's agent of salvation and revelation of God to human beings. Also, John says, the word was both "with God" (distinct from God the Father) and "was God" (fully God). This Divine Word was then the God who "was made flesh" (1:14). John the Baptist, recognizing that this unique combination of divinity and flesh separated Jesus from him and the rest of humanity, declared, "He that cometh from above is above all." (3:31).

■ Jesus revealed the heavenly Father

In contrast to the other three Gospels, John's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' teachings about His identity and unique relationship with the Father. Jesus is the eternal Son who came to reveal the invisible Father. Salvation comes from knowing the Father through the Son. Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

In John 14:8-10 Philip said to Jesus, *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."* Jesus said to him, *"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"* Though fully divine, Jesus entered human existence when *"the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"* (John 1:14). The reason for this incarnation was to bring people back into a right relationship with God, to give them *"the right to become children of God"* by faith (John 1:12). This forms the capstone to the introduction of the gospel of John: *"No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known."* (John 1:18)

The Unique style of the Gospel of John

Difference in Jesus' message

– In the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), Jesus' central message concerns the coming of the "kingdom of God" and Jesus' healings and exorcisms are meant to demonstrate its presence and power. People are called to repent and believe in the good news of the kingdom. In John's Gospel, by contrast, there are no parables or exorcisms. Jesus' teaching focuses much more on His own identity and in knowing God and the eternal life with Him.

Difference in its movement - In the Synoptics, the first part of Jesus' public ministry occurs in Galilee, where Jesus teaches, heals. Then, Jesus makes his way south to Jerusalem to be arrested, die, and to rise again on the third day. By contrast, in John's Gospel Jesus repeatedly goes to Jerusalem for various festivals. Jesus attends at least three Passovers and three other

- **The Gospel is pointing out to put your faith in Jesus by looking at what He is doing and what He is saying!**

John is likely writing both to call unbelievers to faith in Jesus and to provide confidence for those believers who are struggling in their faith. Their primary opponents are (1) false teachers who have risen in the church and are denying Jesus' deity or his true humanity, and (2) unbelieving Jews, who have rejected Jesus' claim to be the Messiah and self-revelation of

Jewish festivals. So, its not a single, straight journey to Jerusalem.

Difference in the role of Messiah - In the Synoptics, Jesus' identity as Messiah is on center stage. Messiah means "*Anointed One*" and refers to the promised King and Savior from the line of David, who would save God's people from their enemies and establish God's kingdom. John's portrait of Jesus focuses less on his messiahship and more on his true humanity and true deity. He is the eternal Son and the "*Word*" (logos) of God, God's self-revelation.

God. John responds by demonstrating that Jesus confirmed the truth through his teaching and his "*signs*" showing that he truly came from the Father to bring eternal life to all who believe. Believe in what Jesus said and what Jesus did is the essence of John's gospel. An examination of John's structure will illustrate how he develops this theme.

The miracles are called signs because they not only demonstrate Jesus' power, but also point to who Jesus is and provoke faith in him. The signs are often linked in some way to Jesus' teaching. For example, Jesus feeds the multitude

with loaves and fish, and then teaches that he is the true manna from heaven, the bread of life.

The first sign, turning water into wine at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1–12), carries symbolic significance. In the Old Testament, God’s salvation is described as a great party—the *“messianic banquet”* that God will throw for all people – an allusion to Isaiah 25:6-8. By turning water into wine, Jesus indicates that God’s final salvation is arriving through His words and deeds.

**The Seven
“Signs” in
the book of
John**

Water into wine (John 2:1–11)

Healing a royal official’s son (John 4:46–54)

Healing a disabled man (John 5:1–15)

Feeding five thousand (John 6:1–14)

Walking on water (John 6:16–21)

Healing a man born blind (John 9:1–12)

Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1–43)

The seventh and climactic sign is the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11). This miracle serves as a preview and foreshadowing of the greatest sign of all—the resurrection of Jesus. Before raising Lazarus, Jesus tells Martha, *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die”* (John 11:25). Jesus’ resurrection provides resurrection life to all who believe. **Along with the seven signs, John brings out the seven “I am” statements that Jesus uses to describe Himself.**

The Seven
“I am’s”

Bread of Life (John 6:35)
Light of the World (John 8:12, 9:5)
Gate for the Sheep (John 10:7–11)
Good Shepherd (John 10:11–15)
Resurrection & Life (John 11:23–26)
Way, Truth, & Life (John 14:1–6)
The True Vine (John 15:5)

In addition to these seven signs, Jesus identifies Himself in an absolute sense as *“I am,”* it’s a clear reference to the divine name Yahweh. There are seven different occasions where Jesus says *“I am”* in the gospel of John (4:26, 6:20, 8:24, 8:28, 8:58, 13:19, 18:5). One such incident occurred when the Jewish leaders sarcastically asked if Jesus was greater than Abraham, Jesus replied, *“Before Abraham was, I am”* (John 8:58). Jesus’ use of the absolute *“I am”* (egō eimi) seems to be an allusion to the burning bush episode in Exodus 3, where Yahweh tells Moses that His divine name is *“I am who I am”* (meaning *“the self-existent one”* and a play on the divine name Yahweh). Jesus’ opponents understand this to be a claim to deity and pick up stones to kill Him (John 8:59).

Throughout the Gospel of John, we see the number seven quietly playing an important role as it conveys the idea of completeness and wholeness. John’s sevens throughout the gospel give us a complete, holistic picture of Jesus, and how He is the fulfilment of God’s plan for our salvation. The seven miracles, the seven I am’s, seven feasts, and seven

titles for Jesus are found throughout the book and prepare us to see the fulfilment in Christ alone.

■ Water imagery in the gospel signifies the Holy Spirit

There are significant events and conversations involving water in the gospel of John. Some of these references are: *Baptism of Jesus (1:33)*, *Six water pots (2:6)*, *Born from water and the Spirit (3:5)*, *Samaritan lady and Jacob's well (4:10)*, *Pool of Bethesda (5:7)*, *Jesus walks on water (6:19)*, *Rivers of Living water flowing from your belly (7:38)*, *Pool of Siloam (9:6)*, *Washing Disciple's feet (John 13:5)*, *Water and Blood came out of Jesus on the cross (19:34)*.

In each of these instances, John helps tie these water episodes directly or indirectly to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Just as water is the most basic element for physical survival, John points out through these water images that the Holy Spirit is a crucial element for our spiritual survival.



CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1

Introduction - Jesus the Word and His First Witnesses

John 1:14,
*"The Word
became flesh and
made his dwelling
among us. We
have seen his
glory, the glory of
the one and only
Son, who came
from the Father,
full of grace and
truth."*

Chapter 2-12

Miraculous Signs and Controversies

John 3:16,
*"For God so loved
the world that he
gave his one and
only Son, that
whoever believes
in him shall not
perish but have
eternal life."*

Chapter 13-17

Jesus' Final Words

John 14:6,
*"Jesus answered,
"I am the way and
the truth and the
life. No one
comes to the
Father except
through me."*

Chapter 18-20

Jesus' Death and Resurrection

John 18:36,
*"Jesus said, "My
kingdom is not of
this world. If it
were, my servants
would fight to
prevent my arrest
by the Jewish
leaders. But now
my kingdom is
from another
place."*

Chapter 21

Conclusion-Peter's Commission

John 21:15,
*Jesus said to
Simon Peter,
"Simon son of
John, do you love
me more than
these?"
"Yes, Lord," he
said, "you know
that I love you."
Jesus said, "Feed
my lambs."*

CHAPTER 1

JESUS THE WORD AND HIS FIRST WITNESSES

John starts the book with the famous first line of Genesis 1:1, "*In the beginning... God (was the Word).*" John implies that God's word, which created the universe became human as Jesus.



The image is powerful and profound. Then, John draws on the stories from Exodus 33-34, saying Jesus is God's tabernacle in our midst (John 1:14). The glorious, divine presence that hovered over the ark of the covenant became a human, Jesus. This leads us to his last claim that the one true God of Israel consists of God the Father and the Son. And Jesus became human to reveal the Father to us.

As John makes these mind-bending truths, we continue to read the stories of how John the Baptist meets Jesus and leads others to meet Him and how they become His disciples. One by one as people encounter Jesus, they say out loud who they think He is. In John's first chapter alone, Jesus is given seven titles: *Lamb of God* (1:29), *Chosen One* (1:34), *Rabbi* (1:38), *Messiah* (1:41), *Son of God* (1:49), *King of Israel* (1:49) and *Son of Man* (1:51). These prepare us for John's love of sevens in designing the story, which altogether claims that this Jesus from Nazareth is the messianic King and teacher of Israel and that He is the Son of God who was commissioned to die for the sins of the world.

CHAPTER 2-12

MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND CONTROVERSIES

The claims made by John in chapter 1 are supported by the stories in chapter 2-12. They follow a basic pattern. Jesus performs a sign or makes a claim about His divine identity, leading to misunderstanding or controversy, and ultimately prompting people to decide who they believe Jesus truly is.

In **Chapter 2**, Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding feast, overturns the tables of money changers, and stops sacrificial offerings. Through His act of turning water into wine, Jesus declared that His Kingdom - a generous Messianic kingdom – was made available to all through Him. Jesus said in the Jerusalem temple, *“Destroy this temple and I’ll raise it again in three days,”* (John 2:19), claiming that Jesus is the reality to which the temple building points – He is the place where heaven and earth meet.

In **Chapter 3**, Jesus tells Nicodemus that Israel doesn’t need another Rabbi or teacher but needs a new heart and a new life to receive things from God. In the words of Jesus, *“No one can experience God’s Kingdom without being born again* (John 3:3). God wants to offer His new life to all to all who believe and it becomes a reality through Jesus - the new teacher and Lord.

In **Chapter 4**, Jesus meets a Samaritan lady at a sacred well. They start talking about water, which Jesus turns into a

The Significance of “Seven”

Throughout the gospel of John, we see the number seven quietly playing an important role as it conveys the idea of completeness and wholeness. John’s sevens (witnesses, signs, “I AM’s”, feasts, disciples, questions, and proofs of His divinity) all stand to give us a complete, holistic picture of Jesus, and how He is the fulfilment of God’s plan for our salvation.

Throughout Scripture, the number seven conveys the idea of completeness or wholeness, both spiritually and physically. Much of this comes from it being tied directly to God’s creation of all things (Gen. 2:1-3). According to Jewish tradition, in the Talmud, Adam was created on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri) of the Hebrew calendar. Even the word “created” is used seven times in the creation account (Gen. 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3, 4). There are seven days in a week and the Sabbath is the seventh day.

John writes 21 chapters, which equals three times seven, which gives us the entire story of Jesus. The last half of the gospel of John covers seven days in the life of Christ.

metaphor and talks about living water that can become a source of eternal life.

Chapters 5-10 are a collection of another set of stories that take place during four Jewish sacred days or feasts. Once again, Jesus uses images related to the feasts to make claims about Himself.

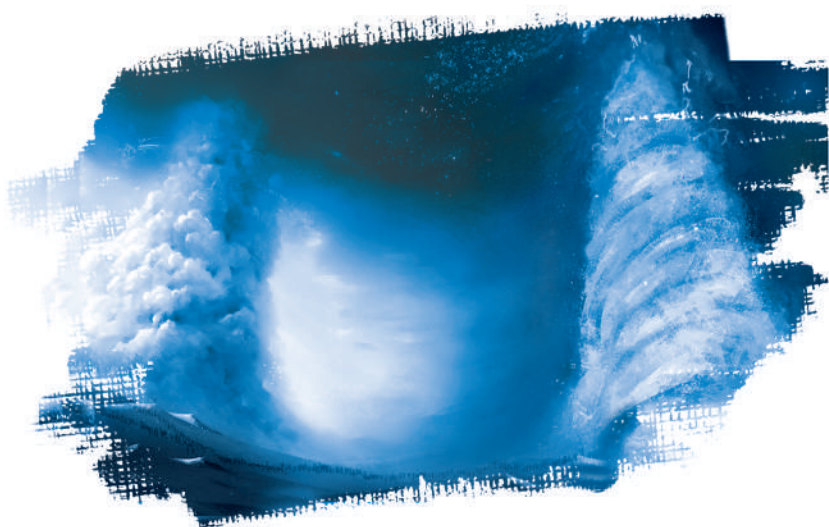
In Chapter 5, Jesus heals a paralyzed man on the Sabbath, starting a controversy with the Jewish leaders about working on the day of rest. Jesus says His Father is working on the Sabbath, and so is He. They catch His meaning. He was *“calling God His Father, making Himself equal with God”* (John 5:17-18), for which they wanted to kill Him.

Chapter 6, takes place during the **Passover**, the feast

The seventh Old Testament quote in John's gospel (12:38) is from Isaiah 53, which tells us that John frames his entire gospel account of Jesus around Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant.

that retells the Exodus story with a symbolic meal of lamb, bread, and wine. On this occasion, Jesus miraculously provides food for a crowd of thousands. This results in people asking Him for more bread, and Jesus responds by saying that He is the *"true bread,"* and that if they *"eat"* Him, they will discover eternal life. This offends many people, who stop following Him.

Chapters 7-10, make up a block of stories set in Jerusalem during the **Feast of Tabernacles.** This festival retold the story of Israel's wilderness wanderings as God guided them with the pillar of cloud and fire and provided them with water in the desert. Jesus stands in the temple courts and shouts, *"If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink"* (John 7:37).



Later, He says, *"I am the light of the world"* (John 8:12). In both of these announcements, Jesus is claiming to be the illuminating presence of God as well as the lifesaving gift of God to His people. While some people believe and follow Him, others are offended and try to kill Him for His exalted claims.

The final feast story, also told in **Chapter 10**, takes place during **Hanukkah**, which means *"rededication."* This festival retells the story of Judah Maccabee clearing the temple of idols and setting it apart as holy once more. Jesus enters the temple area and says that He is the one whom God has *"set apart as the holy one"* (John 10:36). This makes the Jerusalem leaders even more angry, and they set in motion a plan to kill Jesus, who retreats from the city.

All these conflicts culminate in one last miraculous sign in **chapter 11** – The raising of Lazarus from the dead. The news of this amazing sign spreads quickly, and, just as Jesus knew would happen, the Jerusalem leaders hear about it and conspire to murder Him. In this way, the story of Lazarus concludes the stories about Jesus' signs and transitions the reader into the second half of the book.



JOHN 13-17

JESUS' FINAL WORDS

Chapters 13-17 entirely focuses on Jesus' final night and the last words to His disciples. He tries to prepare them for His impending death, and starts by performing a shocking act at dinner (John 13). Jesus takes on the role of a common servant by kneeling down to wash the disciples' dirty feet. Jesus says this act is a symbol of His entire life's purpose, which is to reveal God's true nature as a being of self-giving love. This leads to Jesus' great command to His disciples - to follow Jesus is to love other people just as Jesus loved them. **Acts of generous love are to be the hallmark of Jesus' followers because this is what shows the world who Jesus is and, therefore, who God is.**

John 13:34-35, *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

Jesus continues with a long, flowing speech that concludes with a prayer (John 14-17). Jesus says that it's for the best that He is going away because it means that He will send the Spirit, also called *"the advocate"* (John 14). As a human, Jesus can only be in one place at a time, but the Spirit can be Jesus' divine, personal presence in any place and any time. Jesus says the Spirit is that loving personal presence, which comes to live in His people and draw them into the love of the Father and the Son. Jesus says that His disciples are those who *"abide"* or *"remain"*

in that divine love in the same way that branches are connected to a vine (John 15). He's describing how the personal love of God can permeate a person's life, healing, transforming, and making them new.

The Spirit will also empower Jesus' followers to carry on His mission in the world (John 17) and fulfil the great command to love others through radical acts of service. In this way, Jesus says, His disciples will *"bear witness to the truth"* (15:26). **The sending of the Son is the heart of the Fourth Gospel's plot, its conclusion is open-ended, spilling into the story of the disciples.** Thus, the church's mission is to carry on Jesus' mission (14:12; 17:18). The Spirit will enable to expose the selfish, corrupt ways we humans treat each other and declare that, in

Renewed in the Image of God

Though the New Testament does not define what *"image of God"* means, when this phrase is used, we are directed to Jesus Christ. ***To look closely at Jesus is to see at last what a real human being looks like.*** This untarnished image of God, who represents God so perfectly that whoever has seen Him *"has seen the Father"* (John 14:9), has come into the world to redeem us.

Human Beings, the 'created image of God' has now been restored by the incarnation of the 'eternal image of God.' Human nature is remade, as God the Son united it to himself in order to make it new from the inside out (2 Cor. 5:17); our ignorance is overcome, as He lives a perfect life in order to show us what real humanity is (Heb. 4:15); our guilt is atoned for, as he dies a sinner's death in order to cancel forever the charge that is against us (Col. 2:13 – 14); our corruption is healed, as he rises to life again in order to inaugurate a new humanity with a new nature for a new age, that all who are in Christ may walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

Jesus, God has saved the world through his love and opened up a new way to be human.

As if all this achievement of Christ were not enough, God the Spirit also is given, to inscribe the law on believers' hearts (Heb. 10:15 – 16), to work inside us to draw us into the newness, the fullness, that is ours in Christ (John 16:13 – 15). **Salvation is nothing less than full entrance into the life of Jesus by the Spirit.**

Finally, Jesus predicts that there will be opposition. Just as the Jewish leaders rejected Him, His followers will also be persecuted. Jesus tells them not to be afraid because He has already conquered, or gained victory over, the world (John 16:33). So, in chapters 18-20, John shows us what victory looks like to Jesus.



CHAPTER 18-20

JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The Jewish leaders send soldiers to arrest Jesus, and they find Him and His disciples in a garden. When they ask which one is Jesus, He declares, ***"I am,"*** (18:6) and they fall backward. This is brilliant writing on John's part. **These words of Jesus are the culmination of two sets of seven instances in which Jesus has used that very phrase.** This occurrence as Jesus is arrested is the ironic climax of them all. The moment when Jesus most fully reveals His divine power and victory is the moment He gives up His life.

Jesus is put on trial for His exalted claims of being the Son of God and the King of Israel. He's first tried before Israel's high priest (18:19) and later before the Roman governor Pilate (18:29) who was to punish anyone charged with claiming to be the king of Israel. Jesus tells Pilate that *"my Kingdom is not from this world,"* meaning that while he is a King and that his Kingdom is for this world, its radically different value system and definition of power and greatness are not derived from this world. **The values of Jesus' Kingdom are defined by God's character and revealed through Jesus' death on the cross.** The world's true King conquers sin and evil by letting it conquer Him. He gains victory over the world through an act of self-giving love.

After Jesus' body is placed in a sealed tomb, **chapter 20** begins

on the first day of the new week. Mary and other disciples discover that Jesus' tomb is strangely open and empty. Mary suddenly meets Jesus, who is alive and raised from the dead! (20:16) **According to the pattern of John's writings on several signs, the final sign is the resurrection of Jesus – Jesus' own resurrection from the dead.** It supports Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, the author of all life, whose love conquered death itself.

After the discovery of the empty tomb, Jesus meets up with the disciples and commissions them by sending the Spirit as He promised (20:21-22), so that His mission from the Father can now be carried on through them.

CHAPTER 21

PETER'S COMMISSION

The last chapter gives us a glimpse of the ongoing mission of Jesus with His disciples after resurrection. A number of disciples are fishing but catch nothing. Jesus appears to them on the shore, telling them to cast their net on the other side of the boat (21:6). When they obey Him, they catch a huge amount of fish, and only in that moment do they recognize Him. John is offering this story as a picture of discipleship to Jesus. **His followers will be most effective in the world when their focus is not on their work but on listening for Jesus' voice and obeying His words. That's when they will truly see Him at work in their lives.**

Jesus next questions Peter and commissions him as a unique leader in the Jesus movement. Jesus indicates that Peter will also give up his life one day in service to Jesus (21:19). Then, all of a sudden, the story shifts focus to another figure standing there with Peter, the disciple whom Jesus loved. This is none other than the book's author, John, and Jesus says his role in leading the Church will not be like Peter's. John is called to spend his long-life bearing witness to Jesus (21:22), so that others may believe in Him. And that is exactly what he did as he authored this amazing story about Jesus - the Messiah and Son of God.

CONCLUSION

The gospel that begins with a strong affirmation that Jesus is God, ends with one of the disciples of Jesus confessing the same truth through the words of Thomas, *'My Lord and my God!'* (John 20:28). Thomas was stating in that moment that he finally realised that the very man he had been following was indeed God! **A true profession of faith is not merely professing Christ to be Lord and God, but it's also the understanding that "*Christ is mine*" - '*my*' Lord and '*my*' God.** And, that's what it means to be a Christian, and you're not a Christian until you articulate it by faith. In essence, the gospel of John is trying to persuade us to be like Thomas to confess that Jesus is the Lord of the universe and also *"my Lord and my God."*



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