

## Author

Early church tradition, such as the second-century writings of Irenaeus (a disciple of Polycarp, who in turn had direct contact with some of the apostles), consistently attribute this gospel to the apostle John. <sup>1</sup>

John, a Fisherman, wrote the Gospel of John about 55 years after Jesus' death.

One major theme runs through John's gospel: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and if you commit yourself to Him, He will give you eternal life. <sup>2</sup>

John chapter 1 contains three sections: The Prologue (1:1-18); Who Are You? (1:19-28); The Lamb of God (1:29-51).

### **The Prologue**

The title for Jesus that occurs most frequently in the NT is *Christos*, or "Christ". It is not Jesus' last name. "Jesus Christ" is an affirmation that Jesus is the Messiah. The second-most-frequent title given to Jesus is "Lord." The next-most-used title is Jesus' favorite self-designation – "Son of Man." <sup>3</sup>

When Jesus called Himself the Son of Man in front of Jewish people in the first century, they understood He was identifying Himself with that person who was defined and described in the Old Testament book of Daniel as a heavenly being who comes from the very throne of God on a mission to judge the world. He was telling His hearers where He had come from. <sup>3</sup>

**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, 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.*

### The Uncreated Word

**John 1:1-2** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*

This sentence, more than any other passage in Scripture, is foundational for the church's confession of the doctrine of the Trinity, the belief that God is one in three persons. <sup>3</sup>

**Acts 7:55-56** *But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

At the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, the church, in opposition to the Arian heresy, declared that Jesus is begotten, not made, and that His divine nature is of the same essence (*homoousios*) with the Father. <sup>1</sup>

### **The Belgic Confession**

*Article 8 – God is One in Essence, Yet Distinguished in Three Persons*

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is one single essence, in which are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct, according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. ... The Father hath never been without the Son, or without the Holy Ghost. For they are all three coeternal and coessential. <sup>1</sup>

*Article 12 – The Creation*

We believe that the Father, by the Word, that is, by His Son, created of nothing the heaven, the earth, and all creatures as it seemed good unto Him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator; that He doth also still uphold and govern them by His eternal providence and infinite power for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God. ... <sup>1</sup>

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### Creator

The Word Himself is uncreated and this without beginning or end. <sup>4</sup>

**John 1:3** *All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*

Creation belongs to God alone.

God created all things through Jesus Christ. Creation is finished.

- God is invisible. Jesus Christ reveals God to us (John 1:18) <sup>2</sup>

**Colossians 1:15-17** *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

### The Word of Life and Light

As very God of very God, the Word of God is the source of all light both natural and spiritual. Created lights such as the sun and the stars shine

because they were created by the God of glory, the God who shines in refulgent light (Isa. 60:1-3).<sup>4</sup>

**refulgence** *n* : a radiant of resplendent quality or state : BRILLIANCE –  
**refulgent** *adj*

- The One who in creation made the body and gave it life also in creation made the soul and gave it life.<sup>4</sup>

### The Witness to the Light

The authors of the four Gospels believed they could not adequately explain the person and work of Christ without mentioning the witness of John the Baptist.<sup>4</sup>

God gave him as the preeminent prophetic witness to Christ so that all might know the identity of Jesus, know His role in God's plan, and believe in Him as Savior.<sup>4</sup>

“Men have this peculiar excellence which raises them above other animals, that they are endued with reason and intelligence, and that they carry the distinction between right and wrong engraven on their conscience. There is no man, therefore, whom some perception of the eternal light does not reach.” – John Calvin<sup>4</sup>

**John 1:11** *He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.*

John here refers to the Jewish nation as a whole and its rejection of our Lord.<sup>4</sup>

This verse tells us the world is exposed to the condemnation of God because people prefer the darkness to the light. They do not want to come to the light, Jesus Christ, because their evil deeds will be exposed.<sup>3</sup>

### The Right to Be Children of God

**John 1:12-13** *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.*

- This is the good news of the gospel, the great hope that John wants his readers to know. John longs for them to believe in Jesus and the Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Only those who are born anew spiritually and trust in Christ have that right. To become children of God in the truest and fullest sense, we must be born again.<sup>4</sup>

- To be born again is an act of grace alone, and only God can bring us to new spiritual life. The evidence that we have been born again is that we believe in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

## John 1

### The Incarnation of the Word of God

Scripture's doctrine of divine transcendence tells us that God is set apart from creation and cannot be identified with creation. He “sits above the circle of the earth” on His throne and rules and reigns over the universe, the created order being subject to Him (Isa. 40:22-23). At the same time, the Bible tells us of God's immanence, that though He is set apart and set over us, He is always close to us. We can hide nowhere from His presence, for He is present everywhere (Ps. 139:7-12).<sup>4</sup>

**Revelation 21:23** *And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.*

God frequently manifests His glory as bright, refulgent light (Ex. 34:29-35; Isa. 60:1; Rev. 21:23), so for John to say we have beheld the glory of Jesus almost certainly refers to his experience of the Transfiguration when the glorious light of Jesus' deity was revealed to Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1-8).<sup>4</sup>

### Grace

- No human being (except Christ), deadened as we are by sin, can either see or enter God's kingdom apart from having been born anew, from above, by God's Spirit (3:3-8; 1:12, 13).<sup>1</sup>

**John 1:16-17** *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.*

Though grace was manifest in the OT, it was but a candle compared to the brightness of grace that appeared at the Incarnation. Grace is the unmerited favor of God and is the basis of our salvation, justification, election, faith, and spiritual gifts.<sup>5</sup>

- But when we have a proper estimation of our own condition as sinful creatures who deserve only the wrath of the Lord, and when we understand that God does not give His grace to everyone (Rom. 1:18-3:20; 9-11), we will be much less likely to take grace for granted.<sup>4</sup>

We receive a greater measure of grace under the new covenant because the new covenant features the zenith of God's revelation of Christ, God's incarnate Word (1:18). In Him we see God most clearly (Heb. 1:1-4).<sup>4</sup>

### **Who Are You?**

Directed to John the Baptist, “Who are you?” was a logical question.<sup>2</sup>

**John 1:20** *And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”*

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Note the awkward construction of that verse. It's even worse in the Greek. John the apostle utilizes the strongest possible method in the Greek to show how emphatic John the Baptist was in saying, "I am not the Christ."<sup>3</sup>

John denied being either Elijah or the Messiah.<sup>2</sup> Jesus indicated that John *was* Elijah in a sense.<sup>3</sup> Elijah came, unrecognized, in the person of John the Baptist, and was killed.<sup>5</sup> So while John was not Elijah reincarnated, his ministry was marked by a similar spirit and power.<sup>3</sup>

**Matthew 17:10-13** *And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.*

The Prophet (John 1:21) refers to a special prophet (Deut. 18:18) who would be the mediator of the New Testament, similar to Moses, the mediator of the Old Testament.<sup>3</sup>

**John 1:23** *He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."*

John the Baptist quoted this passage from Isaiah 40:1-3 to reveal his identity. Isaiah declared that before Messiah would come into the world, he would send His messenger. John said, "That's who I am. I'm here to tell you to build the highway of the King."<sup>3</sup>

John got his authority to baptize, not from men, but from heaven, because he was commissioned by God (Matt. 21:23-32).<sup>2</sup>

**John 1:27** *"It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."*

Those of us who believe and trust in Christ are His disciples. But like John, we need to see that we are not worthy in and of ourselves to untie His shoes, for we have sinned against God and despised His just rule. Despite that, Jesus gave Himself for us, to redeem us from our sin. May we never cease to give thanks for such a great salvation.<sup>3</sup>

### The Lamb of God ("Agnus Dei")

**John 1:29** *The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

There are only two books of the Bible wherein Christ is called the Lamb of God, and both were written by the same man, the apostle John. In chapter 5 of Revelation, John records that he was told to await the coming of the Lion

of Judah, but then he turned and beheld not the Lion but a Lamb that appeared to have been slain.<sup>3</sup>

**Revelation 5:12** *saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."*

In this vision of the heavenly throne room of God, Jesus is honored as the Lamb of God.<sup>3</sup>

The title "Lamb of God" has sparked a number of academic controversies. Hearing these criticisms, R. C. wonders whether it ever occurs to these critics that John the Baptist was himself a prophet and had as much authority to give a fresh revelation from the mind of God as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel or any other man sent as a prophet from God. The concept of Jesus as the Lamb of God is not a creation of the vivid imagination of the apostle John or a rhetorical flourish by John the Baptist; instead, it is *God's* designation for His Son.<sup>3</sup>

### Disciples of Jesus

The two disciples (John 1:35-37) of John the Baptist who followed Jesus, were none other than John the son of Zebedee, author of the gospel of John, and Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.<sup>2</sup>

Andrew found his brother Simon, and John brought his brother James.<sup>2</sup>

### Good from Nazareth

Nathanael, it should be noted, is likely the same person as Bartholomew. Bartholomew means "son of Tolmai", so his full name would have been Nathanael son of Tolmai.<sup>4</sup>

### The Way of Salvation

Here (John 1:51) we find an allusion to Jacob's dream of a ladder joining earth and heaven.<sup>4</sup> Christ is God's "ladder" between heaven and earth.<sup>2</sup>

- If a person is to ascend to heaven – attain salvation – he must do it through Christ Jesus (John 14:6).<sup>4</sup>

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### The Agnus Dei<sup>6</sup>

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.*

*Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Grant us peace.*

# Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise **63**

*Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible...be honor and glory forever — 1 Timothy 1:17*

1. Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise,  
 2. Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light,  
 3. To all, life Thou giv - est - to both great and small,  
 4. Great Fa - ther of glo - ry, pure Fa - ther of light,

In light in - ac - ces - si - ble hid from our eyes,  
 Nor want - ing, nor wast - ing, Thou rul - est in might;  
 In all life Thou liv - est - the true life of all;  
 Thine an - gels a - dore Thee, all veil - ing their sight;

Most bless - ed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days,  
 Thy jus - tice, like moun - tains, high soar - ing a - bove  
 We blos - som and flour - ish as leaves on the tree,  
 All praise we would ren - der - O help us to see

Al - mighty, vic - to - rious - Thy great name we praise.  
 Thy clouds, which are foun - tains of good - ness and love.  
 And with - er and per - ish - but naught chang - eth Thee.  
 'Tis on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth Thee!

WORDS: Walter Chalmers Smith, 1824-1908  
 MUSIC: Welsh melody

ST. DENIO  
 11.11.11.11.

## Lecture

- Read vv. 1-18

Note: C. S. Lewis quote on page 12. <sup>2</sup>

## Eternality of Christ

As the Logos incarnate, Christ is revealed as being not only preexistent to creation, but eternal. He is said to be in the beginning *with* God, and also that He *is* God (1:1-3).

## Deity of Christ

- Faith in the deity of Christ is necessary to being a Christian. <sup>1</sup>

**ex nihilo** *adj* 1: made from nothing

In the New Testament, baptism was by immersion. It pictured death, burial, and resurrection. <sup>2</sup>

## Jesus Meets Simon

“We ought also to observe the purpose of God, which determined that Peter, who was to be far more eminent, was brought to the knowledge of Christ by the agency and ministry of Andrew; that none of us, however excellent, may refuse to be taught by an inferior.” – John Calvin <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Reformation Study Bible*, pp. 1933-1945, 2506-2517

<sup>2</sup> *Be Alive*, Warren W. Wiersbe, 1986, pp. 19-32

<sup>3</sup> *John (St. Andrew's Expositional Commentary)*, R. C. Sproul, 2009, pp. 1-18

<sup>4</sup> *Tabletalk* magazine, January 2018, Robert Rothwell, pp. 35-49

<sup>5</sup> *The Ryrie study Bible*, Charles Caldwell Ryrie, 1995

<sup>6</sup> *Agnus Dei (music)*, Wikipedia, 29Dec'18