

The Gospel of John Introduction

John 1:1-18

Today we'll start with a new series.

For an extended period of time we'll be dealing with the Gospel according to the apostle John.

For an introduction to the Gospel we will look at the following things:

- 3 key verses that give us essential information about this Gospel
- a division of the Gospel in major parts
- the first 18 verses of chapter 1

So, let's go and start looking at these things together.

Three keys

- The back-door key
- The side-door key
- The front-door key

In a study I am reading in preparation for preaching on this Gospel the writer spoke about three keys to unlock the contents of it.

The names of the keys refer to the approximate places in the Gospel where you will find the verses, that give the content for the key.

So, let's start with the first one.

The back-door key: John 20:30-31

- And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

In these verses the apostle John first explains that he did not write down everything that could be written about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Obviously he limited himself to just a selection from all the material that was available.

But as he says in verse 31, he had a very clear purpose in mind for writing this Gospel.

He desired to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way, that people would believe in Him so that they would have eternal life in Him.

Let's go to the next key.

The side-door key: John 16:28

- “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.”

These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to the apostles when they were having the Passover meal together on the night before He was betrayed.

He clarifies the fact, that not only He came from the Father, but that He also would go back to the father. The latter happened on the Day of Ascension.

This is a clear indication that at this point in time He was not yet going to restore the Kingdom of Israel. That is indeed something that will happen somewhere in the future.

For the time being He is interceding for us with the Father, as we see from Hebrews 7:25.

But let's go to the next key.

The front-door key: John 1:11-12

- He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
- But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

These 2 verses state 2 important facts about the reaction of the Jewish people towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Gospels we see indeed confirmed that many people rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, especially from the religious establishment of His time.

But we also see that many people believed in Him and therefore got saved. And this despite the fact, that, at a certain point in time, many of His followers turned away from Him as they found certain statements of Him too radical, too hard.

It made me think of the parable in which our Lord compared those who heard the gospel to 4 different kinds of soil (Matthew 13:3-8).

Let's now look at the major division of the Gospel of John.

Major division of the Gospel of John	
Chapters	Event
• 1-2	• Introduction
• 3-12	• Jesus coming to His own
• 13-17	• Dinner Discourse with the apostles
• 18-19	• Trial and crucifixion
• 20-21	• Resurrection and returning to the Father

In the first section the apostle John makes it very clear who and what the Lord Jesus Christ is. He also introduces the person and ministry of John the Baptist.

The second section refers to all the different times that our Lord went into Judah and then back into Galilee again.

The third section refers to the events on the evening He celebrated the Passover together with His apostles before He was arrested. It is good to realize that, within the Jewish context, everything in the chapters 13-19 happened on the same day. In the Jewish setting a day ends at sunset, so what we would call Thursday evening for them already happened on the sixth day of the week.

So, let's go to John 1:1-18 now.

John 1:1-3

- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- He was in the beginning with God.
- All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

In these three opening verses the apostle John states very clearly the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And not only that, but he also makes clear that Christ was indeed fully involved in the creation of all that exists.

This cannot be said of any other person that ever dwelt on this earth. He therefore is in a category of his own.

The apostle John gives us in these verses also the first of many titles of Christ we will find on this Gospel: Christ being the living word.

But let continue with the next verses.

John 1:4-5

- In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

In John 14:6 the Lord Jesus Christ declares that He is indeed the Way, the Truth and the Life. Apart from Him we cannot come to the Father.

In verse 5 we see already that not all men would welcome the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll see that explained more clearly further on in this Gospel.

John 1:6-7

- There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.
- This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

Before the Lord Jesus Christ himself came to earth and started His ministry among men, God already sent a prophet to prepare the way for Him. This person of course is John the Baptist.

In Matthew 17:10-12 the Lord Jesus Christ points to John the Baptist as the fulfilment of Malachi 4:5 where the coming of Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord is foretold.

John 1:8-9

- He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.
- That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

Further on in the first 2 chapters of this Gospel we will see that John the Baptist actively points people to the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who was to come into the world as the Light of the world.

When some of his disciples were complaining that the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ were baptizing more people than the disciples of John the Baptist, he said clearly that he should diminish and that the Lord Jesus was to take the highest position.

So, throughout his words and testimony he pointed not to himself as the one to come but to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let's continue.

John 1:10-11

- He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
- He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

The apostle John reminds us here again of the fact, that the Lord Jesus Christ was fully involved in the creation of the world and all its inhabitants.

And even though He was born as a member of the chosen people of God, many of them did not accept Him for who He was.

In the next verse however we find a great promise for those who truly believed and believe in Him.

John 1:12-13

- But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, 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.

In His discussion with Nicodemus the Lord Jesus Christ says very clearly that people must be born again in order to enter in the Kingdom of God.

The apostle John already refers to that in these 2 verses, making it also clear that being born again is the result of the will and work of God. Without Him working in us we would never come to Christ, as the Lord Jesus Christ also says in John 6:44.

This should remind us of the promise God made in Ezekiel 36:16-27. I advise you to read this passage also in preparation for your Bible studies.

But let's continue.

John 1:14-15

- And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
- John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "

The apostle John again makes it very clear what is the identity of the one who came into the world as the Savior of the world.

And John the Baptist again acknowledges that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one that was sent into to world to become the Savior of the world.

In the next verse we see how the apostle expresses his own experience of walking with the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 1:16-17

- And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.
- For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Even though the Law was given by God it could not save us.

The apostle Paul writes about this problem in chapter 7 of his letter to the church in Rome.

In that chapter he acknowledges the fact that the law reveals our sinfulness. And that according to our human flesh we are totally sinful is a lesson we can clearly learn from the Old Testament.

The solution for our problem came through the Lord Jesus Christ and through Him alone!

Let's go to the last verse for today.

John 1:18

- No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

This should remind us from Exodus 33:20 where God says the following to Moses:

But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live."

This is part of the answer of God when Moses asked God to show him His glory.

Both Daniel and the apostle John at a certain point in time had a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ and it struck them so much that they fell to the ground and lost all their strength. It had a great impact on their lives. When we want to worship God in spirit and in truth, we need to keep in mind how great and awesome He is. All too often we are inclined to treat Him like He is some kind of Santa Claus. But He isn't anything like that and we should give Him all the glory He is entitled to.

Let us pray!