

# God Was Here!

John 1:1-18 • September 11, 2011

Have you ever thought about how many decisions we make based on what someone else says?

How many of you have decided to go to a barber or hair stylist because someone told you—and then SHOWED you—how great a haircut they got there?

How many of you went to a restaurant because someone told you how good the food was?

When we think about it, we read books, shop at stores, watch TV shows or movies, pick a doctor — we make a lot of decisions in life based on what others say.

But, when it comes to decisions, the greatest decision anyone can make in life is what they will do with Jesus Christ. And that brings me to not only our text for this morning, but our text for the next several months.

As our church begins its focus on building a closer relationship with Christ, today we're beginning a study of the Gospel of John. The apostle John said that his gospel was his personal testimony about his relationship with Jesus Christ.

John not only said his gospel was his testimony. He also repeatedly said that he wrote his testimony – his gospel – in the hopes that it would help readers like you and me decide to make that step of faith and trust in Jesus Christ, believing that He really is the Son of God Who came to save us from our sins.

Turn to John 20:31. John waits until almost the end of his gospel to give us his reason for writing it. He says, (verse 30)

John 20:30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 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.

That's why we're focusing on the theme "Believe!" John uses the word "believe" 44 times in his gospel. "Believe" is the verb for the noun "faith."

Faith is simply believing what God says about His Son and when we do, we receive the gift of eternal life. But we also receive the gift of LIFE! Knowing how to deal with, succeed, enjoy all that THIS life throws at us. And it's all found in Christ – “in His name.”

Now, if you're not a Christian, I pray this study will help you understand who Jesus really is. After all, even though John writes these words, he writes what God put in his heart to write.

This gospel is more than John's personal testimony. It's inspired by God Himself to show us who Jesus really was, why He came and what He can and WILL do in our lives in the 21st century.

If you ARE a Christian, I pray our study will help deepen your relationship with Jesus, because that's what being a Christian is all about. It's not about trying to be good or religious.

No, being a Christian is about having a personal, one-on-one relationship with Jesus Christ—and every believer needs to grow in that relationship. In fact, that's God's goal for every one of us.

// Okay, any time you plan on studying an entire book you need to start by building a solid foundation. That means we need to look at some background information so that we can understand the context in which John writes his gospel. So, let's begin there.

The first thing we need to note is that John wrote his gospel in his later years while he was serving as the pastor of the church in Ephesus. God inspired him to write these words after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 A.D. (Jews rebelled against Rome in 66 A.D. Titus sent to regain control. Destroyed Jerusalem & temple, just as Jesus had predicted [Matthew 24:2].)

Most scholars date John's gospel around the year 90 A.D. (90-100 A.D.) That's almost 60 years AFTER Jesus had returned to heaven. John was very young when he decided to follow Jesus and he also lived a very long life. In any case, it's late date is important because it was the LAST of the four gospels to be written.

The other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called “the synoptic gospels.” The word “synoptic” means “to see together” which tells us that the first

three gospel accounts contain many of the same stories and teachings—things they SAW TOGETHER—although from a different perspective.

Each of the gospel writers had a particular perspective or purpose in mind as they wrote their accounts of the life of Jesus.

Matthew (60-65 A.D.) wrote to his fellow JEWS to establish the fact that Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies about God’s Messiah. One clue to this theme is that he begins by giving the legal genealogy of Jesus to prove to the Jews that Jesus was indeed the promised One they’d been waiting for.

Mark (55-65 A.D.) wrote about the miracles that Jesus did in order to convince the Gentile world that Jesus meets the needs of the human heart.

Luke (60 A.D.) wrote from the perspective of a historian. In his writing he showed that he’d done a great deal of research—giving more attention to the chronology and details of Jesus’ life than any of the other gospel writers.

Well, all three of the synoptic gospels were already written and being copied and distributed when John was inspired to write his own. So, God led John to include things the others had left out – parts of Jesus’ ministry and teachings that the other three hadn’t covered.

But John also had a different purpose in mind. You see, he wrote his gospel for people—both Jews and Gentiles – who’d heard about Jesus of Nazareth, but still weren’t convinced enough to believe in Him as the Savior of their sins. (Re-read 20:31.)

One way we see this is in the way that John used the word “signs” to describe the miracles that Jesus did. Remember verse 30?

John 20:30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

You see, in the New Testament there are three words that are used consistently for the miraculous, supernatural events of God: “power,” “wonders,” and “signs.” (poderes, prodigios, señales)

I know this sounds obvious—but “power” refers to the supernatural power of God. “Wonders” refers to the results of that power. And “signs” was the purpose that God had in doing the miracle in the first place.

Well, John uses the word “sign” eight times to show us his purpose was to lead people to believe that Jesus was the Christ.

By the way, for the past 2000 years John’s gospel has been very effective in doing just that. In fact, many times people are given a copy of the Gospel of John to read before they read the rest of the Bible and reading the things written on its pages has led many of them to believe in Jesus.

One more thing we need to know about this gospel is that when John wrote it, the first generation of churches was being attacked by false teachers, a group known as the Gnostics. (Gnósticos)

Basically the Gnostics believed that all material substance was evil and only the spirit was pure—so they taught that Jesus was not real flesh and blood—because otherwise He couldn’t be God.

They also said that God didn’t really create the world because as a Spirit, God is pure and the world is a material substance, so it’s not. So, they believed that the world’s actual creator was sort of a copy of a copy of a copy of God.

In their minds, the original—God—well, He was too pure to have anything to do with the physical world. He was detached from us and our world. He had to be to remain holy.

So they taught that people could only get eternal life by gaining absolute mysterious knowledge. So, forget the Gospel message that God became flesh and died for our sins.

Now the reason I mention all this is because there are still Gnostics all around us today – cults and religions that deny that Jesus was God. But as we study—especially our text for this morning—notice the things John says to refute the false teaching of the Gnostics.

// Okay, now that our foundation is built, let’s get into John’s testimony – how he begins telling us about Jesus of Nazareth. Let’s read the first 18 verses of chapter 1.

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

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend (extinguish) it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive 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 man, but of God.

14 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.

15 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.'"

15 Juan dio testimonio de él, y clamó diciendo: Este es de quien yo decía: El que viene después de mí, es antes de mí; porque era primero que yo.

16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

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.

What an introduction! First of all,

1. John says that Jesus is ETERNAL.

Look at verses 1 and 2.

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

Now, before we go any further I need to explain why John refers to Jesus as “the Word” and to do that we need to go back to his purpose in writing this gospel.

Remember, John wrote his testimony about Jesus in the hopes of convincing both Jews and Gentiles who hadn’t yet decided what to believe about Jesus of Nazareth. He wanted to convince them that Jesus was the Son of God—the Savior of the World.

Well, by 90 A.D. the Gospel message (Death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ) had spread beyond the Jewish world and into the Gentile world. Thanks to the work of missionaries like Paul, Christianity had gone from Jerusalem to Asia Minor and Greece and even to Rome.

So, in John’s day, Christianity was no longer just a Jewish religion. In fact, by this time historians tell us that there were probably 100,000 Gentile Christians for every one Jewish Christian.

John was writing to people in BOTH people groups who hadn’t yet made their mind up about Jesus. So he picked a term that would be familiar to both—and “the WORD” was that term.

The Jews knew how their Scriptures started. Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created...” John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word...” To the Jews this was a way of saying that to see the creative power of God—the WORD that brought creation into existence—they simply had to look to Christ.

The Gentiles, who were pagans, called the controlling power of the universe “Logos” or “the Word.” So to them it was a way of saying that the controlling power of the universe—THE WORD—became an actual Person.

So THE WORD was Jesus and both Jews and Gentiles clearly understood what John meant.

Okay, back to my point. John begins his gospel in an unusual manner. Unlike the synoptic gospels that begin their account in a historical context, John begins in eternity.

Matthew traces the genealogy of Jesus.

Mark began with the ministry of John the Baptist.  
Luke starts with the story of Jesus' birth.

But not John. In his first two verses John takes back to before the beginning into eternity past—before creation, before man—before the existence of time itself. He starts his book in the same way the Bible starts and says, “In the beginning...” was the WORD.

In the BEGINNING was Jesus. In fact, the word “was” here means “to exist independent of any beginning.” So this phrase literally means, “in a beginning that had no beginning was the Word”

John was saying that Jesus—the WORD—existed before His birth in Bethlehem and lives even after His death on the cross. He was saying that Jesus was not “made” like you and I were made when sperm and egg came together. He didn't “come into being.”

He always was. He is eternal. There never was a time when Christ was not! And I don't know about you—but WOW! Do you hear what John's saying? All that Jesus IS, He ALWAYS WAS. Wow!

We can't say this about the founders of the world's other religions. I mean, Buddha had a beginning and an end. So did Mohammed and Confucius and all the rest.

But not Jesus. Not the WORD. No, Jesus is ETERNAL because Jesus was and is and always will be.

Do you know what else this means? It means that Jesus shows us what God's like – what He IS like, WAS like and will ALWAYS be like.

What Jesus did when He was born was open a window in time so we can see the eternal God. It was only when Jesus came that men saw fully and completely what God has ALWAYS been like, which leads me to point out a second way John describes Jesus.

2. John says that Jesus is GOD.

Look at the last part of verse 1 where he writes, “...the WORD was God” or literally, “God was the WORD.” Later in his testimony, John records Jesus' own statements about Himself.

John 10:30 I and My Father are one.  
Juan 10:30 Yo y el Padre uno somos.

John 14:9 He who has seen Me has seen the Father.  
Juan 14:9 El que me ha visto a mí, ha visto al Padre.

So—understand—John didn't say that Jesus was identical to God, like an identical twin. No! In a way we can't understand on this side of eternity, He WAS God.

That means that the baby lying in the manger that first Christmas night was GOD.

The 12 year old boy in the temple confusing the priests was GOD.  
The Man Who taught and fed the multitudes...Who healed the sick and raised the dead...the Man Who hung on that Roman cross....was GOD.

I mean, when you look at Jesus Christ, you're not looking at some Jewish guy who lived 33 short years 2,000 years ago. No! You're looking at ETERNAL GOD, Who existed before time began.

This means that everything that can be said about God the Father can be said about God the Son. Jesus is in every way God, yet He is a separate person from God the Father.

In their New World Translation of John, the Jehovah's Witnesses translate this phrase in verse 1 like this: "and the word was a god." They do this by adding the indefinite article "a" but there is no indefinite article in the Greek.

So—unlike any other widely-followed religious leader in history, Jesus Christ made a unique claim. He declared Himself God. Not a god, not god-like, but God incarnate – the Creator of the universe in human flesh.

John emphasizes and affirms this truth in verse 3 by saying,

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Literally this says, "Every single part of the universe came into being through Him." John was saying that, as God, Jesus created everything from atoms to galaxies.



And while we're on the subject, not only did Jesus create the universe—in Colossians 1:17 Paul reminds us that even now Jesus holds the universe together.

We say it's the law of gravity that holds the things of this planet in place. But it's more accurate to say it's CHRIST who holds the entire universe together. Beginning with the atoms that make up your body to galaxies light years away, ALL of it is held together by Jesus.

Jesus is God—the Creator—and He holds His creation together. Not just atoms and galaxies, but ME and YOU. And He doesn't just hold my BODY together; He holds my LIFE together!

I mean, I read these words from John and think back on all the tough times I've had in life, the problems...the surgeries...the pain...the stresses of life... the deaths of people I love.

I look back and I can see that it's JESUS...THE WORD MADE FLESH...He's the One who's held me together in those times.

Even now, He holds me in the palm of His almighty hand! Doesn't that bring you comfort to know that? Doesn't it re-assure you to know that Jesus—GOD—holds you?! Jesus is God...the Creator and Sustainer of the universe.

// John says Jesus is ETERNAL/ Jesus is GOD. And then he uses one more word to describe the WORD. Verse 14:

14 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.

3. John says that in Jesus the Word became FLESH.

John says that the eternal Jesus—God—Who created us—became flesh and actually lived among us! Contrary to what Gnostic teachers were saying, in Jesus the holy God who created this world became flesh.

John says, "God was here! And I saw Him! I spent time with Him. I talked with Him, walked with Him, lived with Him!" He begins the letter of 1 John the same way. "I saw Him, I heard Him, I touched Him and now I want to tell you about Him..."

Here John says, “And I beheld his glory. Because Jesus was the eternal God in human skin, let me tell you what He’s like. He’s one of a kind. There’s no one like Him. He’s FULL of grace and truth.”

If you could choose only two words to describe Jesus, which two would you choose? John, moved by the Holy Spirit, chose these two. Grace. God’s favor that we don’t deserve. God’s kindness to us. God’s goodness to us. God’s unconditional love for us. God’s generosity towards us.

And truth. Truth is exactly how things are. Truth equals fact (synonym). Truth is wonderful, but truth also can be painful.

All of us like truth we agree with. Right? But when we hear truth we don’t agree with – especially truth about ourselves – we get offended, defensive, even angry. Right? But it’s still TRUTH/ FACT/ how we REALLY are.

Jesus was FULL of truth. That’s why people then and people today either love Him or hate Him. He tells it like it really is. He shows us ourselves as we really are.

The truth is we DON’T deserve ANYTHING from God – except His wrath. That’s the truth. So aren’t you glad He also shows us grace?!

Grace by itself can be misunderstood as soft and easy. God overlooks our arrogance and closes His eyes to our sins.

Truth by itself can be misunderstood as hard and harsh. God tells us, “You’re a sinner! A rebel! You’re self-absorbed and arrogant and you deserve death and hell!”

But grace and truth together bring balance and give us a complete picture of God and what He’s really like. Jesus, the eternal God, the Creator, is not only grace AND truth, He’s FULL of grace AND truth. (Greek, replete, full to the brim) There’s full and then there’s full to the top – no room for anything else.

Jesus, the eternal God, the Creator, is FULL of grace and truth. He always has been. He always will be. And He is right now.

John’s powerful introduction forces us to make a decision. I mean, we read his testimony that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal God—the Creator—who put on human skin and came to earth to die on the cross in order to save us from our sins.

Now we have to decide whether or not to BELIEVE what John's written. Do you remember what John said about why he wrote his gospel?

31 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.

He wrote these words, that we might BELIEVE...and in that BELIEF...in that FAITH...we might have life. Eternal life and ABUNDANT life...both of them right here, right now.

John says that when Jesus came He was rejected by some—but those who received Him...those who BELIEVED in His name...were given a life reserved ONLY for the children of God.

So, what are you going to do with John's testimony? Will you accept or reject the WORD?