

John's overview

John 1 vs 1-18

God comes
to earth

John's Gospel
starts with an
overview vs 1-18

There is a lot in
this section, so don't
be surprised that
it's going to need
some unpacking!

You might find this a surprising start!
No angels, no Bethlehem, no stable,
no baby Jesus, no wise men...

Amazing beginnings!

Start Here

Chapter 1

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 He was with God in the beginning.
- 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.
- 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.
- 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Look how often the phrase
the Word is used

What or who is
the Word?

What difference
does the Word
make for life?

- John stresses twice – **the Word** was there in the beginning.

v 1 **The Word was with God and was God.**

v 2 **The Word is a person!**

v 3 **The Word, who is God and a person, made everything.**

But John's claims for **the Word** go even further!

- v 4
- **The source of life!**
 - **The answer for life!**
 - **Eternal life!**

This makes sense if, as John has just claimed, **the Word** is our creator!

- v 5
- **2,000 years later, the light of the Word still outshines the darkness.**

The Word existed before time, before creation, before 'the beginning'!

In short... **He is eternal!**

John the Baptist is introduced and explained...

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

What had John the Baptist come to do?

He was sent by God to point to the coming of "the light". **vs 6,7**

Later in the chapter we'll see:

- He was the sensation of his day – the preacher in the wilderness.
- John the Baptist would have been all over your TV news, and trending on Twitter.
- The government and religious leaders sent people to check him out!
- But John the Baptist is not the much anticipated **Word**.

Through John the Baptist, God goes out of His way to make sure that the coming of the Word is publicly known.

We still haven't been told who the Word is...

The Word snubbed...

10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him.

11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God -

13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Who rejected
the Word?

- 'The world' v 10
- 'His own' (the Jews) v 11

Is rejection the only response?

No! Some people believed.

Look at the unique and awesome
gift for those who accept Him (v 12)

They are adopted into *His* family
Imagine being adopted into the Royal family. God offers something way bigger!

The phrase in v 12 – '**he gave the right**' – His offer comes with absolute authority.

The right for what?

v 12

To become children of God!

Who got this?

- not people born into a religious family
- not people who somehow became religious
- but people **born of God.** v 13

This is a '**right**' to a family's wealth beyond your wildest dreams! This '**Father**' is richer than a multi-trillionaire!

God's glory on earth...

What more does John
tell us about the Word?

- God comes down to earth as a man.
- John wants us to know that he was a first-hand witness to this.
- **The Word** is glorious – the Word is **God's Son!**

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.

It is surprising that the Word doesn't arrive in a whirlwind of power and might, instead John says the Word comes full of grace and truth.

Grace is all God's undeserved kindness and love freely given. Truth is the truth – absolute truth, the answer to all our searching.

So, it's God's Son but what is His name?!

The truth is out

15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, 'This is the one I spoke about when I said, "He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me."')

16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

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

Is John the Baptist the Word?

- No! He points to **the Word**, and says: 'He ... has surpassed me, because he was before me.'

vs 15, 16 Of course He is greater than John the Baptist - **the Word** is the creator God.

- God has already given grace in the Old Testament. Now we see His grace in all its fullness - in Jesus!
- God's good law with all its rules and regulations is to be fulfilled in Jesus - see **v 17**

So who is the Word?

God's Son... Jesus Christ. And He's not about rules - He brings grace and truth.

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only **Son**, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

The 'himself' is **Jesus!**
A helpful translation would be: He (Jesus) has made Him (God) known to us.

So what have we learnt about Jesus – the Word?

No wonder John concludes as he does with v 18

How does this picture fit with how you imagined Jesus?

He's a lot more than the Sunday school picture of 'Gentle Jesus – meek and mild' isn't He? John says Jesus **the Word** is the all powerful, creator God, full of grace and truth!

Summary..

- v 1 He was there from the start (in the beginning)
- vs 1, 2 He was with God
- v 1 He is God
- v 3 He made everything
- v 4 He gives life, now and forever
- vs 4, 9 He gives us understanding for life (John calls this 'light')
- vs 10, 11 He was rejected by the world and His own people (the Jews)
- v 12 To those who receive Him, He gives them the right to be part of His family
- v 14 He came to earth as a man
- v 14 John, who wrote this book, was an eyewitness to Jesus
- v 17 Jesus comes full of grace rather than earthly power
- v 17 He brings all truth

Take a moment to re-read
John's overview below:

John 1 vs 1-18

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. 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. ¹⁵ (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, "He who comes after me has surpassed me because

he was before me.") ¹⁶ Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

What comes next?

Next time we'll get a glimpse
of the life and times of John
the Baptist before Jesus
comes onto the scene.

Warm up act for a hero

John 1 vs 19-34

- **A Levite (v 19)** – he is a priest (most priests came from the family of Levi)
- **Elijah (v 21)** – it is promised in the Old Testament book of Malachi that God would send someone like Elijah (a famous Israelite prophet, around 860 BC), before the Saviour arrived.
- **The Prophet (v 21)** – the greatest Old Testament prophet, Moses, was promised that at the end of his life God would send another like him, to lead God's people.
- **The Pharisees (v 24)** – mostly local officials, who were also very religious.

Key characters
we'll meet in
this section.

John gets grilled

19 Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was.

20 He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Messiah.'

21 They asked him, 'Then who are you? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.'

22 Finally they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'

What is the importance of John the Baptist?

He is the 'link man' who prepares the way for Jesus.

- John – the hottest item on the news! News crews would have been out in the desert. What he said would have made the front page of your paper!
- The Jews have been watching for signs of the coming Saviour – understandably they wonder if John is the man.
- The government's religious leaders were sent out to quiz John:

▽ 19 'Who are you?'

▽ 21 'Are you Elijah?' ... 'Are you the Prophet?'

▽ 22 'Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us.'

Does John the Baptist want to be the centre of attention?

John had very high 'street cred', but he isn't the Saviour...

▽ 20 'I am not the Messiah'

So who is John and what is he all about?

Get ready...

²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord."'

- Isaiah was a prophet sent by God 700+ years before Jesus. He told people what would happen with the coming Saviour.
- John the Baptist uses words from Isaiah's book. He has come to prepare us for Jesus.

Such powerful imagery was not new or surprising to the people of these...

In the days of great empires, it was normal practice to create wide highways as entrances to major cities, so that a victorious leader could parade in front of his people.

What is John the Baptist telling them?

John the Baptist is urging the people to get ready – God is coming!

Isaiah 40 v 3 tells exactly of this moment 'prepare the way for the LORD... a highway for our God.'

It's not me you're looking for...

²⁴ Now the Pharisees who had been sent

²⁵ questioned him, 'Why then do you baptise if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?'

²⁶ 'I baptise with water,' John replied, 'but among you stands one you do not know.

²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

²⁸ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

What question do they ask John?

'Why are you baptizing...?' ▽ 25

John the Baptist confirms all he can do is put you under the water.

▽ 26

Back in a time of open sandals, with hot dusty streets full of roaming animals, feet washing was bad news. A job for your most lowly servant!

What shocking thing does John the Baptist say?

Jesus is so mega that John the Baptist isn't even worthy enough to untie His sandals, let alone wash His feet!

Have a look at what John adds in verse 28. All the way through the book, John gives historically accurate details as if to say, 'Go check and see if what I am saying is correct!'

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'

³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, "A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me."

This is a specific reference to Jesus' death on the cross, pointing to the fact that Jesus would die for the sin of the world.

John gives Jesus a unique title – what is it?

'The Lamb of God' ∇ 29

The key annual festival for the Jews is Passover – it's like Christmas, or Easter. On Passover night, the angel of death passed through the land of Egypt and killed the firstborn of every household, because Pharaoh would not let the Israelites leave.

The Jews were told of only one escape from this judgement. The blood of an innocent, spotless lamb was to be sprinkled around the door post. A lamb that had lived with the family, in the house for at least four days, so that particularly the eldest son bonded with it... and therefore knew that the lamb died in his place.

- The special title for Jesus is therefore a reminder of the Passover sacrifice, when the lamb took away the sin of the people and made them right with God. ∇ 29

What does John the Baptist proclaim?

∇ 29

Whose sin will Jesus take away?

The whole world! This offer is to all people everywhere, not just the Jews.

John tells us again that Jesus existed before John. Of course he did! He is the creator God from verses 1-4.

Heaven-sent King...

³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.'

³² Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.'

³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit."

What else are we told about

Jesus by John the Baptist?

The Spirit of God comes down... and stays! ▽ 32

- In the Old Testament the Spirit frequently 'fell on' God's chosen rulers and kings, but just temporarily.

The Bible makes clear that God is 3 in 1: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit.

What will Jesus, God's Spirit-filled Lamb, do?

Jesus is the Lamb who takes away our sin, so He can make us pure and spotless in God's sight – ready to be filled with God's Spirit.

No human being could do this. Only God can give of Himself.

All John can do is symbolically wash people. Jesus brings the real deal! ▽ 33

Jesus fills people with God's presence permanently (with His Spirit).

³⁴ I have seen and I testify that
this is God's Chosen One.

After the Jews have been waiting over 1000 years, John puts his neck on the line and says, Jesus is 'the Son of God!' **v 34**

Summary...

Back in chapter 1 we were told that John the Baptist would help us **'believe'**.

So what has he taught us?

- v 27** John is *only* a humble servant (remember the feet!)
- v 29** Jesus is the Lamb of God whose death will take away our sin
- v 32** Jesus is God's Spirit-filled Son
- v 33** Jesus will flood us with God's presence (the Holy Spirit)
- v 34** This is so important, get ready – Jesus is coming!

John 1 vs 19-34

¹⁹ Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. ²⁰ He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Messiah.' ²¹ They asked him, 'Then who are you? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' ²² Finally they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' ²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Make straight the way for the Lord."' ²⁴ Now the Pharisees who had been sent ²⁵ questioned him, 'Why then do you baptise if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?' ²⁶ 'I baptise with water,' John replied, 'but among you stands one you do not know. ²⁷ He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.' ²⁸ This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising. ²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, "A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me." ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.' ³² Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit." ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.'



Here's a chance to re-read what we've looked at today!



Next time:

The hero arrives...!



The hero we've been waiting for

John 1 vs 35-51

In this next section John the Baptist passes on the job of telling people about Jesus to the disciples.

What have we learnt so far?

John 1 vs 1-18

- 'The Word' is Jesus
- Jesus was with God in the beginning - He is eternal
- He made everything
- He came to earth to 'give us the right' to be adopted into His family
- Through Jesus we can know God

John 1 vs 19-34

- Jesus - the Lamb of God - has arrived
- Jesus takes away the sin of the world
- He is filled with God's Spirit
- As God, Jesus can give us God's Spirit

John the Baptist hands over...

When John the Baptist
sees Jesus, what unique
title does he give Him again?

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.

³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'

³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

He can't help himself 'Look, the Lamb of God!' **▽ 36**

With this John the Baptist makes the point Jesus is *the One*!

So John the Baptist steps off centre stage, and two of his followers become Jesus' first disciples. **▽ 37**

This is a vital point: John (the writer) wants us to know without a doubt that Jesus' disciples were eyewitnesses - there from the beginning..

Life-changing encounter...

³⁸ Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?' They said, 'Rabbi' (which means 'Teacher'), 'where are you staying?'

³⁹ 'Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.' So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

^{v 38} Notice how the disciples immediately call Jesus 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher). Even the officials of the synagogue would always call Him Rabbi!

What a life-changing day for these two disciples – meeting and staying with Jesus!

- From that day on they were with Him until He returned to heaven
- ^{v 39}
- Two of the chosen 12 apostles*

*An apostle was a chosen disciple, who was an eyewitness of Jesus.

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ).

42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which, when translated, is Peter).

Note that in v40 only one of the two is named: the other is thought to be John (The Gospel writer)... and he is clearly a firsthand witness - remember: **John 1 v 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.'

After spending the day together - what impression does Andrew have of Jesus?

Andrew puts his neck on the line with a huge claim - he's found the long-awaited Messiah and there is no doubt in his mind. **v 41**

Like John the Baptist, he can't keep it to himself!

v 42 Simon - is to be re-named Cephas/Peter. Cephas is Aramaic for rock.*

*This is fitting because Jesus will use Peter to become the foundation of the early church.

And there are more...

⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.'

⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'

⁴⁶ 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked. 'Come and see,' said Philip.

Another encounter, and there is no doubt in Philip's mind either... he too has met the Messiah!

What is behind his sarcastic question?

Nathanael needs convincing, with good reason.

Nazareth is a northern town, and was a hotchpotch of different racial and religious groups. ▽ 45

Because of the Jews' concern for religious purity, it was the last place they expected the King of the Jews to come from. ▽ 46

With confidence, Philip says, 'Come and see!'

Jesus knows everything!

How can we know

Jesus is the Messiah?

47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.'

48 'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, 'I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you.'

49 Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.'

Jesus proves Himself:

- Jesus knows Nathanael's heart – there's no deceit. **v 47**
- Incredibly Jesus knows where he's been and what he's been doing, even though Jesus wasn't there to see. **v 48**

It's enough for Nathanael!

He risks his reputation by shouting out who Jesus is!

Cont. →

What is the promise of Jesus?

'You haven't seen anything yet!'

vs 50, 51

What is Jesus on about in v 51?

Jesus is telling everyone who He is!

His audience was Jewish and they would have known the verse in the first book of the Bible, Genesis:

Genesis 28 v 12: 'He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.'

So what is Jesus saying?

- Jesus is the way to heaven!
- He bridges the gap between God and humanity.
- God's Messiah – **the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!** v 29

⁵⁰ Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You will see greater things than that.'

⁵¹ He then added, 'Very truly I tell you, you will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on" the Son of Man.'

- Whenever Jesus starts a sentence with 'Very truly I tell you...' it's always to grab our attention to a major point!
- 'The Son of Man' is a favourite name Jesus calls himself.

Take a moment to
re-read today's section



John 1 vs 35-51

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!' ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?' They said, 'Rabbi' (which means 'Teacher'), 'where are you staying?' ³⁹ 'Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.' So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which, when translated, is Peter). ⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.' ⁴⁴ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.' ⁴⁶ 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked. 'Come and see,' said Philip. ⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he

said of him, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.' ⁴⁸ 'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, 'I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called you.' ⁴⁹ Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.' ⁵⁰ Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You will see greater things than that.' ⁵¹ He then added, 'Very truly I tell you, you will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on" the Son of Man.'

Summary of Chapter 1

So - what have we learned?

- God used John the Baptist to prepare people for Jesus
- He talks about Jesus (not the church... not traditions... not sacraments!)
- John the Baptist is the link between the Old Testament and the New Testament eyewitnesses
- Jesus is:
 - **The Passover Lamb** - come to die as a sacrifice for sin
 - **The Messiah** - come as God's chosen ruler
 - **The gateway to heaven!**
 - **The Word** of verses 1-18... has become a man
- The promise in John chapter 1 vs 1-18 is now possible through Jesus - remember John 1 v 12:

John 1 v 12 'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'

What comes next?

Jesus shows His glory in a surprising way... or was it?

the Word

one to one

The Word One to One

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(reprinted 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018)

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Published by 10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com
Unit C Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England.

Email: info@10ofthose.com
Website: www.10ofthose.com

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ISBN 978-1-909611-21-4 (Pack 1 - including books 1-3)

Designed by Diane Warnes
Printed in China

10 Publishing
a division of **10**ofthose.com