

Introduction to the Gospel of John (John 1:1-2)^a

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Background

1. Written by the Apostle John

- A. Written prior to book of Revelation ~ 80-90 A.D.
- B. Written from Ephesus [Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1]
- C. Other books
 - I. 1-3 John
 - II. Revelation
- D. Died during reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117)

2. Themes

- A. Christology - nature of Jesus
 - I. Deity
 - a. Divine genealogy (John 1)
 - i. Chart [comparing gospels](#)^c
 - Genealogies (Matthew 1, Luke 2, John 1, none in Mark)
 - b. I AM (ἐγώ εἰμι - emphasized, "I, I AM")
 - i. statements, self-identification
 - the bread of life (John 6:35)
 - the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5)
 - the I AM (John 8:24,28,58 cf. Ex. 3:14)
 - the door, the gate for the sheep (John 10:9)
 - the good shepherd (John 10:14)
 - the son of God (John 10:36) - "I and My Father are one"
 - the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
 - the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)
 - true vine (John 15:1,5)

ii. Who is Jesus? Legend, liar, lunatic, or Lord?

- *Legend* - but too much historical evidence and impact
- *Liar* - but His teachings are all about truth
- *Lunatic* - made outrageous claims—unless He is divine
- *Lord* - God incarnate
- One among many great religious teachers? Not an option!
 - Either a loony or divine

II. Humanity

a. Incarnation, approachable

i. John [1:14](#)

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. (John [1:14](#))

ii. 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]. (John [1:18](#))

iii. The fulfillment of Deu. [18:15-19](#)

15 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 "according to all you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.' 17 "And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. 18 'I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. 19 'And it shall be [that] whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require [it] of him. (Deu. [18:15-19](#))

III. Response to Gnosticism

“They normally adopted a dualist philosophy, in which matter was inherently evil and only the immaterial was redeemable. Thus they denied the resurrection of the body and looked forward only to the immortality of the soul. The vast majority were ‘docetist’ (from the Greek *dokeō*, meaning ‘to seem’), believing that Jesus only seemed to be human, since a perfectly holy God could not really take on an irredeemably corrupt body. “ [Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (2nd ed.) (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2007), p. 256n45]

B. Evangelism

I. Positive/negative reactions to Christ’s signs (especially John [6](#))

II. John [20:29-31](#) - written so that you may believe

29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed [are] those who have not seen and [yet] have believed." 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.** (John [20:29-31](#))

III. The most famous (evangelistic) verse in the Bible (John [3:16](#))

IV. Believe : Matthew (9 verses), Mark (15 verses), Luke (10 verses), *John* (86 verses)

V. Repentance?

a. Gospel written so people can be saved (John [20:29-31](#))

b. John never mentions repentance (*metanoia*)

c. "Conversion is turning from evil (Acts [8:22](#); 2Cor. [12:21](#); Rev. [2:21-22](#)) to God (Acts [20:21](#); [26:20](#); Rev. [16:9](#)). In Acts [3:19](#) and [26:20](#) *metanoēō* and *epistrephō* are placed side by side; *metanoēō* describes the turning from evil and *epistrephō* the turning to God." — [Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), p. 367].

d. "[A] serious Arminian error respecting this doctrine occurs when repentance is added to faith or believing as a condition of salvation. It is true that repentance can very well be required as a condition of salvation, but then only because the change of mind which it is has been involved when turning from every other confidence to the one needful trust in Christ. Such turning about, of course, cannot be achieved without a change of mind. This vital newness of mind is a part of believing, after all, and therefore it may be and is used as a synonym for *believing* at times (cf. Acts [17:30](#); [20:21](#); [26:20](#); Rom. [2:4](#); 2 Tim. [2:25](#); 2 Pet. [3:9](#)). Repentance nevertheless cannot be added to believing as a condition of salvation, because upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only (cf. John [3:16](#); Acts [16:31](#)). Similarly, the Gospel by John, which was written that men might believe and believing have life through Christ's name (John [20:31](#)), does not once use the word *repentance*. In like manner, the Epistle to the Romans, written to formulate the complete statement of salvation by grace alone, does not use the term repentance in relation to salvation. Again, confusion over this doctrine arises when it is not made clear that covenant people such as Israel or Christians may repent as a separate act." — [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, c1948, 1976), pp. 7:265-266].

3. John vs. Peter - intimacy

A. The "disciple whom Jesus loved," 5X (John [13:23](#); [19:26](#); [20:2](#); [21:7,20](#))

I. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. (John 13:23)

B. Peter arrives first in race to the tomb (John 21:20)

C. Peter plunged into the water (John 21:7)

D. Peter: "Lord, what about this man?" (John 21:20)

E. Jesus entrusts his mother to John's care (John 19:26)

4. Upper-room discourse (John 13-17)

A. Unique (extensive section not in the other gospels)

B. Details concerning the coming of the Spirit

I. Formation of the Church

II. Only John records the preconditions for the coming of the Spirit (John 7:39; 16:7)

C. Union between believer, Jesus, and the Father

5. Synoptic gospels vs. John

A. Meaning of *synoptic*

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.¹

1. "In the beginning" (John 1:1)

A. Relationship to book of Genesis

I. "In the beginning" vs. בְּרֵאשִׁית [b^erēšîṭ] - how it would sound to the Jewish ear

II. Ἐν ἀρχῇ [En archē] (Gen. 1:1, LXX) = Ἐν ἀρχῇ [En archē] (John 1:1)

2. "was the Word" (John 1:1)

A. Identified with the creative will and action of God

I. "Then God said . . ."

a. ". . . let there be" (Gen. 1:6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26)

II. God's word is the rational expression of God's will

B. Eternality of Jesus - in the beginning

I. John 17:5 - glory shared before the world was

I [am] the LORD, that [is] My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images. (Isa. 42:8)

II. John 17:24 - You loved Me before the foundation of the world

III. Everlasting Father (Isa. 9:6)

a. Eternal Father (Isa. 9:6, NASB)

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And **His name will be called** Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, **Eternal Father**, Prince of Peace. (Isa. 9:6)

IV. Goings forth are from of old, from everlasting (Mic. 5:2, NKJV)

a. Whose origins are in the distant past (NET)

b. His origin is from antiquity, from eternity (HCSB)

V. Before Abraham, I AM (John 8:58)

3. "the Word was God"

A. The central subject of early heretical views - the nature of Christ

I. The incarnation: a radical concept - how should it be understood?

II. Born of a virgin as a human at a point in time—stepping into time, as it were

III. "The power of the Highest will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35) - was He therefore lesser in nature?

IV. The subject of early [ecumenical councils](#)^d, 325 - 680 AD

a. First Council of Nicaea (325)

b. First Council of Constantinople (381)

c. First Council of Ephesus (431)

d. Council of Chalcedon (451)

e. Second Council of Constantinople (553)

f. Third Council of Constantinople (680-681)

B. Carefully crafted Greek: “kai qeovs h'n oJ lovgos”

I. Word order and placement of definite article

- a. “qeovs” first, emphatic position stresses essence or quality: “What God was the Word was” (ontology - nature of being)
- b. “lovgos” next, with article: keeps us from identifying the person of the Word (Jesus) with the person of God (the Father)
- c. Luther: carefully steers between the errors of Sabellianism and Arianism
 - i. *Sabellianism* - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are modes/manifestations of a single being, not persons
 - ii. *Arianism* - Jesus was begotten by the Father at a point in time (not eternal), a distinct creature

4. **Claims of Jesus’ deity are widespread in the NT - some of the strongest are in John’s gospel**

[Num. 21:6; 1Cor. 10:9]; Isa. 45:23; Php. 1:10; [Isa. 49:10; Rev. 1:17-18]; Luke 1:76; Luke 22:69; John 1:1; John 5:18,23; John 8:58; John 10:30-33,38; John 12:45; John 14:1,9; John 19:7; Rom. 9:5; [1Cor. 10:9; Num. 21:6]; Php. 1:10; Isa. 45:23; Php. 1:19; Php. 2:6; Col. 2:2; 1Ti. 3:16; Heb. 3:1-6; [Rev. 1:17-18; Isa. 49:10]; Deu. 6:4; John 20:28; John 1:1,1-2

A. John 1:1

B. John 5:18

Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, **making Himself equal with God.** (John 5:18)

C. John 5:22-23

"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, "that "all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father". He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." (John 5:22-23)

D. John 8:57-59

57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, "before Abraham was, I AM". 59 Then **they took up stones to throw at Him**; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:57-59)

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Endnotes:

1. [NKJV, John 1:1-2](#)
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Sources:

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Links Mentioned Above

- a - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/John_by_Tony_Garland/001_Introduction/index.htm.
- b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- c - See http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/John_by_Tony_Garland/001_Introduction/four-gospels_chart-20180125111825.pdf.
- d - See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_seven_ecumenical_councils.
- e - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.