

A Verse-by-Verse Teaching Commentary

Gospel of John: Chapters 1–3

Eyewitness. Theologian. Beloved Disciple.

Introduction to the Gospel of John

- **Authorship & Date**

- Written by the Apostle John — the 'beloved disciple' — c. A.D. 85–95
- An eyewitness account written as theology, not biography

- **Stated Purpose**

- "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31)

- **Stands Apart from the Synoptics**

- Matthew, Mark, and Luke focus on narrative chronology; John focuses on identity and belief
- Key vocabulary: life, light, love, truth, Word, believe — each repeated with deepening meaning
- Structured around the Book of Signs (ch. 1–12) and the Book of Glory (ch. 13–21)

The Prologue: The Word Became Flesh

- **The Word (Logos) Is God**

- "In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God" (v. 1) — pre-existence, relational distinction, and full deity
- Logos bridges Jewish theology (creative Word of God) and Greek philosophy (ordering principle of the cosmos)

- **The Word as Creator & Life-Giver**

- "All things were made through him" (v. 3) — the Creator entered his own creation
- "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (vv. 4–5) — the darkness has not overcome it

- **The Incarnation**

- "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (v. 14) — eskenosen: God pitched his tent among humanity
- Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ; the Law came through Moses (v. 17)
- Jesus alone has seen the Father and makes Him known (v. 18)

John the Baptist's Testimony

● A Model of Humility

- Triple denial: 'I am not the Christ, not Elijah, not the Prophet' — self-identification as merely 'a voice' (vv. 19–23)
- "He who comes after me... the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie" (v. 27)
- Even a disciple would not untie a teacher's sandals — John places himself infinitely below Jesus

● The Lamb of God

- "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (v. 29) — one of the richest declarations in the NT
- Drawing on: Passover Lamb (Ex. 12), Suffering Servant (Isa. 53:7), daily Temple sacrifices

● The Spirit Descends

- The Spirit descends like a dove and remains on Jesus — the permanent anointing of the Messiah (v. 32)
- "This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" — surpassing all water baptism (vv. 33–34)

The First Disciples

- **Jesus' First Question: 'What Are You Seeking?'**

- Probes the deepest intention of the heart — are we seeking Jesus himself, or only what he provides? (v. 38)
- "Come and see" — the invitation of discipleship; personal discovery over theological argument (v. 39)

- **The Pattern of Witness**

- Andrew immediately finds Peter: 'We have found the Messiah' — confident declaration after one afternoon (vv. 40–41)
- Philip tells Nathanael: 'We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote' — Jesus fulfills the whole canon (v. 45)
- Philip's answer to skepticism: 'Come and see' (v. 46) — same invitation as Jesus gave

- **Jesus Sees and Renames**

- Jesus looks at Simon and renames him Peter (Rock) — seeing not only who he is but who he will become (v. 42)
- "You will see greater things than these" — true discipleship opens into ever-expanding revelation (v. 50)

The Wedding at Cana: The First Sign

● The Setting

- Jesus attends and honours a wedding — holiness does not equal joylessness; he enters ordinary human life
- "The third day" may echo the seven days of creation — a new creation is beginning

● Mary's Word of Faith

- "Do whatever he tells you" (v. 5) — Mary's final recorded words in John; the perfect posture of discipleship
- "My hour has not yet come" — from the very start Jesus is oriented toward the cross (v. 4)

● The Sign and Its Meaning

- Six stone jars of Jewish purification water → 150–180 gallons of fine wine: ritual law gives way to grace
- "The good wine until last" (v. 10) — Jesus always brings something better; the new covenant surpasses the old
- The disciples 'believed in him' — the sign's purpose is faith, not spectacle (v. 11)

The Cleansing of the Temple

● Holy Anger

- The Court of the Gentiles — the only place non-Jews could worship — had become an exploitative market
- "My Father's house" — Jesus claims unique Sonship; righteous anger against corrupted worship (v. 16)
- "Zeal for your house will consume me" (Psalm 69:9) — total, self-costly devotion to the Father (v. 17)

● The New Temple

- "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" — a riddle pointing to his death and resurrection (v. 19)
- naos (inner sanctuary) = Jesus' body; he is the new place where God's presence fully dwells (v. 21)
- The disciples only understood this after the resurrection — honest, retrospective eyewitness testimony (v. 22)

● Knowing What Is in Man

- Many believed based on signs, but Jesus 'did not entrust himself to them' — he knows the human heart (vv. 23–25)

Jesus and Nicodemus: Born Again

● Who Was Nicodemus?

- A Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin (the supreme Jewish council) — the most religious man imaginable
- Comes 'by night' — symbolic of spiritual darkness; correct conclusion about evidence, wrong response to it

● You Must Be Born Again (from Above)

- anōthen = both 'again' and 'from above' — new birth is a new beginning AND a divine origin (v. 3)
- Born of water and Spirit (Ezek. 36:25–27) — spiritual rebirth is impossible for man; it is God's act (v. 5)
- The wind analogy: the Spirit's work is real and observable, but beyond human control or comprehension (vv. 7–8)

● The Gospel in Miniature

- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him... have eternal life" (v. 16)
- Universal offer ('whoever'); singular condition ('believes'); the light has come — rejection is a choice (vv. 19–20)

The Final Testimony of John the Baptist

- **Everything Is Given from Heaven**

- "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven" (v. 27) — no rivalry, no competition
- John's influence was not his to guard; it was God's to give and withdraw as he pleased

- **Friend of the Bridegroom**

- John is the best man at the wedding — his joy is complete when he hears the Bridegroom's voice (v. 29)
- "He must increase, but I must decrease" (v. 30) — the most selfless statement in the NT; joy, not reluctance

- **The Authority of the Son**

- "He who comes from above is above all" — Jesus speaks what he has seen in the Father's presence (vv. 31–32)
- "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand" (v. 35) — universal authority flows from love
- "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" — present tense; eternal life is a now possession (v. 36)

Key Themes Established in John 1–3

Foundations for the entire Gospel

1. The Identity of Jesus

Pre-existent divine Word, fully God, agent of creation, revealer of the Father

2. The Mission of Witness

John, Andrew, Philip — all point away from themselves toward Jesus

3. The New Birth

Entry into the Kingdom requires a Spirit-initiated rebirth; human effort cannot achieve it

4. Light and Darkness

Those who come to the light receive life; those who refuse it remain under judgment

5. Signs Point Beyond Themselves

Cana and the Temple are windows into Jesus' identity and the new covenant he inaugurates

6. He Must Increase

"He must increase, but I must decrease" — the posture of every true disciple and teacher