



# Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: John 1:1-18*

### I. The Structure of John's Prologue (Jn. 1:1-18)

- **“Genesis 1-2 clearly underlies the first half of the Prologue, especially 1:1-5...The 2nd half of the Prologue (esp. 1:14-18)...clearly echoes the giving of the Law at Sinai, especially Exodus 33-34.”** [Craig A. Evans, *Word & Glory...*, p. 100]

#### A. Against the background of creation (Gen. 1:1-28; Jn. 1:1-13)

- Creation: Word, light, darkness, life

#### B. Against the background of Exodus (Exo. 25:8; Jn. 1:14-18)

- **“The last five verses of the Prologue [i.e., 1:14-18] connect John's story of Jesus with the Exodus, & specifically with the covenant God made with ancient Israel through Moses at Sinai, anchoring this presentation of Jesus firmly in Jewish history.”** [Karen H. Jobes, *John Through OT Eyes*, 41]
- **“There is a decisive shift from Genesis to Exodus imagery in the Prologue's closing paragraph (1:14-18)...This interweaving of creation themes from Genesis & redemption themes from Exodus in the prologue anticipates the more detailed narrative that follows [in John].”** [Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the 4th Gospel*, 96-7]
- **“Careful review of the imagery & context makes it clear that the giving of the Law at Sinai, particularly the 2nd giving of the Law following...the golden calf (Ex. 32), clearly lies behind the 2nd half of the Prologue (Jn. 1:14-18).”** [Craig A. Evans, *Word & Glory: On the... Background of John's Prologue*, 79]
- Exodus: Tabernacle, Moses, Law, glory

## C. 'Inclusio'

- “The primary purpose [of this Gospel] is to engender belief in the readership. This final statement [20:31] **creates an *inclusio* with the prologue**. Belief in Jesus’s name (as in 1:12–13) culminates in the believer having life in his name (20:31).” [Christopher W. Skinner, *John & Thomas—Gospels in Conflict?* 74]

## II. Light Came To Dispel Darkness & Give Life (Jn. 1:4-5, 9, 10-13; Gen. 1:3-4)

## A. Light came, shined in the darkness and brought order (Gen. 1:3-4)

- “*In Genesis 1 God spoke 10 times and each time his Word turned the dark chaos into an ordered cosmos that was full of life.*” (Tim Mackie)

## B. Jesus, the true Light, came &amp; shined in the darkness (Jn. 1:4-5, 9)

## C. Responding to Jesus gives us new life/birth (Jn. 1:10-13)

- “*John 1:12-13 is very possibly the climactic statement of the entire Prologue, and by way of ‘inclusio’ epitomises the very purpose for which the Gospel was written: for people to ‘believe’ and have life ‘in his name’ (20:31).*” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: John*, p. 38)
- “*In contrast to the people of the world, John describes some who did receive the true light & who believed in his name. [1:12]...Belief in the name means to trust in Jesus’ messianic mission...Evoking trust in Jesus’ messianic mission is also the purpose for which John writes, creating a conceptual inclusio with John 20:31.*” [Karen H. Jobes, 36]

## 1. No one recognized the light at first (v. 10)

– “*In the eyes of many people, Jesus seems too human to have come from God...They insist that he is a human being, who is wrongfully trying to elevate himself to the status of God. They reject the idea that he has come down from God to carry out the work of God in human form. This irony is central to John’s Gospel: **God reaches across the barrier that separates him from human beings** by sending his Word in human form; **yet this human form became a new barrier**, since people see only the human Jesus and cannot comprehend that he is from God (1:10-11).*” (Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel*, p. 29)

– “*The first half of John’s Gospel documents how the pagan world and Israel failed to recognize Jesus as Messiah and Saviour of the world, rejecting...all the signs pointing to his deity and Messiahship.*” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: John*, p. 36)

## 2. Many rejected the light (v. 11)

– “*In v. 11, John does not say that ‘his own’ did not know him, but that they did not receive him. **The idea is not of mere recognition, but of acceptance and welcome.***” (NET Bible)

– “Not only was Jesus not received by a world made through him, but also he was **rejected by a people specifically chosen by God as his very own** (Ex. 19:5). The picture is that of the Word **not being a welcomed guest among his own people**, the very ones who should have received him with open arms.” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: John*, p. 37)

### 3. But some received/believed in the light (vv. 12-13)

– “[Verse 12 is a **sharp contrast**] with those who did not [receive him], marking out **believers as those who ‘went against the current,’ who broke the general pattern by which the world thinks, lives, and acts.**” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: John*, p. 38)

– “[K]nowing God is more like knowing a person... **To know God through his Word is to ‘receive’ him, as one welcomes a person into one’s home (1:11).** It is to ‘believe’ in the Word, which means **trusting God himself (1:12).**” (Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel*, p. 32)

#### a) These are children of God

– “The Gospel recognizes that all people are physically begotten through the natural processes associated with blood, flesh, and human desire. **But to be begotten of God means believing in the Word of God, who gives life. Through this birth into faith, people become children of God.** All people come into being through God’s word and are related to him as creatures (1:4). Yet some people reject the Word while others receive and trust him (1:10-11).” (Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel*, p. 51)

#### b) Not due to heritage, ethnicity or effort

- The Jewish people must not presume upon their ethnic privilege
- Being a child of God is not a result of blood relations (Abraham or Moses)
- Spiritual birth must be received from God through faith in Jesus

#### c) But born of God

– “Being a child of God is neither a quality possessed by all, nor an exclusive prerogative for Israelites.; it is **an entitlement for those who believe in the word [Jesus].**” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: John*, p. 39)

## III. God Came To Dwell Among Us & Give Us Life (Jn. 1:14-17; Exo. 25:8-9)

- “The major burden is to **identify the Word explicitly with Jesus.**” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: John*, p. 40)

### A. God dwelt among his people previously in the Tabernacle (Exo. 25:8)

- *“With the Tabernacle **God is creating a space for his people to know and enjoy him**” (Arie C. Leder, *Waiting For The Land*, p. 111)*
- *“The Tabernacle is **the means for God to dwell among his people...**[T]he Lord speaks from the [Tabernacle] **to instruct his people to live sacrificial, clean, and holy lives.**” (Arie C. Leder, *Waiting For The Land*, p. 51)*

#### B. God dwelt among Israel & the disciples in Jesus (Jn. 1:14)

- *“**In John’s Gospel the flesh is not inherently evil—after all, the Word becomes ‘flesh’ (1:14; cf. 6:51-56). Rather, flesh is limited & mortal, it cannot generate the eternal life that God provides (3:15-16). The incapacity to generate eternal life characterises the human condition.**” [Craig R. Koester, “Theological Complexity...of Nicodemus...,” in Christopher W. Skinner (ed.) *Characters & Characterization in...John*, 171-2]*
- *“‘Flesh’ is a strong, almost crude way of referring to human nature. John does not say, ‘the Word became man,’ nor ‘the Word took a body.’ He chooses that form of expression which puts what he wants to say most bluntly. It seems probable that he was confronted by...people who were ready to think of Jesus...as the Christ of God but...denied the reality of his humanity. They thought of him as only appearing to live a human life. Since God could not, on their premises, defile himself by real contact with humankind, the whole life of Jesus must be appearance only, John’s strong term leaves no room for such fancies. He is clear on the deity of the Word. But he is just as clear on the genuineness of his humanity.” (Leon Morris, *NICNT: John*, p. 102)*

##### 1. The incarnation is of equal importance with creation

– *“‘The Word was made flesh’ **takes the opening statement in 1:1 one step further: that same Word now has been born as a human being...**John’s message is that **the incarnation represents an event of equal importance with creation.**” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: John*, p. 41) – Think about majestic mountains & breathtaking waterfalls, beautifully coloured birds & fish, the freshness of Spring & crisp Fall air, the immensity of the universe & the tiniest orchid. All are part of God’s good creation. They fill us with wonder & awe. What John is saying in the opening lines of his Gospel is that the incarnation is of equivalent importance, if not more. Has it become mundane to us?*

##### 2. Full of glory – God’s presence (Exo. 40:34-35)

##### 3. Full of grace – brings God’s blessings to us

##### 4. Full of truth

#### C. Responding to Jesus (Jn. 1:16-17)

##### 1. Receive God’s grace again and again

##### 2. Through Jesus

### IV. John’s Invitation (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 1:1-3)

#### A. The transcendent God wants to be known – He’s not interested in being distant & remote from us

B. Jesus reveals him whom no human eye has seen

- *“John here does not use the more common term for “to make known,” gnorizo [15:15; 17:26], but the rare expression ‘exegeomai’; found only here in this Gospel. In its Lukan occurrences (Lk. 24:35; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19), the term regularly means “to give a full account” in the sense of “telling the whole story,” the probable meaning here also...” (Andreas Kostenberger, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament: John, p. 50)*

C. John invites us to continue to discover Jesus as we keep reading