

Introduction to John

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[0 : 00] I would like you to turn in your Bibles this morning to John, the Gospel.

And follow as I begin reading. Turn in your Bibles to John and follow as I begin reading. In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God. And the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life.

And the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

[1 : 28] There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through Him. He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through Him. Yet the world did not know Him.

He came to His own. And His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him who believe in His name. He gave the right to become the children of God.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, it is our undeserved privilege to come into your presence this morning. Because of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In fact, He has bidden us to come boldly before the throne of grace. To find help in time of need.

And there is no moment in which we, as we draw breath, do not have need.

[2 : 48] And as we, this morning, open Your Word and hold it in our hands. And as I proclaim it. We have need. Your people to hear it.

With the enabling of the Spirit of God. And me to declare it. To preach it boldly and clearly. Through the power of the Spirit of God.

And Father, as we take this Word that You have given to us. Through the work of the Holy Spirit upon John the Apostle. We pray.

That that Spirit which You have given to Your children. Would quicken our hearts to hear. And to understand. And to appreciate. And to grow in our love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we ask this in Your precious name. Amen. Amen. Well, it is at a very particular juncture in my ministry that I have to say to you.

[3 : 51] I'm laying aside a favorite book. And I'm taking up a favorite book. I remember when we started into the book of Ephesians. And we concluded it last week.

I remember saying over and over again. Boy, this is the best passage. This is a phenomenal book. And you heard me say that over and over again. And some of you were probably sitting out there saying.

Do you remember the story of the little boy who cried wolf too often? And you would say. Pastor, you're going to wear us out. Saying this is the best, the best, the best.

But I take great comfort in knowing. That I am not the only pastor. Who when he comes to the text. And has been touched by the Spirit of God.

And enjoys the passage that God has given to him. He can't help but say. Man, this is the best day. This is the best passage. And this is the best book. And so as we take up the book of John.

[4 : 48] I have to tell you. It is the best book right now for me. And I trust that as you begin working your way through the book of John with me. Whether it is in your own private study.

Or in your devotional time. Or as you track the sermons. And allow the teaching of the word of God to make a difference in your heart. I trust that one of the things. Man, this is great. It is an encouragement.

It is a profound blessing. I stop and think a little bit of why I would take the book of John. For one, it is quite a few more chapters than Ephesians.

And some of you have maybe thought to yourself. Are we going to be in John for the duration? I really cannot say. I will tell you that it is my prayerful intention to take a slow start.

As we work through the profound theological statements in the first chapter or so. And then we will pick up steam as we get into the narratives. And there is a, I wouldn't say a promise.

[5 : 52] But there is an ambition that we will take some of the larger passages in a narrative fashion. And we will allow them to kind of flow out in the context in which they are set. As you look at the book of John, you may ask yourself the question, so why study it?

Why this book? And apart from the fact that it is in the New Testament and it is part of the gospels it's spoken of as the gospel of John. If you were to ask me, what is it that has brought you to this place where you are going to open up the book of John and present it to these dear, dear people that the Lord Jesus died for and redeemed and loves.

I'd have to tell you this. It is so that you and I together can grow in our affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. It says in 1 Peter, and it's one of those passages that remains as a focal point in my life, whom having not seen you love.

Do you know what? You can't love somebody you don't know. And the only way we can love the Lord Jesus Christ, first of all, is by the work of grace that brings love into our heart for him.

In 1 John chapter 4, it says we love him. Why? Because he first loved us. And he pursued me in my despicable, rebellious spirit. And he brought to me a conviction of my sin and drew me to the cross and loved me and loved me.

[7 : 19] And he has also continued to work in my heart slowly and arduously to help me grow in my love for the Lord Jesus Christ. And I trust that that is something that you are growing in.

I've said often to you that when my evening comes to a close, that I say I love you to two different sets of people or two different individuals.

One is to Judith. And I have to say that after she hits the pillow, she is about 30 seconds from La La Land. And I got to get it in pretty quickly. Because if I don't, it's just, you know, there's that soft, easy breathing that tells me what I said does not mean a thing.

But there is someone who is always on task and is waiting to hear my conversation. And the last person I talk to is the Lord Jesus Christ. And I end my evening by saying, Lord Jesus, I am so thankful that you love me.

And I want to revel and I want to rejoice and I want to enjoy the reality and the sweetness of your love for me. That never changes. That is always constant.

[8 : 24] That is firm and clear. And is the thing that I depend upon more than anything else. And so as we study the book of John, I would have to confess that my ambition is the same as the ambition with which I first came to the book of Mark.

And then to the book of Luke. And then to the book of Hebrews. And then to the book of Revelation. It was that you and I together can grow in knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. And have that knowledge end up affecting our confidence and our certainty in Him and our affection for Him.

And so as we open the book of John, if you were to ask me, why are you teaching this book? For one thing I would say is so that you who know the Lord Jesus Christ can grow in loving Him.

But there is another reason and it is given to us by John the Apostle himself. And we are going to come back to it again and again this morning. I want you to turn in your Bibles if you will.

If you are in John chapter 1. I just read that to kind of frame the beginning of the book. But I want you to look at John chapter 20 verse 30 and 31. Often authors tell you at the beginning, kind of in an introductory fashion, how they are going to go about the book they are going to write.

[9 : 44] John does it at the end. And in John chapter 20 verse 30, he says this, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book.

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. I would encourage you to underline that.

You see, John is telling us at the end, I am writing this book so you can have adequate information to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ so that you can have life.

Several weeks ago, I got one of those interesting calls that more often than not come in the spring. Around March and April, it seems that they happen on a very regular basis.

And I'll get a call and Connie will send it through to me. And there's usually a girl on the end of the phone, a young girl somewhere in her 20s and 30s. And she will say to me, Oh, pastor, I would like to talk to you about whether or not you will do a wedding for people who are not members of your church.

[10:58] When a person says that, it usually tells me that they've made enough calls that they have been through the routine a little bit. And so they kind of cut to the chase. And I'll say, I am so glad you called.

We at Maranatha counted an absolute privilege to be part of helping a young man and a young woman build their lives on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I'm glad you called. In the course of conversation, it ended up being quite evident that this young lady really did not have much understanding about the Lord Jesus at all.

When I asked him, so why would you want to be married at Maranatha? Because I don't think I remember your name. No, we've never been there. Well, I'm glad you called. But why would you want to be married at Maranatha?

We're just looking for a church. I said, oh, okay. Well, where do you go now? I mean, that's a logical question, isn't it? There have been people that have wanted to be married here because their church is a little church of 40 or 50.

[11:58] Or maybe they're meeting in a warehouse somewhere. You know what? By the way, the place has irrelevance to the issue of what the church really is. It's not a building. It's people. And she said, well, I happen to see the church on the web, and I think it's beautiful.

Oh, I like it. You saw the church on the web? Yeah. Well, actually, what the building is is not the church. The church is God's people. And in the course of conversation, I ended up having an opportunity to talk to this young lady about the Lord Jesus Christ and share the gospel with her. And as we were making our way through that conversation, the girl broke down, began to cry. She said, I can't believe it.

No one has ever talked to me about these things before. And I was hurt. Do you follow that? I wasn't the first church she had called.

And I said, you have to believe, you have to understand that it's fair to expect a pastor to want to talk about Jesus when you happen to call.

[13:10] Does that make sense? As our conversation played on, I could tell that her interest in spiritual things was piqued.

But she had this lingering concern that maybe the young man that she was going to marry really didn't have much interest in the faith. Do you follow that? And one of the things that I have learned over the years is that pressing prematurely for a decision doesn't work.

You can get people to say yes just to get rid of you. But that has nothing to do with the work of God and drawing a person to salvation. And so I remember saying to her as we kind of brought the conversation towards the end, I said, well, hey, what about this?

Why don't you get your Bible? Do you have one? Yeah, I do. And I want you to read the gospel of John. I want you to read John. And as you are reading through the gospel of John, I want you to keep on asking yourself just a couple questions.

Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? I said, the book of John is all about Jesus. And so as you are reading through the gospel of John, I want you to keep on asking yourself this question.

[14:29] Who is Jesus? And what is Jesus to me? What is Jesus to me? Who is Jesus to me? Now, I bring that by way of introduction to tell you that out in the track rack are little gospels of John.

Now, can anybody think of why we would do this? As we are working through the book of John, the gospel of John, what I'm going to encourage you to do is think about getting some copies of the gospel of John.

And we're not going to do memory work at this point. We're going to be mobile track racks. You got it right there in the pocket? Now, I don't want you to do drive-by johnnings.

You know, it's like fling them out the window. So, I shouldn't say this, but I will. When I was a boy, there are many things I can't tell you about when I was a boy, but this one I can, I think.

When I was a boy, we would pass out tracks in India. It was called mobile literature methodology.

[15:38] And as we were going through a village, you know, cars were rare issues in India where I grew up in those days. And when our little old sedan would roll through the town, we would roll down the window and guess what we would do with the tracks?

Does anybody have an idea? We would allow the slipstream of the car as it was, you know, to kind of bring the tracks out. They were single slicers, you know, and just drop them out the window. And there we go. I gave 100 tracks. You know, we're not going to be doing that with these. They happen to cost about a dollar a piece. So I want you to be well advised that when you hand out one of them, it's something to be done prayerfully, thoughtfully, with a little bit of backup to it.

But I want to encourage us to be people who take advantage of the book of John to make a difference in the lives of people, right? Let's go over the passage again.

It says this. These are written so that you may believe and have life. And as we work our way through the book of John, one of the things that I trust happens is that you who know John or know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, have your lives encouraged and strengthened by the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ and your heart is touched and encouraged by him.

[17:01] And those of you that are sitting here this morning that may not know Christ as your personal Savior, you may be sitting here. And the truth of the matter is you have grown up with all the vocabulary.

How many of you realize you can grow up in a Christian home? You can have gone through a Juana. You could have memorized all the verses. You could have even been a Sunday school teacher in some environments. And the truth of the matter is you've never come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you're sitting here this morning and in the course of our studies in the book of John, if the Spirit of God convicts you that the reality of the matter is that you really don't know Christ as your personal Savior, I trust today will be the day of conversion of salvation.

So as you look at the gospel of John, I want you at the outset to understand some of the differences that John has from any others of the gospel so that you have a little bit of background and a little bit of foundation with you.

So let's understand, first of all, the uniqueness of John. I want you to in one way recognize that John is no different than any other book in the Bible.

[18:11] What I mean by that is that it was given by divine inspiration. The Holy Spirit worked on the heart of John the Apostle. And when he wrote it, he wrote it in some ways for exactly the same reason as every other author in writing the scriptures.

Namely, that all scripture, revelation given to us by God, is designed to declare and to make plain the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Savior of the world.

So in one sense, we could say that all of scripture is Christocentric. It brings to us the picture of Christ Jesus our Savior. While all of scripture has that common theme, different authors were tasked with different responsibilities in displaying the nature and character of our Savior.

A lot of the Old Testament in particular is narrative. And it relies upon stories to give us kind of the larger picture of God at work and redeeming his people, whether it is bringing promise to Abraham and through him, the Messianic line, or whether it is bringing his people out of Egypt, whatever it is, we see the picture of God at work in the process.

And those historical counts are important, but they are not the distillation that we have in the Gospels. And when we talk about the Gospels, we're talking about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

[19:36] Three of the four Gospels are called synoptic. Okay? And the word synoptic actually means to see together. Optic being what?

Ocular, you know, eyeball. So the optic part means seeing sin together. We see it together. And in essence, what we have in the synoptic Gospels, that's Matthew, Mark, Luke, we have a lot of information that is relatively similar when you are studying in Matthew.

In many cases, when you want to get a little further insight on the particular incident or the story that is being told, you can turn to one of the other Gospels and you'll find companion passage that kind of fleshes it out, gives you greater detail.

That is not at all the case when we come to the book of John. John is profoundly different. And as we saw in John chapter 20, verse 30 and 31, John says right up front, there's a lot that could be said about Jesus.

But there's just a certain amount that he has chosen. In fact, I want you to recognize that John actually zeros in on only 21 days of Christ's earthly ministry.

[20:54] That's not very much. He lived, if you are to track through Matthew, Mark, and Luke, he lived for about 33 years. He was born, grew up. We know nothing about that part of his life.

And then began his public ministry around 30 and concluded it on the cross. It's interesting that John deliberately chose to not include most of the detail that we find in the synoptics.

There are no parables. Can you imagine that? There are no parables in John. In fact, John does not include Christ's birth, his baptism, or his ascension.

We don't find any detail of those facts in the book of John. There are only 10 percent, there is only 10 percent of the material in John that matches up to the rest of the synoptic gospels.

On the other hand, while John doesn't tell us much of the detail that we have in the synoptics, John, on the other hand, is the one that gives to us the clearest picture of Christ being the Son of God divinity.

[22 : 01] John is the only one who speaks of the wedding feast. He is the only one who speaks of Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the raising of Lazarus. You can imagine that the raising of Lazarus would be one of those miracles that would have a lot of oomph in all of the New Testament.

Can you understand that? I mean, here, Jesus raising someone from the dead, Lazarus in particular. John is the only one who makes reference to it. Furthermore, John is the only one who gives us a direct statement in which Jesus announces that he is God.

Now, that's pretty interesting, isn't it? Think about this. We base our faith upon the reality that Jesus Christ is actually God himself, God the Son.

And yet, John is the only place where there is a direct statement about Christ saying, I am he. Let's look for a moment so we can catch that passage and turn in your Bible over to John 4, verse 26.

John 4, verse 26. Let me set the context for you a little bit and remind you that here we are dealing with Jesus as he is going through Samaria and he stops at a well to get a drink.

[23 : 17] And as he is there at the well, he ends up in conversation with the woman. And you remember the woman hears Jesus talk about living water and she says, I'd like some of that.

And Jesus says, well, go bring your husband. Now, why do you think Jesus brought that up? What was Jesus' intention with this woman?

What do you think? Now, here's the end of the story. He was working to draw her to salvation. Isn't that right? So when he asked that question, go bring your husband, what was his actual purpose? It was to bring, can anybody say it? Conviction. Can there be conversion without conviction? What's the answer? No. No. You have to have the bad news before you have the good news.

If, according to what we hear said today, we're all just pretty wonderful people and we're getting there anyway, there's no need for Jesus. The reason we need the Lord Jesus Christ is because we're sinners and we stand condemned before a holy God.

[24 : 22] And God sent his son, the Lord Jesus, to be the payment for our sins, to be a sacrifice in our place. Jesus says to the woman, hey, go bring your husband.

She says, I don't have one. He says, you're right. You've had five of them. And the man you're shacking up with right now, he's not your husband. And the woman dodges it.

She says, oh, I can see you're a prophet. Well, you're right. I'm more than that. Anyway, here we go to John chapter 4, verse 26. Jesus said to her. And anyway, verse 25. The woman said to him, I know that Messiah is coming.

He was called Christ. When he comes, he will tell us all things. Now, she had heard him tell her all things. Am I right? She had heard Jesus say, you're a sinner, fundamentally.

And so we find there in verse 26, Jesus said to her, I who speak to you, what? Am he. That is pretty clear.

[25 : 21] John gives us a clear, persuasive picture of who the Lord Jesus Christ is. So John is unique in that very little of what we find in the synoptics is actually in John.

John comes at it differently. So let's understand the value of John. The gospel of John really serves as a perfect illustration of what distinguishes Scripture from all other sources of information.

Scripture, and John in particular, aims to do more than just inform. Can I say that slowly? Scripture is different from all other sources of information in that Scripture doesn't aim just to inform.

I'm not up here just to tell you facts. I am up here to persuade you of the glory of Christ and cause you to be a worshiper that delights in him or a sinner who is convicted and drawn to the cross.

Do you understand that? Preaching says this is Jesus and he deserves your praise and your adulation and you are to be convinced and convicted of his glory.

[26 : 37] John presents evidence that leads to faith that brings eternal life. I want you to have that fixed in your mind.

Go back again, if you will, as we think of this, to John chapter 20, verse 31. John chapter 20, verse 31.

That string, evidence, faith, life, are three words that kind of give you an overview of the operating principle of all of John.

As you are reading through the book of John, you are being exposed to evidence that is designed to bring you to faith so that you may have life.

And I want you to think with me just for a moment of how that plays out in the life of the woman at the well. Will you stop and think with me just? And we'll just do this by way of memory. I'm assuming that most of you know the story of the woman at the well.

[27 : 44] Okay? Samaritan woman, there she is. She's a sinner. Jesus exposes, he shows evidence of his deity. Number one, he tells her things about herself that nobody else had reason to know.

And she says, well, I get it. You're somebody special. He says, well, let's take it a little further. I am God. And she is convinced of that. She comes to faith and she goes into town.

And what does she do? I love what she does. She runs into town and she says, come see the man who told me all about me. Listen to me. I want you to think about this.

When we come to faith, the facts of our past, though we don't tromp out all the dirty details, the facts of our past are part of the story that makes him the hero.

How many of you understood what I just said? He is the one who is the one who receives glory and adoration for the fact that he saved a miserable sinner. Now, you don't have to give all the dirty baggage.

[28 : 46] But the fact of the matter is, is he is the one who saved you. And so as you look at John, you understand that here throughout this gospel, we are going to see the apostle over and over again exposing us to the reality of the information of who Jesus is to bring us to faith that we might have life.

Every step, every step of the journey that we're going to take through this book of John will challenge us to consider Christ and say, that is the Messiah. That is my Savior. That is the one I'm trusting in.

Or whether or not you're going to back off and say, well, I'm not interested. I'm not, I don't care about who he is. From the beginning to the end of the book of John, every time we open this book, we are going to be put on the spot of choosing to believe or to deny who Jesus is.

Think with me just for a moment. The opening lines that I read to you this morning in the beginning was the word and the word was God and the word was with God and the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we beheld his glory, the glory of what? That's our Savior. And John is telling us that so that we who sit here can have the hair go back up on the back of our neck and we can think that's my Jesus.

[30 : 03] That's who I'm believing in. And I'm going to see him someday. Do you follow that? You work your way through and you deal with a Samaritan woman and you stop and you are in awe that Jesus would take the time to sit down at a well and talk with a woman.

And you think he did that for me. He found me in my misery and my despair. He took the time to talk to me. He took the time to help me understand what a sinner I am.

And he was the one who gave me salvation through his blood. You go into John chapter 6. That long extended passage in which John declares that Jesus taught and said, I am the bread of life. Whosoever eats of me shall have life. And remember how the disciples responded? Most of them left. It was a hard saying. Hey, listen to me.

Gospel preaching sometimes has hard things to say. Do you realize that? But at the end of the day, those who know Christ are drawn to the truth.

[31 : 16] And remember what Peter said? Are you guys leaving? Jesus says. He says, well, where are we going? Nobody else is it. You have the words of life. In John chapter 14, he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No man comes to the Father but by me. I am appalled today when I hear people talk about, well, there's just so many different ways to get to heaven. That's not true. Jesus did not come because there are a lot of different ways.

He came because it's only through him that salvation is to be had. I love John chapter 20. And here is Jesus dealing with that doubting Thomas.

Remember, Thomas says, well, I'm not going to believe unless I can put my finger inside. And Jesus shows up. And what does Jesus do? Come here, Thomas. Put your finger in my hand. And go ahead and put your hand up into where the spear point went. And you know what? Thomas says, my Lord and my God.

[32 : 19] Let's come back again. The book of John gives us information to bring us to faith, to give us life. Information to bring us to faith, to give us life.

And so this morning, as you are thinking about that, the evidence that brings faith, that brings life, I'd have to ask you a very practical question.

Some of you I've known for almost 28 years. Others of you, I'm seeing you today for the first time. And you know what I do not know is this. I do not know the certainty of your eternal destiny.

Do you follow that? But I know this. Jesus came to take all the questions away. He came that you might have life. And life is had by, first of all, being convicted of the reality of your sin and the desperation of your condition apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because here's what the Bible says. It says the wages of sin are what? Death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[33 : 34] And this morning, I guess the question is this. What will you do with the truth of his coming and his offer of salvation? See, the purpose of preaching is to make it clear that Christ Jesus is the Savior of the world.

And that he came to deal with the desperate condition that we are in on our own, apart from God, entirely unable to save ourselves. Deceived by Satan to think that our effort, our standing is dependent upon all those good little things we've done.

No. There is none righteous, no, not one. And salvation belongs only to those who believe in the finished work of Christ, who died in my place and died in your place and has satisfied the judgment of God against sinners.

And faith brings us to say, yes, Jesus, I am a sinner who stands justly condemned before the throne. And yet I know Jesus died in my place and I claim his death and his blood for my life.

You know what Jesus does when he hears that prayer? He answers it. He grants salvation. And so as we close this morning, let me appeal to you.

[34 : 57] Have you put your head down just for a moment where you sit. And I want you to ask yourself a question quietly. What are you going to do with the truth of Jesus? He came into the world to be the Savior of the world.

He came because mankind stood justly condemned before a holy God. And my question to you is this. Have you truly believed in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?

Or is he just a historical fact? And really when you get to heaven, you think you're going to be able to stand before God and say, hey, by the way, I was a really good person. No.

There is none righteous, no, not one. And my question to you this morning where you sit is, do you know Christ as your personal Savior? Have you trusted in his finished work alone for your salvation?

If you've never come to that place, I would plead with you right now where you sit, humble yourself enough just to slip your hand up and say, I need Christ as my Savior.

[35 : 56] I need salvation for the burden and the darkness of my soul. If you're here and you need that, would you slip up your hand and say, that's me. That's me.

Father God, I pray that you would work in the hearts of those who are here that know the Lord Jesus Christ, that their hearts would revel in the sweetness of the truth that he is their Savior.

Work in the hearts of those that do not know Christ to give them no rest and no peace until they confess their sins and believe on Christ in whom alone is salvation. We ask this in your precious name.

Amen. I'm going to ask that the candidate for baptism comes. And as our band is leading us in our closing song, we'll prepare for baptism.