

JESUS IS GOD

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

The Gospel of John was authored by the "disciple that Jesus loved" - Jn 21:7. According to historical and Scriptural evidence, this Gospel was probably written between 85 and 95 A.D. It is unique in many ways when compared to the synoptic gospels, but especially in its emphasis on the deity of Jesus Christ. John indicated that the divine purpose in writing this Gospel was for the salvation of men's souls - Jn 20:30-31. The contents of the book can be categorized by Jesus Christ's ministry:

- I. Jesus Christ's Public Ministry — 1:1-12:50
- II. Jesus Christ's Private Ministry — 13:1-17:26
- III. Jesus Christ's Paschal Ministry — 18:1-21:25

Who is Jesus? He is not merely another man, or the highest of God's creation, He is the Creator of all things; He is God - Jn 1:1-3. Even though Jesus is God, He is not God the Father; He is the eternal Son of God, equal to His Father in essence, but under His Father in authority. When His Father sent Him to earth to redeem fallen mankind, He obeyed, gave up His glory as God, became a man and "dwelt among us" - Phil 2:6-7; Jn 1:14. Jesus Christ became the unique God-man; He is "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" - Col 2:9. After His death and resurrection, He became the mediator between God and man - Phil 2:8-11; 1 Tim 2:5. He has ushered in a new dispensation of grace and truth - Jn 1:17.

John the Baptist prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ and thus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 40:3; Jn 1:23). John the Baptist testified that Jesus truly is the Son of God (Jn 1:34). The decision of John's disciples to follow Jesus is told in 1:35-51.

The central idea of this lesson is the deity of Jesus Christ. Three areas of evidence in John 1 testify that Jesus Christ is God.

I. John the Apostle Testified of Jesus' Deity — 1:1-18

A. In Relation to God — 1:1-2

1:1 — "In the beginning was the Word" - John's first statement declares the Word is eternal. Christ is the Word (1:14), He was in the beginning, so He always existed as the Son of God.

"Was with God" — This shows Christ's equality with God. He is equal to His Father in essence, but He is subject to His Father in authority. He is distinct from His Father as a person, but He has always had fellowship with Him - cf. v. 2.

"Was God" — Christ's essence is God. He is fully human and fully God. Paul wrote, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:9).

B. In Relation to Creation — 1:3

1:3 — Christ was the Creator of all things - cf. Heb 1:2; Col 1:16-17; therefore, it is not possible that He was created by His Father as some believe. He was appointed, not created, by His Father to create all things.

C. In Relation to Man — 1:4-18

1. Jesus is the Life and Light — 1:4-5

1:4 — Christ is the source of all life, physical life and spiritual life in this context. His spiritual life gives spiritual light (insight and understanding) to those who accept Him as their Savior. Christ offers life to those who are dead in sin and gives light on how they should live this life.

1:5 — "Light. . . darkness" - The spiritual understanding ("light") that comes from knowing Christ conquers the moral depravity ("darkness") inherent in a person's sinful condition.

"Comprehended" — This word also can be translated "apprehended" or "seized." The context demands a strong word to show that darkness is seeking to seize the light that Christ gives to believers and put it out, but it is unable to do so.

2. John gave witness to the Light — 1:6-8

1:6 — "A man sent from God" - John the Baptist was divinely commissioned and sent to be the forerunner of Christ - Isa 40:3.

1:7-8 — "Witness" - The ministry of John the Baptist was to be a witness of the Light (Jesus Christ) so that sinners could believe Him and be saved. Since verse 8 clearly states that John was not that Light, it must be refuting some false teaching saying he was that Light.

3. Sinners reacted to the Light — 1:9-13

1:9 — "True Light" - Jesus Christ was the genuine Light. He is not a reflection, but the actual Light.

"Which lights every man" — This can be interpreted in two ways and both make good sense. (1) Every person receives the light of reason and conscience from Christ through his natural birth - Rom 1:19-20. However, this light is not enough to save him from his sins. (2) Every person who receives the true Light coming into the world is given spiritual understanding through his second birth. This latter interpretation fits the context better.

"Comes into the world" — This phrase can modify "man" (KJV), but it seems superfluous to say it, since all men come into the world. Or, it can modify "Light," which harmonizes with the thought in verse 11, "He came unto His own," and this makes better sense.

1:10 — "World" - The people that Christ had created were so blinded by their sin that they did not even recognize Him when He came to them.

1:11 — "He came to His own" - "Own" in this case is neuter and refers to Christ's place or home. He came to the land or nation of Israel.

"His own received Him not" — "Own" in this case is masculine and refers to Christ's people, the Israelites, but they rejected Him.

1:12 — "As many as received Him" - Not everyone rejected Christ. Some Israelites and some Gentiles did receive Christ.

"Power" — "Authority." Jesus Christ gives authority to those who receive Him, to become the children of God.

"Sons of God" — It is better to translate it, "children of God."

"Believe on His name" — This is an explanation of what it means to receive Him as stated earlier in the verse. "Name" refers to the whole Person of Jesus Christ and all that He stands for.

1:13 — "Not of blood" — The new birth does not come as a result of physical descent. Christian parents are not able to produce Christian children by natural birth. Jewish people could not count on their Jewish ancestry to make children of God.

"Nor of the will of the flesh" — A person does not have the will power in his or her flesh to produce the new birth. It is not by good works.

"Nor of the will of man" — Children of God are not made by the desire of godly parents or by friends, even if they live a godly life before them and tell them the Gospel message.

"But of God" — Spiritual children are produced only by God according to His plan of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

4. Jesus revealed the glory of God — 1:14-18

1:14 — "Word was made flesh" - God the Son became a human being.

"Dwelt among us" — Lit., "pitched a tent among us." It would have been very meaningful for Israelites to hear it said this way when they recalled how God dwelt with their forefathers in a tent in the wilderness. Christ lived temporarily among the people He had made.

"We beheld His glory" — This seems to be a reference to Christ's transfiguration when John and two other disciples saw his glorified body, the glory He had laid aside in Heaven to be a man - Mark 9:2-8.

"Only begotten" — The Greek word means "one of a kind," or "unique." Jesus Christ was the unique Son of the Father. Angels could be called sons of God by creation, but this Son was unique because He is the eternal Son of God and is equal to God being "in the bosom of the Father" - cf. 1:18.

"Full of grace and truth" — Jesus Christ fully expressed God's compassion and favor to sinners with absolute truthfulness about their sin. In so doing, He was sought after by those in desperate need, but was rejected and hated by those that felt no need and loved their sin.

1:15 — "Preferred before me" - Even though Christ's ministry began after that of John the Baptist, John clearly declared that Christ was preferred before him.

"He was before me" — John gives the reason for Christ's preference before him; it was due to His preexistence and His rank of first place. No one is before Christ or has a higher rank than He has.

1:16 — "His fullness" - Believers receive the fullness of Christ's grace and truth - cf. 1:14.

"Grace for grace" — In modern English this phrase could be expressed as grace following grace. When one supply of God's goodness has been exhausted another source of His goodness will be provided.

1:17 — "Moses . . . Jesus Christ" - Moses gave us God's law, which represents the dispensation under the old covenant made at Sinai, while Christ gave us God's grace, which represents the dispensation under the new covenant established at Calvary. Christians live by Christ's grace, not by Moses' law. The law is needed to reveal our sins, but it cannot save us.

1:18 — "No man has seen God" - No one can see God in His full glory and live. Moses could see only His back and others could see theophanies, but only His Son could see Him.

"Only begotten Son" — Christ is the unique Son (cf. 1:14) that has revealed His Father to us.

"In the bosom of the Father" — This speaks of the love and intimacy between the Father and His Son. They share the same divine nature and always have lived together.

"He has declared Him" - Jesus Christ's words and life have revealed to us exactly who the Father is.

II. John the Baptist Testified of Jesus' Deity — 1:19-36

A. Interrogation of John — 1:19

1:19 — "The Jews" - This is a title for the religious authorities in the book of John, i.e. the Sanhedrin. They sent messengers to inquire of John about his preaching (Mt 3:5) and baptizing (1:25). They felt it was their duty to check on the religious teachers and preachers in the country to see that no error was propagated among the people. However, they did not recognize the sin and wickedness in their own lives.

B. Admission of John — 1:20-23

1:20 — John denied that he was the Christ, that is, the Messiah.

1:21 — Furthermore, he was not Elijah (cf. Mal 4:5), even though he did come in the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Lk 1:17; cf. Mt 11:14; 17:10-13); nor was he that Prophet (cf. Deut 18:15, 18). That "prophet" was identified in a variety of ways by the Jews, but the correct identification is Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22-23; 7:37).

1:23 — He said he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" Notice the full text of Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (Isa 40:3). The "Lord" in John is clearly identified as "LORD" (Yahweh or Jehovah) in Isaiah, which indicates that Jesus is Yahweh or God - Deut 4:7; 6:4; Ps 18:31; 91:2. Also, "LORD" is parallel to "God" in this verse. John the Baptist clearly testified that Jesus is God, when he called him Lord.

C. Mission of John — 1:24-28

1:24-26 — John came to preach repentance (Mt 3:1-2) and to baptize with water those who did repent as a sign of their decision (Acts 19:4).

1:27 — John was keenly aware of the greatness of Jesus Christ and so there was no false humility when he felt unworthy to do the most menial task for Him.

1:28 — "Bethabara" - This has been identified as Bethany on the other side of the Jordan River where John was baptizing believers who had repented of their sins.

D. Testimony of John — 1:29-34

1:29 — Christ was announced by John the Baptist to be the Lamb of God - cf. Isa 53:7. This signifies that John understood the suffering and sacrifice Jesus would have to endure for sinners.

1:30 — Christ's superior rank and preeminence are repeated several times in this chapter - 1:15, 27.

1:31 — John did not know for certain that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ), but he knew that God sent him to baptize those that repented.

1:32-33 — God told John that he would know the Christ (Messiah) when the Spirit would descend and rest on Him. This happened when John baptized Jesus (Isa 11:2; 42:1).

1:34 — John boldly identified Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

E. Followers of John — 1:35-36

1:35-36 — These two verses form a transition from John the Baptist's ministry to Jesus Christ's public ministry. The two disciples were Andrew and probably John, since he rarely identified himself by name in any of his writings.

III. Disciples of John Testified of Jesus' Deity — 1:37-51

A. Andrew and John — 1:37-42

1:39 — "Tenth hour" - John seems to reckon time by the Roman system, so this would be 10 a.m. John remembered the very hour that he met Jesus about sixty years later.

1:41 — "He first found his own brother" - Andrew first told his discovery of the Messiah to his brother, Simon (Peter). This is a good principle to follow for witnessing: tell the good news to the family first.

1:42 — "Cephas" — This refers to Peter, the Aramaic word for "stone" (*petros* in Greek).

B. Philip and Nathanael — 1:43-51

1:43-45 — Jesus found Phillip and said, "Follow Me." Philip found Nathaniel and told him that they had found the One that Moses wrote in the law about the Messiah. Another good

principle for witnessing is to tell one's friends about Jesus Christ. (Nathanael is probably the same man named Bartholomew in the Synoptic Gospels.)

1:46 — When Nathanael heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, he was unimpressed. Nazareth was not known for anything good. It was a poor town that was not even mentioned in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Philip persisted and invited Nathanael to come with him and see Jesus for himself.

1:47-49 — "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him" - Jesus graciously greeted Nathaniel as an Israelite with no guile. Nathaniel asked how Jesus knew him. Jesus answered by saying that He saw him under the fig tree before Philip called him. Jesus' answer quickly dispelled his doubts and he perceived Him to be the "Son of God" and the "King of Israel."

1:50-51 — When Nathaniel believed Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus promised that he would see even greater things. He would see Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man. When will this happen? The angels will be messengers between God in Heaven and His Son on earth when He reigns as King over Israel and all nations in His Millennial Kingdom. Nathaniel and all believers will see angels ascending and descending on the Son of man when they reign with Christ in His Kingdom - Rev 3:21.