

## **Behold Your God**

**John 1:1-18**

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Tonight we begin a gospel, so I want to introduce the gospels. The New Testament starts with four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Now, the first three gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—are known as synoptics. The word “synoptic” means to see together. Pretty much, Matthew, Mark, and Luke look at the life of Jesus Christ in more of chronological order—it’s not quite so thematic but is more chronological—and they cover more as a biography of the life of Jesus Christ, but John’s gospel is altogether different than these first three.

In the gospels, we basically have Christ presented in Matthew as “Behold your King.” If you haven’t seen that, it’s important that Matthew has a Jewish focus and emphasis. Matthew is basically saying, “Behold your King.” All through the gospel of Matthew, you find the repeated phrase, “...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken...by the prophet, saying,” so he goes back to the Old Testament and helps us to see that Jesus is the promised Messiah. The gospel of Mark is focusing more on the Roman mind or culture. The gospel of Mark says, “Behold the Servant.” Matthew says, “Behold the King,” and Mark says, “Behold the Servant,” writing to the Roman mind and culture of the time. The key word there is “immediately” or “straightway.” It’s a very fast-moving, fast-paced gospel. Luke does kind of have a little different flavor from Matthew and Mark, even though it is the third synoptic. In Luke’s gospel, he says, “Behold the Man.” In Matthew, “Behold the King;” Mark, “Behold the Servant;” and Luke says, “Behold the Man. His emphasis is to the Greeks—to the Greek mind or Greek culture. It’s the gospel that has so many of the parables contained in it.

When you come to John’s gospel, as we have tonight, basically John says, “Behold your God,” and that’s our theme that will be running through our series through this gospel of John. So, Matthew, “Behold your King,” and it’s Jewish; Mark, “Behold the Servant,” its focus is Roman; Luke, “Behold the Man,” and it’s written to the Greeks who wanted to deify man or perfect man, so it’s written to the Greek culture; then John’s gospel, the fourth gospel, breaks away and is “Behold your God,” and it is universal. I don’t want to forget that. It’s universal. It’s not written specifically to the Jewish, Roman, or to the Greek mind. It’s actually inclusive or universal. We have John 3:16, we all know it so well. Some of the most famous verses in the Bible are in the gospel of John, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” and Jesus dealing with Nicodemus and the teaching there on being born again.

There are three key words to understanding the gospel of John. There are really several key words, but I tried to simplify it and reduce them to three. They are the words: signs, belief, and life. The whole gospel revolves around these three key words—signs, belief, and life. Signs speak of the fact of something that is a revelation of God. We’re going to see in just a moment there are seven miracles in the gospel of John called signs. They are called signs because they are pointing to something, and they are pointing to the deity of Christ. The word belief is

the reaction that ought to be invoked from the result of seeing the sign or the miracle. So, there's the miracle and then the response is either to belief or not. Some have themed the gospel of John the gospel of belief, and it's actually the gospel of unbelief or belief. The third key word, life, is the result of that belief that you have in the revelation of God. So, there is God revealed in the signs, there is the reaction of belief and trusting that Jesus is the Son of God, and then the result is that it brings eternal life. There are another kind of a combination of words that some hone in on the gospel of John, that is, the word life and light. We're going to see it in the prologue tonight.

I want you to keep your place here in this first chapter because that's going to be our study tonight, but turn with me to John 20:30-31. John actually tells us why he wrote his gospel. He has the built-in information for us as to why he wrote his gospel. He has a stated purpose, and it's in John 20:30-31. It says this, "And many other signs," there's that word, "truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written," he's telling us why he wrote the specific signs in his gospel, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." In that kind of an explanation of why he wrote, you have the signs, the belief, and the life.

Let me just break this down, and I'm resisting the temptation to just teach on these two verses the whole night. I want to get back to chapter one, but you might want to write down these notes. The gospel of John is selective. It's not just a biography about Jesus, it's selective—there are seven signs or seven miracles. It says in there in verse 30, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book." There are many many miracles recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and they record a lot of the same miracles that aren't recorded for us in the gospel of John. Now, this is what I've always found to be fascinating, if you haven't seen this before, the gospel of John is basically laid out around seven miracles. Now, some add an eighth miracle after His resurrection being the catch of fish or the fishes filling the nets on the Sea of Galilee (John 21), but it's really seven miracles. Let me mention them for you. There's the turning of water into wine, we get that in John 2; the healing of the nobleman's son, we'll get that in John 4; the healing of the impotent man, John 5; the feeding of the five thousand, we get that in John 6; there's the walking on water, John 6 as well; the healing of the blind man, John 9, which is so amazing; and the seventh is in John 11, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. There are only two miracles of the seven that are recorded in the other gospels, and they are the feeding of the five thousand and when Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee.

It's interesting that the feeding of the five thousand is actually in all four of the gospels, but the gospel of John is definitely unique. I love what Graham Scroggie said in his introduction to the Bible. He said, "The moment we pick up John's gospel, we are aware that it's different from the others. There is no genealogy, no manger scene, no boyhood, no baptism, no temptation, no Mount Transfiguration, no Gethsemane. There are only a few special miracles chosen by John as signs. We have the famous "I Am" sayings of Jesus, and many discourses found nowhere else. There are no scribes, no lepers, no publicans, no demoniacs. There are no parables," which is interesting, "there almost seems as if others have pointed out that John sits with a

copy of Luke's gospel open before him, deliberately leaving out things Luke puts in, putting in things that Luke leaves out. This gospel has been called the most profound book ever written," and I concur. It doesn't have any parables, but it does have allegories.

What it does have is an amazing section of the Bible (I've kind of been tempted to preach through this on Sunday morning. I did it on Sunday night years ago.) called The Upper Room Discourse. In the gospel of John you have many of the teachings of Jesus. In this section of John, which covers only one night, it's several chapters (chapters 13-17) and ends in John 17 with what it considered to be the Holy of Holies of all Scripture—Jesus actually praying to His Father. It records His actual words that He prayed. He's not teaching us to pray, He is praying and talking to His Father in what's called the Holy of Holies of Scripture. There are many other facets and features that are unique to John's gospel, but notice also that it's an attested gospel. In John 20:30, it says that these seven signs or miracles were done, "...in the presence of his disciples." They saw these miracles, and they're attesting to the fact that they indeed took place.

The gospel of John is also an apologetic gospel. Notice verse 31, "But these are written, that ye might believe," remember that's one of the key words. It's the gospel of belief, "...that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It's not only a selective gospel, it's an attested gospel, and it's an apologetic gospel—not that it's apologizing for anything but actually defending the reality of who Jesus is. It's also an interpretive gospel. Look at verse 31 of the statement of purpose, "...that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." He says, "I included this specialized material for the express purpose that you might come to believe and understand that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

In the gospel of John, you not only have the seven miracles called signs because they are pointing to His deity, but you also have seven "I Am" statements of Jesus. In every one of these statements, He's claiming to be God. He is the "Bread of Life," John 6:35, and the "Light of the World," John 8:12 and 9:5. The third "I Am" is in John 10:7, "the door," and in John 10:11, 14, "The Good Shepherd," or the Shepherd, the Good One. He is the "Resurrection and the Life," in John 11:25, and "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," John 14:6. In John 15:1 (I hope I haven't confused you too much), Jesus said, "I am the true vine." I love that. Every time He says, "I Am," ego eimi, He's claiming to be Jehovah God. We're going to look at these as we go through this gospel of John.

Lastly, this gospel is an effective gospel. It is an evangelistic gospel. Notice John 20:31, it says, "...and that believing ye might have life through his name." It's okay to talk, the ushers won't kick you out. I know sometimes you don't want to say it because, "I don't want to say the wrong word and everybody looks at me like, 'What's that dodo bird doing?'" As you read the gospel of John, it brings you to either belief or unbelief, to either rejection or receiving and believing in Jesus Christ.

Just a little footnote, and I'm gonna give you all these little footnotes as we go through this gospel, that is, there are those who teach that regeneration comes before faith in Christ. I don't want to get too sidetracked. I talked about it a few weeks ago, but here's one of my little proof

texts that it happens the moment you believe. You're not regenerated in order that you might believe, you are believing so that you might be regenerated. Notice it in John 20:31. It says, "But these are written, that ye might believe," there's faith, there's trusting or putting your faith in Christ, "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." I do believe that this is the sequential process: You believe in Jesus, then you are quickened or regenerated, and you have life through His name. Some of you may wonder why I even shared that, and it doesn't really matter to some, but it is important that you understand that you believe in Jesus, and the moment you trust in Christ, God regenerates you or gives you life, and you are born again. Turn back with me to John 1, but let me mention just a couple more things before I jump into this, and you're laughing at me right now because you're saying, "You're not going to get through 18 verses."

I love the author of this gospel, his name is John, and I think that's just a beautiful name. The name John means beloved or God is gracious. What a blessing that is. He was given a nickname by Jesus. That nickname was for him and he had a brother named James. The nickname was "Sons of Thunder." Isn't that cool? That nickname was given because he and his brother wanted to call fire from heaven down on the Samaritan people because they didn't want Jesus to pass through their territory, so Jesus called them the "Sons of Thunder." John had a dad named Zebedee and a mother named Salome. It's believed that she was actually either a sister or that she was a cousin to Mary, the mother of Jesus, which means that possibly John the apostle and Jesus were related in that way, or second cousins, or they were cousins in a sense.

John is an interesting character in the New Testament. He calls himself in the gospel, "the one who Jesus loved." Neither Matthew, Mark, or Luke named themselves in their gospels, and neither does John, but when John refers to himself, and this is kind of cool, he says, "I'm the one that Jesus loved." Jesus had an inner circle of three of His disciples that He would separate sometimes from the others. They were Peter, James and John—Peter and the two brothers. Peter was part of that as well, but John was very close to the Lord at the Last Supper, and lay at His breast. Now, John became the only disciple who did not die a martyr's death. It's believed that he wrote this gospel sometime between 60-90 A.D. He probably wrote it just before the book of Revelation in 90 or 91 A.D. Matthew, Mark, and Luke were already written when John wrote his gospel, and he wanted to write with a whole different emphasis. He did author also the book of Revelation. He was exiled to the island of Patmos by Roman Emperor Domitian, and he got the revelation and wrote the book of Revelation. He wrote 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John, so he's written the majority of our New Testament and became known as Son of Thunder and the apostle of love. Evidently, in his older years, God softened his heart in an awesome way.

Martin Luther said about the gospel of John (I found it interesting) that if the entire Bible were destroyed and only two books of the Bible were preserved, that Christianity could continue if those two books of the Bible were the gospel of John and the book of Romans. He thought that if we just had the gospel of John and the book of Romans that Christianity would survive. You can see how important these books of the Bible are.

Now, in John 1:1-18, we have some very deep theology. John's gospel is very theological, so you've got to put on your thinking caps and track with me tonight. In the first 18 verses we have the prologue, and I want to break it into five sections for you. In verses 1-2 we have the Word and God. Let's read them. "In the beginning was the Word," that's the theme through these 18 verses, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God." Let's read verses 3-5, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not," didn't take it in or understand it or comprehend it or could not extinguish that light.

Again, there are a lot of things that could be said, but let's start in verse 1 with the meaning of the word "Word," "In the beginning was the Word." The word "Word" is the Greek word *logos*. That word is kind of a challenge to define. I like to kind of keep it simple, but it was used by the Greeks, by Philo and Greek philosophers, and had two basic meanings. It had the idea of reason and thought, and the idea of communication. By the way, I'll just kind of spill the beans for you, the "Word" is Jesus Christ. "In the beginning was the Word," is a reference to Jesus Christ. John uses this really amazing term to describe Jesus. He calls Him the "Word," which is interesting. Remember Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, right? The A and the Z, the first and the last letter of the Greek alphabet. When you think of the Word, let me make it simple for you, words express our hidden thoughts, feelings, and ideas. What are words? They're communication, so we have a thought or a feeling we want to communicate with somebody, what do we do? We express it in words. I believe that when John says that He was the Word, there's probably more than we can comprehend, but simply stated, he's saying that Jesus Christ comes to reveal God to us.

In Hebrews 1:1 it says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers," different, "manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by," in and through, "his Son." God speaking, and how does God speak? In the Person of Jesus Christ. If you want to hear God, you have to look and listen to Jesus Christ. You have to look at Him and listen to Him. As I've said so often, "If you're wrong about Jesus, you're wrong about God; if you don't have Jesus, you don't have God." God is speaking. This is the doctrine of revelation, and God cannot be known apart from revelation because God is transcendent and beyond our comprehension, so God has to condescend to us and speak to us. How does God speak? He speaks in creation, in our conscience, and He speaks clearly and loudly in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ. He's the *logos*. He's the Word, the revealer, the communicator. If you want to know what God is like, you find Him in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Let me say three things about the Word. These are super important. First, Jesus Christ is the eternal Word. That's seen in that first statement, "In the beginning was the Word." When there was the beginning, the Word already existed, so it speaks of His pre-existence to creation, to Bethlehem, and it speaks of what is called His eternity—that Jesus Christ is eternal. These are some of the strongest and most powerful evidences for the deity of Jesus Christ, and there's a parallel in this verse with Genesis 1:1.

The first book of the Bible, first chapter, first verse says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," right? So, this is the beginning. When everything began, and I think it's pretty amazing that scientists can't really explain the origin of things or where life really came from. They have their kind of bizarre, crazy hypotheses, and I've been doing a little research on my own listening to some Christian scientists, not religious Christian scientists, but Christians who are scientists. They are teaching that there's special creation, intelligent design in creation, and they are making it very evident, and even non-Christian scientists, that the more we know scientifically, the more we realize that the universe couldn't have just happened and that life can't just happen. The information programmed in the DNA molecule just blows that out the door. The information there is laid down in sequential order and couldn't have just happened. It had to have some kind of intelligence there. Even before that, scientists came to the conclusion that the universe had a beginning and came up with the Big Bang Theory. You've heard of that. Of course, that's consistent with Scripture. There was a Big Bang, it was the Word of God saying, "Light be," and light was. God started it.

What we have the beginning here is of time, matter, and space. All of this began, and when it began, Jesus Christ was there. The inference is that He already was there, that He is eternal. This is important because there are cults and false teaching that Jesus Christ is not the eternal God, that He's a created being, and they stumble over that term, the Son of God, or the only begotten Son of God. Sometimes they teach that He was created by God. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus was first created as Michael the Archangel and then morphed into Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, but they don't believe in His eternity or that He was eternal. The Bible teaches that He was eternal, "In the beginning was the Word."

The second fact we have about Jesus in verse 1 is that He is a personal being or God. He is an eternal God, and He is a personal God. This is important, too. He's not some force. It says, "...and the Word was with God." That word "with" literally means face-to-face. You actually have right off the bat, the first verse of John, an inference here to the persons in the Godhead. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God," with God is a reference to God the Father, so Jesus, the eternal Word, was with God the Father who is also eternal. The word "with" literally means to be face-to-face with. If you're with someone, there's two of you, right? There's not one of you, there's two of you, so this implies the triune, or at least the fact that you have God the Father and God the Son, and obviously God the Holy Spirit was present as well. He's not a force, He's not inanimate, He's a person. He was with the Father.

The third fact we have in verse 1 is that He was divine. He's the eternal Word, He's the personal Word, and He's the divine Word. All this in verse 1, "...and the Word was God." In the Greek, it's even more powerful. It starts with God, for emphasis, was the Word. It doesn't say the God, it just says God was the Word. In the Jehovah's Witnesses' New World Translation they deny the deity of Christ, and what they do is insert the article "a" in here in their translation, but there's no basis for it from the Greek, and it reads the Word was a God, making Jesus a demigod or a lesser god, but some kind of a second-class god. I don't know, you have to have multiple gods, He's not the eternal God. There's no basis for that at all, and if you read this verse to a Jehovah's Witness on your doorstep or when you're talking to them at home, when

they knock on your door, they'll say, "Well, He's a god, but He's not the God." He is the eternal God, the personal God, and He's divine.

Just so that we won't miss it, look at verse 2, "The same was in the beginning with God." Verse 2 is a summary of verse 1, "The same was in the beginning with God." This eternal Word, this personal Word, this divine Word was in the beginning with God, and he summarizes it there in that verse. You need to be careful that you don't misinterpret that verse. It's foundational, and it's super important.

There's another false teaching that I wanted to mention, and that, in simple terms, is what's known as Oneness or the Unity school of thought. In the groups that we have that claim to be Christian but their doctrine is heretical, known as the Apostolic Church or Apostolic Congregations, they are Oneness. They don't believe in the Trinity. They believe in a doctrine called Modalism. What is Modalism? Modalism is that God the Father takes on the mode of God the Son—He's no longer God the Father, He morphs into God the Son, and God the Son takes on the mode or morphs into God the Holy Spirit. There's only one Person, and He's just appearing or manifesting in different ways as a Father, as the Son, or as the Spirit. What's a real mind blower, (and I probably shouldn't say it, but I should say it) is that the popular television preacher T.D. Jakes is a Modalist. He's not a Trinitarian. To deny the Trinity is heretical, yet people follow his teaching because he's a dynamic orator not giving thought to the doctrine that he teaches. Why do I point that out from this verse? Because the Word was with God. You have two Persons. You don't just have one Person here—the Father who becomes the Son, and the Son who becomes the Spirit. This verse does not teach Modalism, it supports the doctrine of the Trinity, and to deny the Trinity is not biblical and is heretical.

We move in verse 3 to the Word and creation. You say, "Are we ever going to get past verse 1?" Yes, verse 3. My outline in verses 1-2 is that you have the Word and God. In verse 3, now we move to the Word and creation. Trust me, we won't spend too much time on it, but notice verse 3, "All things," and this phrase "all things" means all things. That's profound. "...were made by him," who? The eternal personal divine Word, the Word that was in the beginning with God the Father. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made," all things and, "not any thing," means not anything. Everything we see created was created by Jesus Christ. Now, that's not to say that God the Father or God the Holy Spirit wasn't involved, but it came through God the Son. In Colossians it says, "For by him were all things created...and by him all things consist," or are held together. He is the Creator of all things, so He is God and He is the Creator. He made all things.

In verses 4-5, we move to the Word and humanity. It says, "In him was life," there's one of those key words, "and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." I've been listening to these scientists, and it's been quite amazing. They're actually talking about the origin of life and how mystified they are by it and how difficult it is to try to understand the origin or the source of life. If you open the Scripture, the theologians have been there for quite some time, life and light—light being necessary for life—come from God. Amen? He's the source of all life, and He's the source of all light. Light has

the idea of moral goodness and truth. Another contrast in John is darkness, "...and the darkness comprehended it not," that symbolizes evil and ignorance, so light and life come from Jesus Christ, and it talks about His relationship to humanity. "And the light shineth in darkness," that's talking about sinful, fallen man, living in darkness and separated from God, cannot comprehend, cannot understand, the light that has come; so God sent the Eternal Word—the Personal Word, the Divine Word—but men in their unregenerate state, their sinful darkness, can't comprehend it. They can't fathom or understand it.

If you talk to a non-Christian who doesn't have the life of God in their soul, they don't understand spiritual things. If you're here tonight and you're not born again, you probably think, This is just...I can't even understand anything the preacher's saying. Basically, the idea is that life and light come from God, and we are—because of man's sin—in darkness and need to be regenerated or born again (we'll get that in chapter 3).

We move in verses 6-13 to the Word's witness to the world through John the Baptist. It says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He," that is, John the Baptist (this is not John the apostle who wrote the book, it's John the Baptist), "...was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," 'that comes into the world' is a reference to Jesus Christ. He comes into the world and brings light to every man, but men reject that Light and choose to live in darkness. In verse 9, you have the Light revealed, and what's happening for us in verses 6-13 is John summarizing his whole gospel. Everything he talks about in the whole gospel is summarized that God came into the world, brought the Light, and that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. There's that contrast.

In verse 9 is Light revealed; verse 10, Light rejected. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him," again, He created the whole universe, "and the world knew him not." Think about that. When Jesus Christ was here walking on the planet, He made it all! Can you imagine that? Can you imagine the disciples lying out underneath the night sky in the Garden of Gethsemane looking at the stars and so excited about the stars and Jesus could say, "I made that one, pretty cool, isn't it. I made that one, too." The galaxies, billions of galaxies and billions of stars, vastness of space, and He spoke them into existence by His Word. Light was rejected though He was in the world, even though it was made by Him, but "the world knew him not." It's because He came veiled in flesh. We're going to see in verse 14.

Notice verse 11, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Again, this is the theme of the gospel of John. An important distinction that you need to know in verse 11, when, "He came unto his own," that word "own" is neuter and has a reference to His own creation. Some say His own people, His own town, but the first "own" there is His creation. He was the Creator who became the creature. He was here among us, and the second word "own" in verse 11, "and his own received him not," is a reference to His own Jewish people. He came into His own created world, but His own Jewish people, many of them had been looking for the Messiah, longing for the Messiah, but they didn't recognize Him, "and his own received him not."



In verse 12 we have the Light received. In verse 9, Light revealed; Light rejected, verse 10-11; and then in verse 12, Light received. "But as many as received him, to them," those who received Him, those who believed, and those who put their faith in Jesus Christ, "gave he power," means the authority or the right, "to become the sons," a better translation is children, "of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Jesus came into His own created world. That's why He could walk on the water, by the way, He made it. That's why He could turn water into wine instantly without the process of fermentation, He was the Creator. That's why He could reach down and touch blinded eyes and give them sight. That's why He could speak the word and raise the dead because He was the source of light and life, He was the Creator of all things. Jesus did miracles that no one else had ever done and no one else could do. He was God in flesh, as we're going to see in verse 14.

"But as many as received him," you have the contrast, which is developed through John's gospel, between unbelief and belief—unbelief rejected Him, and belief, those who received Him. Again, there have been some in the certain branch of Christianity, those who teach that regeneration comes before faith, that put down this concept of receiving Jesus as your Savior. Why? I don't know. It's right here in the Bible. They put down the idea that we should tell people, "Hey, you need to receive Jesus. You need to trust Jesus. You need to put your faith in Jesus. Have you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior?" That's the word used in the very text here, and the word "received" is actually the idea of faith—"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves," not your faith but your salvation, "it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast," for salvation is a gift from God, but the idea here is that we have to believe or receive, and then He gives us the authority, the right, "to become the sons," children, "of God." This term "sons of God," notice it is in the plural, which indicates that it's talking about Christians. When the reference is to the Son of God, singular, it's a reference to Jesus Christ who is uniquely the only Son of God. We are the children of God, so the "sons of God" conveys the idea of our standing, our position. The children of God conveys the idea that we have His nature and His character. We become partakers of the divine nature. God allows us to be partakers of His nature—we're born of God.

Notice verse 13, "Which were born, not of blood," which means it's not a work of heredity, and we're going to learn that in John 3, Nicodemus could not go back into his mother's womb and be born the second time, "nor of the will of the flesh," it's not a natural ability. You can't born yourself again. You can't regenerate yourself. It's a divine, sovereign work of God, "nor of the will of man, but of God." Here's a clear statement that salvation is of the Lord. You say, "Well, don't I have to believe in Jesus? Don't I have to receive Christ?" Yes, you do, but God is the One who by His grace regenerates and gives you life, convicts you, draws you, and then regenerates you, indwells you, seals you, adopts you into His family. The list could go on, but it's a divine work as it says in the book of Jonah, "Salvation is of the LORD."

You know, if you're a Christian tonight, you have to give all the credit, all the glory to God. There's no boasting. You can't boast of, "Aren't I an awesome Christian? Aren't I amazing that I repented of my sins and I believed in Jesus Christ?" No. You did the sinning, He did the

saving. What do you have to boast about? I was running from Him. He was running after me, and He apprehended me. He's the Good Shepherd who goes into the hills and finds the one lost sheep and brings it back rejoicing. Your salvation is the will of God. It's not of human volition, it's not of human ability, and it's not of heredity—God has no grandchildren, only children. It's a work of the Holy Spirit.

Now, we've got to get to verse 14 and we'll finish up, but I'll go back and build on it next week. In verses 14-18, we now move to the Word made flesh. We have the Word and God, verses 1-2; we have the Word, the logos, and creation, verse 3; We have the Word, the logos, and humanity, verses 4-5; we have the witness to the Word through the ministry of John the Baptist, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, verses 6-13. He's rejected by men but received by those who are given the right to become the children of God, "even to them that believe on his name." Lastly, the Word made flesh, and I love this. Verse 14 is the Christmas story in John's gospel. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory," John including himself with the other apostles, those who believed in Jesus, "...we beheld," we looked at intently and studied, "his glory," we saw His glory. John was on Mount Transfiguration and saw Christ glorified. He saw His glory in the seven miracles. "...the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. 15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me."

John was six months older than Jesus, and Jesus and John the Baptist were second cousins. He was six months older than Jesus, but he says, "...is preferred before me," and notice at the end of verse 15, "...for he was before me." That's another reference to His eternality or that He's eternal, "...he was before me. And of his fulness," that of Christ, the Living Word, "have all we received, and grace for grace," or grace upon grace, waves of grace upon grace. "For the law was given my Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath," and this is one of my favorite words, "declared him." That word "declared" we get our word exegete from. We use it for the expository or expositional preaching. It means to pull out, to take out, or to explain. Jesus exegetes the Father for us.

Again, I'm going to have to come back to these verses next week. Verse 14 is the reference to the incarnation. I'm hesitating for a moment because I want you to see something. Take verses 1, 14, and 18 and memorize and meditate in them. Write them down on a card (a 5 x 7 card). Put it on your mirror over your sink in the morning, and put it on the dashboard of your car. Memorize them because they're absolutely amazing. Verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," so we have His essence—being God, eternal God, personal God, divine God—then we have His incarnation—He was made flesh, He came into this world. The purpose for He came, "...we beheld his glory," and then in verse 18, why He came. He came to reveal or to explain or to exegete God the Father for us. The Word, verse 14, the eternal Word, the personal Word, the divine Word, "...was made flesh, and dwelt among us," that phrase "made flesh" indicates He took on human in nature. He didn't give up His deity, He took on

humanity.

Now, trust me, all the studies in John aren't going to be this theological. Some of you are looking at me like, "Whoa! A whole year of this?" No. We'll get to the narrative, but you need to understand, as I pointed out, some of the false doctrine from verse 1, denying the Trinity, the deity of Christ. By the way, the Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of Christ, so also when you get to verse 14, some people deny His humanity. When John wrote this gospel, a heresy known as gnosticism had come on the scene, and that branch of gnosticism taught that Jesus didn't have a real body but was just a phantom. He was just like a ghost. If you reached out to touch Him, your hand would just go SWOOSH! right through Him like Casper the Friendly Ghost. You couldn't really get ahold of Him. When He walked on the beach, He didn't leave footprints. He was just like a ghost. They said He wasn't really man. That's heretical. It's as heretical to deny the deity of Christ as it is the humanity of Christ. They're both heretical.

The Bible teaches that Christ is both—fully God and fully man in one Person. It is known as the hypostatic union—two natures in one Person, Jesus Christ. All of your cults, all of your false religious systems err in this area. They either deny His deity or they deny His humanity. Those two doctrines are denied and misunderstood. They don't see that they're two natures in one Person, so when it says, "And the Word was made flesh," put alongside that Philippians 2 where it says, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," thought equality with God was not something to hold onto, "But made himself of no reputation," emptied Himself, "and took upon him the form of a servant...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That's the kenosis passage where Christ took on humanity. This is John's version of it. He was made flesh. By the way, you might make a note there, sinless flesh. We are sinful flesh, human nature, but He is sinless. He was born of a virgin.

Notice that it says that He "dwelt among us." That means He pitched His tent among us. In the Old Testament God dwelt in the camp in the congregation in the tabernacle, which was a tent, right? That was where the presence of God was, so Jesus Christ is now the presence of God. He's a tent pitched among us, "(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." The word "begotten" there means the only unique Son of the Father, and He's, "full of grace and truth. 15 John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me. 16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given by Moses," which could not save us, only condemn us, "but," thank God, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." By the way, this is the first time in John's gospel that you have Him called Jesus Christ or Messiah flat out in the text.

Verse 18, "No man hath seen God at any time," that's because God is Spirit. God is transcendent, you can't see God. We've seen manifestations of God, but we've never seen God in His essence, "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Now, I'm struggling a little bit you can maybe tell there because there's so much. I tried to cram it in. I'm going to have to go back over verse 14, and we'll get a running start on the text. In verse 18, in what are known as the few and very oldest Greek manuscripts,

the rendering in verse 18 is not, "...the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," but literally the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, "he hath declared him." There's really good textual support for that interpretation. It would be one of the most powerful and clear statements of the deity of Jesus Christ, but, as I said, he's telling us why Jesus came. Why the incarnation? Why Christ taking on flesh? And He actually became a man—He was thirsty, tired, hungry, weary, slept, ate, wept—so that He could become a sympathetic High Priest but also so that He could reveal God and He could redeem man—so He could reveal God to us, He exegetes or explains God, and so that He could redeem man back to God.

Jesus is the divine Word, He's the creative Word, and He is the incarnate Word. Amen?