

Background to the Gospel of John - The apostle John is the writer of the Book of John, and he is writing later in life. He is the last surviving disciple of Jesus. Rome has destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. Peter was martyred in AD 67-68, and John is serving the churches around Ephesus where he is writing from. It is around AD 80-90, and the rumor that John will live until Christ's return is developing.

The other gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) were written earlier, and John wants to add to those accounts. He provides almost 90 percent new material in his gospel, which is not found in the others. Assuming that his readers have knowledge of the other gospels, he relies on them for background to events and gives details in his gospel that help explain things in the others.

John himself has been changed by the person he is writing about. When he was a young man Jesus labeled him as one of the "sons of thunder." He had a fiery temperament and once offered to call down fire from heaven on a group that did not receive them. Later in life, through the writing of the epistles we know as first, second, and third John, he becomes known as the apostle of love. Interestingly, he never names himself in his gospel choosing to call himself instead "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

John starts off his gospel with one of the most profound passages of Scripture in all the Bible, that God has come to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. The first eighteen verses of John are his prologue. He introduces his claim to the deity of Jesus and many other themes: light, darkness, testifying, believing and more.

Take a look at the first 5 verses of the Gospel of John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John's point is that Jesus is God. He gives four evidences as to the deity of Jesus in these verses.

1. The Word is Pre-Existent - existing before all creation
2. The Word is Co-Existent - existing with God
3. The Word is the Creator - the agent of creation
4. The Word is Self-Existent - the source of life

The Word is Pre-Existent – In this text, John reveals the Word to be the incarnation of divine power and revelation. It is God in human flesh.

John opens his book with the words "In the beginning was the Word." Genesis, the first book of the Bible, begins "In the Beginning God." John is drawing the reader back to the beginning when God created the world. As we consider the creation account, the fact that only God existed, and that He created everything out of nothing we are struck with the fact that John is claiming that Jesus is God.

Since Jesus "was in the beginning," He is pre-existent, having no beginning. He existed before anything else. This is evidence of the deity of Christ. **Since only God existed in the beginning, and Jesus existed in the beginning, then He must be God.**

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. Hebrews 1:1-2

The Word is Co-Existent – "And the Word was with God." There are two important points in this short phrase. First, it distinguishes between God and the Word, which is a reference to the trinity. There is one God who exists as three distinct persons. God is one, in essence, and three, in person. The Word (Jesus) is the second person of the trinity.



The second point has to do with our understanding of the word *with*. Here it means more than “merely existing together.” It has the meaning of a face-to-face, intimate relationship. **The Word is co-existent with God, and therefore, must be God.**

“And the Word was God.” There is no ambiguity here; this is a straightforward claim to the deity of Jesus Christ. The idea that Jesus is merely a great man or moral teacher is repudiated in this statement. Colossians 2:9 says, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”

The Word is the Creator – “all things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” Here John reveals to us that not only was Jesus in the beginning with God, and that He was God, but also that Jesus is the agent by which God created everything.

Colossians 1:16 says, “For by Him, all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

This then is a further declaration of the deity of Jesus Christ. God is the creator (“In the beginning God created”) and **since Jesus is the agent of creation, He must be God.**

The Word is Self-Existent – “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.” Here John reveals to his readers that Jesus is the source of life. Everything living gets its life from Him. He does not receive life – He is not created. Rather, He is the giver of life. He also is the sustainer of life – Acts 17:28 says, “for in Him we live and move and exist.” **Since Jesus is the source of life, He is God.**

John does not stop here, but goes on to introduce a metaphor. He links life with light. Light becomes the manifestation of life. God’s life is true and holy, and the Light (Jesus) is that truth and holiness manifest. Light and darkness are themes throughout the Gospel of John: Light equals good, and darkness equals evil and sin.

The fact that man needed a light (“and the life was the Light of men”) implies that man was in darkness. In Genesis 3 we learn that Adam and Eve sinned and

plunged the world into darkness (sin). Not only does the world have a sin problem, but each of us has a sin problem.

There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one. Romans 3:10-12

This is the reason it is so hard to govern a society. We all have a bent toward sin. But there is **hope**. “The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” Just like a light in a dark room overcomes the darkness, Jesus coming into the world overcame sin and death. The Devil and the evil in this world can try to thwart the will of God but Christ has already secured the victory.

Jesus is the Light of the world. As God, He lived a perfect life on this earth. His death paid for our sin. “That through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Hebrews 2:14)

John begins his gospel with a bold declaration that Jesus is God and gives four evidences to prove His deity. This is a foundational truth. There is no salvation without it. John states his purpose for writing in chapter 20 verse 31, **“but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”**

The question implied to us is **“Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ?”**



Bible Study Information:

Legislator Only

Next Study: Tuesday January 30th

Time: 8:00 pm

Location: Perkins in Fort Pierre



Behold Your God

The Deity of Christ

Jarvis Wipf • SD State Minister • PO Box 333, Highmore, South Dakota 57345 • 605-870-2025 • jarvis.wipf@capitolcom.org

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