

# The Gospel of John

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The Gospel of John is the most unique of the four Gospels. It doesn't have the story of Jesus' birth or his baptism. It doesn't have any of the many parables Jesus told, and there is no command to love your neighbor or enemy. In addition, John's Gospel very rarely talks about the Kingdom of God compared to the other Gospels. Yet, even though it doesn't have all of these things, the Gospel of John is so spiritually deep that you can study the book for the rest of your life and still discover new things each time.

**Writer:** John, the disciple of Jesus. Also called John the Apostle.

**Date of writing:** Written sometime between 55-95 AD.

**Original Audience:** Both Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus.

## **Main Purpose of the Book:**

John states his main purpose for writing the Gospel at the end of the book, saying, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:30-31). In these verses, we learn three important things. First, John acknowledges that there were many other stories and sayings of Jesus he could have added to his book. It is possible that John knew about the other three Gospels written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke and knew that he didn't need to preserve those same stories in the book he wrote. Second, John says his purpose for writing was so that you would believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. John knows this is the most important thing for every person to believe. Finally, he says that by believing you may have life in his name. In the opening section of his Gospel, John tells us that in Jesus is life and that life is the light of all mankind (1:4). And, "to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (1:12-13).



## **Outline of John's Gospel:**

1. Introduction - The beginning of life (1:1-18)
  2. The book of signs (1:19-12:50)  
In this section, John tells us about the amazing things Jesus did. There are seven miracles recorded in this section.
  3. The book of glory (13:1-20:31)  
In this section, John focuses on the last week of Jesus's life when the time for Jesus to be glorified had come (see 13:1 and 17:1)
  4. Concluding stories (21:1-25)
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## The Book of Seven Signs

In Jewish culture, seven is the number of completion or perfection. John includes several lists of seven things in his Gospel. For example, Jesus performs seven signs or miracles:

1. The changing of water into wine (2:1-11)
2. The healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54)
3. The healing at the pool (5:1-9)
4. The feeding of the five thousand (6:1-14)
5. Walking on water (6:16-21)
6. The healing of the blind man (9:1-12)
7. The raising of Lazarus (11:1-46)

## The Seven "I am" Statements

Jesus said:

1. "I am the bread of life" (6:35, 51)
2. "I am the light of the world" (8:12; 9:5)
3. "I am the door" (10:7, 9)
4. "I am the good shepherd" (10:11, 14)
5. "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25)
6. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6)
7. "I am the true vine" (15:1, 5)

## The Seven Absolute "I AM" Statements

When God was sending Moses back to Egypt to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land, Moses asked God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God answered Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Ex 3:13-14). Seven times in John's Gospel, Jesus says those exact words: I AM. The way Jesus uses those words may seem strange when we translate them into our language, but the people who first heard them knew exactly what he was saying: Jesus was saying that he was God. Notice each "I AM" statement in these verses: 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 8:28, 8:58; 13:19; 18:5-8. The final time Jesus says that he is the I AM is the most powerful. Soldiers come to arrest him, and Jesus asks them, "'who is it you want?' Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. 'I am he,' Jesus said. When Jesus said 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground" (18:5). Jesus's statement was so shocking and powerful that those who came to arrest him fell to the ground.

## Loving One Another

John's Gospel has more to say about love than the other three Gospels. The word "love" occurs more than fifty times, and yet John doesn't include Jesus' commands to love our neighbor or our enemies (Mark 12:31, Matthew 5:44, and Luke 6:27). Instead, the focus is on loving one another. Jesus tells his followers, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (13:34-35). John's Gospel also includes the most famous verse about God's love: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

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Study each of the "Seven Signs" passages listed above, and discuss these questions:

- 1) What do we learn about Jesus' power in this story?
- 2) What do we learn about people from the story?
- 3) What do I need to do to obey Jesus?
- 4) Who can I share this story with?