

WEDNESDAY FELLOWSHIP
At Christ Church, Crouch End Hill
Tel/ Fax: 020 8340 1566
No: 1

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Why are there four gospels?

Matthew , set forth Christ as the Redeemer – King of Israel, the Messiah promised to the forefathers. The inscription "Behold your King" (Zech.9:9) could be written over Matthew's Gospel.

Mark , revealed Jesus as the suffering Servant, providing a model of discipleship for the persecuted Christians in Rome. The inscription "Behold, My Servant" (Isaiah 42:1) could be written over Mark's gospel.

Luke, writing to all believers in God and the entire gentile world focussed on Jesus' humanity. Over the gospel, we might write "Behold a man" (Zechariah 6:12)

Introduction to John

The first five verses of John's gospel is a grand introduction to the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. The rest of the book is a record which was written to show "**that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.**" (JOHN 20:31). John wrote to a timeless universal audience. He stressed the deity of Christ, and His unique relationship with the Father. There is no account of Jesus' birth, baptism or temptation. He tells nothing of the last supper, Gethsemane or the Ascension.

John 1: 1-18

JESUS THE WORD: HIS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." (JOHN 1:1,2). In the first century, it was the **Gnostics**, the wise of the age, who were denying the deity of Christ. John's Gospel, as well as his epistles, are an answer to such infidelity.

In much the same way as we use words to express ideas, the Son is God's expression of Himself. Later, verse 14 identifies the Word as the One who "became flesh and dwelt among us." In this way, **the Word explained God to us.**

There are three things which we learn in the first two verses about the Person who became Jesus of Nazareth. First, that He was in the beginning with God. The Bible does not say He had a beginning, but **that He was already there "in the beginning."**

Second, that He was **"with God."** He was in fellowship with the Father. The Scriptures show that He was equal with God, but "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of man." (PHILIPPIANS 2:6,7).

Third, we see that "the Word was God." He possesses the characteristics of God, such as His eternal nature; His identity; His purpose and His mind though He subjected Himself to human limitations. (Hebrews 2: 17,18; 4:14-16; Philipians 2: 8).

JESUS THE LIFE: HIS RELATIONSHIP TO CREATION

"All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing has come into being that has come into being. In Him was life..." (JOHN 1:3,4a). One of the most used phrases in the Genesis account of creation is, "and God said...". When God spoke it became so. In the creation, we witness the power, majesty and wisdom of God. The creative force which acted to bring all things into existence was not impersonal, but rather a living being. He is called "the Word" and He is eternal, He is with God and He is God.

The One we know as Jesus was the active agent in creation. The Genesis account makes it clear that there is a plurality of Persons that are included in the one God we worship. The Bible says, "then God said, 'let us make man in our image, according to Our likeness...'". (Genesis 1:26). The Word carried out the determination of the mind of God.

Some say the concept of a plurality of Persons as one God is difficult to understand. I agree, but I am not one who expects that it would be easy to comprehend all the facets of our eternal God. Certainly, if the Bible can speak of a man and woman "becoming one flesh" (Genesis 2:24) then it can also speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being "one God."

The Son of God on Earth

In spite of the fact that Jesus offers Himself to everyone without exception, His light is shunned by many. (see 1:10-13)

The Son of God Incarnate

Verse 14 describes the incarnation – God becoming man in the person of Christ. Of this glorious Saviour, John the Baptist testified. (vv15-17)

The Son of God explained the Father

When the divine sculptor became human clay, the abstractions of deity were explained in very concrete, human terms. No man has seen God...(v18).

LIVING INSIGHTS

Why is the deity of Jesus Christ so crucial to Christianity? Couldn't an ordinary, good man have died for our sins? Why must we maintain that Jesus is eternal and not created? Why must we insist that He is God?

Simply put, we'd have no Saviour if Jesus had been less than deity. No one but God could have lived out God's law perfectly, making Him the spotless Lamb who took *our* place on the Cross and atoned for *our* sins. Only God could grant forgiveness of sins and give us new life.

So, you see, it was not enough for Jesus to be a good teacher or moral example – He had to be God.

Is it any wonder that Christ's deity is one of the first doctrines to be attacked by cults? For if they take away His deity, they take away His atonement for our sins. Salvation then becomes a matter of achieving God's favour through works. And that's exactly what cults are-systems of righteousness by works.

In addition to what you've learned in John's inspired prologue, look up some other key passages on Christ's deity. You'll not only draw closer to your Saviour, but you might be better prepared to share the gospel with the next Mormon or Jehovah's Witness who knocks at your door. The following references will get you started.

Matthew 1: 23 _____

Matthew 26: 63-64 _____

John 1: 32-34 _____

John 8: 57-58 _____

John 10: 30 _____

Philippians 2: 5-11 _____

Colossians 1: 15-20 _____

Titus 2: 13 _____

Hebrews 1: 1-4 _____
