

John Series: That You May Believe

#1: Introduction to John

Text: John 20:31 ***“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”***

I. Purpose of the Gospel of John

1. **“That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ”** (Messiah) – written for Jews. Jesus is the Promised One, who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies and types.
2. **That you may believe that Jesus is “the Son of God”** (God incarnate) – written for Gentiles. John is writing to the CHURCH, believers made up of Jews AND Gentiles. Jesus is God in the flesh.
3. **“And that believing you may have LIFE in His name.”** Eternal life is found only through faith in Jesus, the Christ and the Son of God.

II. Description of the Book

1. Simple, yet powerful words.
2. “Most familiar & best-loved book in the Bible...Probably the most important document in all the literature of the world.” (Charles Erdman’s Commentary introduction)

III. John’s Style (from Erdman’s commentary)

1. John uses **witnesses** to show Christ as the Son of God. These include the testimony of the Father, testimony of the Holy Spirit, of the Scriptures, of John the Baptist, the Disciples, various individuals (Nicodemus, Samaritan woman at the well, Pilate, Caiaphas) and the testimony of the words and works of Jesus.
2. John carefully selects **7 signs** from all Christ’s miracles to show Christ as the Son of God.
3. John presents a **drama**. As each “actor” in the drama appears we are given new testimony that Jesus is God. As this testimony grows so grows the **faith** of His followers and the **hatred** of His enemies.

IV. Comparison to the Other Gospels (from Wiersbe’s commentary)

1. Matthew wrote for Jews & showed Jesus the King, who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies.
2. Mark wrote for Romans & showed Jesus the Servant.
3. Luke wrote for the Greeks & showed Jesus the Son of Man.
4. John writes for Jews & Gentiles (the Church) to show Jesus the Son of God.
 - a. John explains Jewish customs for Gentile readers
 - b. For Jewish readers John shows that Christ not only fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, but also the Old Testament TYPES (Lamb of God, Ladder to heaven, New Temple, Serpent lifted up, Bread of God from heaven).
5. Other 3 gospels show events in the life of Christ; John gives their meaning (the feeding of 5,000 is recorded in all 4 gospels, but only in John is Jesus’ explanation that He is the Bread of life for those who have faith in Him).

V. About the Author, John the Apostle (from Erdman and Hendrickson’s commentaries)

John is an eyewitness of the things in his book (1 John 1:1-4)

1. John is probably Jesus’ cousin. Zebedee is his father and Salome (sister to Mary) is his mother.
2. He was a fisherman with his older brother James, his father Zebedee, and the hired servants.
3. He was a disciple of John the Baptist, awaiting the coming Messiah.
4. He was among the first 2 disciples of Jesus, and the last one to die.
5. He immediately left his job and family at Christ’s call to follow Him.
6. He was named one of the 12 Apostles by Christ, and was one of the 3 in the inner circle.
7. He and his brother James were called “sons of thunder” by Jesus.
8. John was arguably Christ’s best friend on earth, and leaned at his breast at the Last Supper.
9. John was the only disciple who stood at the cross.
10. He entered Christ’s empty tomb and was the first to believe in the resurrection.

11. John is seen with Peter often in Acts (3:1, 4:19, 8:14).
12. He is one of the "pillars" of the early church at Jerusalem (Gal 2:9, Acts 15:6).
13. Probably left Jerusalem in the Jewish War and fled to Asia Minor.
14. He could have been around 60 or 65 years old, living in Ephesus, the church started by Paul.
15. All the other Apostles were dead, including Paul. All the books of the Bible were written except his (he probably read them). John's gospel may have been written partly to correct the false teachings of the heretic Cerinthus, who in John's day taught against the deity of Christ.
16. Tradition says that John was boiled in oil and did not die. He was then banished to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation.
17. He was later released from Patmos and, according to Clement of Alexandria, he carried on an active ministry as chief administrator of the churches in the Ephesus district. He was probably over 90 years old at this point, and still went about "appointing bishops and setting in order whole churches."
18. He calls himself "the elder" in 2nd and 3rd John. Tradition tells us that as he grew very old he had to be carried around by the people in order to go to the church meetings, where he reportedly always said, "Little children, love one another."
19. Polycarp, who later became the Bishop of the church at Smyrna, sat at John's feet and directly heard his eyewitness account of Christ. This connects the first generation disciples with the next generation of the church.

VI. Themes

1. **Deity of Christ (Jesus is God)**
2. **Christ is opposed.** Darkness comes against the light. An enemy exists and exerts influence over his "children," those who do not "believe." (Jn 1:5, Jn 8:44, 2 Cor 4:3-4)
3. **Some reject Christ in unbelief.** We see a deepening hatred growing in those who will not believe, culminating in Christ's betrayal and crucifixion. (Jn 1:11, 5:16, 6:66, 7:5, 8:6, 48, 59, 9:29, 10:31, 33, 39, 11:53, 57, 13:27, 18:3, 12, 22, 19:1-3, 6-7, 17-18)
4. **Some believe and have LIFE.** We also see a growing faith among the believers, influenced by God's enabling and drawing power. (Jn 1:12-13, 29, 41, 45, 49, 2:11, 23, 3:36, 4:29, 42, 53, 6:2, 14, 68-69, 7:31, 40, 8:30, 9:25,33, 38, 10:41-42, 11:27, 45, 12:10-11, 16:30, 19:34-37, 20:8, 28, 30-31, 21:24)

Conclusion: Hear John's eyewitness testimony of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. Look to the Lamb of God who bore sin at the cross! Turn from your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will have life in His name!