

INTRODUCTION

How many gospels are there? If you said, "Four" that's incorrect. There is one Gospel—the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are four Gospel *accounts*: the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Today we will start a journey through the fourth gospel account, the Gospel according to John.

We are going to learn that one of the most important words in John's account of Jesus is the word "sign." We have all seen signs. One of my favorite stories about perseverance is about the little mom and pop hardware store in a growing city. Target built a huge Super Target right beside them. And then Walmart built a Supercenter store right on the other side. A lot of merchants would have just closed down their little store and given up. But the owner of the mom and pop hardware store changed their name and got a huge sign to go over their front door. The sign said MAIN ENTRANCE!

As we begin this study, let's take a moment to discover the theme of this entire Gospel Account. It's found in John 20:30. The Bible says, "Jesus performed many other SIGNS in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may BELIEVE that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have LIFE in his name." (John 20:30-31 CSB)

The signs referred to are miracles Jesus performed. A sign doesn't exist for itself, it is always there to inform you or to point to something or someone else. The sign in front of our church identifies this as Green Acres Baptist Church but you will never see someone sitting there staring at the sign as if that's the church.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke follow the same chronology of the life of Jesus. But the Holy Spirit led John to be more selective in sharing the story of Jesus. The structure of John is fairly simple. There are seven signs, miracles, plus one big miracle, the resurrection. And there are seven rich "I am" claims from Jesus. For instance, all four gospel accounts describe the feeding of the 5,000. But only in John do we hear Jesus saying after the miracle, "I am the bread of Life that has come down from heaven."

John 1:1-3 (CSB): "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created."

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce you to Jesus Christ. In this passage of scripture there are four tremendous truths about Jesus. Let's look at them and then make a couple of practical applications to our lives.

I. JESUS IS THE WORD.

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word..." When John begins his story about Jesus, he doesn't start with the birth or childhood of Jesus. There's no Bethlehem. Instead, John goes

back further than that. He goes WAY back. He goes back to the beginning of the beginning. The first words of the Old Testament in Genesis are "In the beginning God created." As we read John 1:1 we see the exact phrase from Genesis 1:1, we're just given some more insight about the nature of the God who created everything.

The word for word is *logos*. In ancient philosophy, *logos* meant the essence of order and knowledge. So if we are going to understand this part of the Bible, who, or what is the Word? Well, in verse 2 we see that the word is a person. "He" was with God, not "it" was with God. Then later in this first chapter, the Word is clearly identified as Jesus.

So let's get very basic and define what a word really is. A word is an audible or visual expression of a thought.

Let's do a little experiment together. Right now I am thinking of a random word in my mind. Now unless you're a mind reader, you don't have a clue what my thought is, because I haven't spoken it or written the word. But just for the sake of the experiment, go ahead and guess what the word is. Okay, got your guess? I'm about to express my thought to you with a word. The word is "ostrich." Now that I've spoken the word, you can visualize a big bird.

The question of the Old Testament was, "Who can know the mind of the Lord?" Or to put it another way, "What is God really like?" In the New Testament, God gives us a word that expresses His deepest thoughts—and Jesus is the Word. Jesus is the expression of God.

The next thing we learn is that:

II. JESUS EXISTS ETERNALLY WITH GOD.

The Bible says, "The Word was with God..." In Psalm 90 we learn about the eternal nature of God. The Psalmist says, "From eternity to eternity, you are God." (Psalm 90:2 CSB)

You and I exist at this moment, but that wasn't always the case. I was born sixty-five years ago in Ruston, Louisiana to Orlo and Bess Dykes. So you ask where was I before then? Well according to the Bible, God knit me together in my mother's womb nine months before I was born. But if you go back before then, I didn't exist. Neither did you.

But Jesus existed for eons of eternities before He took on flesh and was born in Bethlehem. That's why I love to ask people the simple riddle. Who was the only baby ever born who was older than his mother and the same age of His father? That would be Jesus alone.

In John 8 we read that Jesus was being badgered by some of the religious leaders. They were actually mocking Him. They were laughing at the idea of a virgin birth by saying, "WE were not born out of sexual immorality. We know who our Father is—our Father is Abraham."

Then Jesus made a shocking response to them. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad." The Jews replied, "You aren't fifty years old yet, and you've

seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:56-58 CSB)

When the Jews heard that claim they picked up stones to kill Him because they understood two things. First, they knew Jesus was claiming that He existed at least during the same time as Abraham. And second, Jesus was identifying Himself as the great "I am." That was the name that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush.

In Exodus 3 God said, "Moses, go tell Pharaoh to let me people go!" Moses said, "But God, they have so many gods in Egypt, and each one has a name. So who can I say has sent me?" And God said, "You tell them I AM has sent you." That simple word in Hebrew literally means, "I am being. I have always been, and I will always be." And as we're going to see in the Gospel According to John, Jesus claimed this title for himself many times.

If I were to ask what you were doing a week ago, you might be able to answer me. If I asked you what you were doing a year ago, you'd have a harder time remembering. But if I asked you what you were doing a thousand years ago, you couldn't answer me, because you didn't exist. So that's what makes Jesus unique. He exists with God from the beginning of the beginning.

III. JESUS IS GOD.

The next phrase says, "The Word was God." A little girl who was drawing a picture with her crayons. She was working feverishly. Her mother said, "What are you drawing, dear?" She said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." Her mother laughed and said, "You can't really draw a picture of God because nobody knows what He looks like." The little girl looked up and said, "They will in a minute."

Jesus came to show us what God is like. He put a human face on the invisible, immortal God. There are millions who believe in Jesus, but they don't believe He is God. Muslims revere Isa, Jesus, as a great prophet. They believe He was born of a virgin and performed miracles, and is even going to return, but they do not believe He is God.

Our Mormon friends are some of the nicest people you'll ever meet, but they don't believe Jesus was God from the beginning. They believe Jesus earned His godhead status just like every good Mormon man can do.

I've heard people insist that Jesus never claimed to be God. But every time He referred to Himself as "I am" He was identifying Himself as the same God who called Moses. And the main reason the Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead was because of His claim to be God. To them, this was the ultimate blasphemy.

In John 5:18 (CSB) we read, "This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill him: Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God."

This introduces us to the important doctrine of the Trinity, or the tri-unity of God. There is only ONE God. But He expresses Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is hard for us to understand, because we live in a physical universe where only one bit of matter can occupy one space at a time. We try to use simple metaphors to help us close to understand the trinity. I'm one person, but I'm a husband, father, and a grandfather. H₂O is a liquid, but it can also be ice, or steam. It's the same formula expressed in three different ways. John Wesley said, "If you can explain to me how there can be three candles in one room, and only one light, then I will explain to you the trinity."

Basically, it's beyond our understanding. There is a mystery to God that we will never be able to grasp. 1 Timothy 3:16 (ASV) says, "Great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh."

IV. JESUS IS THE CREATOR.

The Bible says, "All things were created through him..." There are basically two trains of thought about the origins of the universe. First, some people claim it occurred accidentally, that somewhere in the distant past, unknown forces came together and there was a big bang, and the universe was formed. And as part of this random process, life came into existence, and at the evolutionary pinnacle of life, we have human beings.

On the other hand, many of us believe it happened this way: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. When I look at the expanse of the heavens, I see the handiwork of God. When I see the intricate nature of the human body, I see the handwork of God. When I see the order of the seasons, I see the handwork of God.

Years ago I was flying back from an overseas mission trips. I struck up a conversation with the man next to me. He was a university professor, and soon the discussion got around to faith. I asked him what he believed about creation. He was very articulate as he described the Big Bang theory and the theory of evolution. I listened politely and when he finished. I asked, "So you basically believe that everything we are see and everything we are is just a result of random chance?" He said, "Yes, that's what I believe. What do you believe?"

We were flying on a Boeing 747. So I said, "Take this jet that is flying at 35,000 feet at 500 miles per hour. I said it has six million different parts that have to fit together. There are over 170 miles of wiring that have to be correctly connected. So how did it come into existence? Maybe there was an explosion in a junkyard and the random result was this aircraft was formed as a result of that explosion. You could have a million explosions in a million junkyards and I don't think this jet could be the result. Instead I believe it was designed and built at the Boeing factory in Everett, Washington." And then I said, "The human body is a thousand times more complex than this jet. I believe in a Creator." He smiled and said, "You have a good point there." I don't know if he changed his mind or not, but I think he'd never thought about the possibility of a Creator in those terms before.

There are many verses in the Bible that verify Jesus is the creator. One of my favorites is in Colossians 1. The Bible says, "For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16-17 CSB)

Not only is Jesus the creator of all things, the Bible also says, "In him all things hold together" The word is *sunestimei*, which means "to stick together; to cohere." It means Jesus is the super glue of all matter. He is the duct tape of the universe.

Have you ever wondered what keeps the universe together? Why doesn't the earth go spinning off into space, or why doesn't the moon crash into the earth? Why doesn't all of matter just explode or implode into some black hole?

That's a question scientists have been studying for many years. They claim all matter large and small is composed of particles, atoms, which are broken down into smaller particles called neutrons, protons, electrons and...croutons (just to see if you were paying attention). Protons and neutrons are at the nucleus of the atom and electrons spin around the nucleus. Here's a little atomic humor for you. What did the proton say to the electron? "Why do you have to be so negative all the time?" The electron said to the proton, "Yeah, well you think everything just revolves around you." And the neutron said, "Thanks for letting me stay here at no charge."

According to the Bible, Jesus not only created the universe, but He is sustaining the universe at this very moment.

So, we have learned four truths about Jesus. He is the Word, He exists with God from the beginning; He is God; and He is the Creator. All four of these truths are important to support the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. But doctrine can be cold and dry. What about the personal application of these truths? How can these truths make a difference in your life? Here are two points of application.

A. Jesus made you and He cares for you.

Psalms 33 tells us how God is interested and personally involved in His creation. The Bible says, "The Lord looks down from heaven; he observes everyone. He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth from his dwelling place. He forms the hearts of them all; he considers all their works." (Psalm 33:13-15 CSB)

Don't be paranoid, but God is watching you right now. I like the story about the Catholic school where the children were lined up in the cafeteria. A nun had placed a sign on the box of apples that said, "Take one apple only. God is watching." At the end of the line a student had scribbled a sign on the cookies that said, "Take as many cookies as you want, God is watching the apples."

God can watch the apples *and* the cookies. And He can watch over you and billions of other people. The Bible says that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. The God who fashioned the

stars and galaxies fashioned you, and the God who holds all matter can sustain your life and keep you from falling apart.

Years ago, Bette Midler sang a song of hope called "From a Distance." Part of the lyrics said, "From a distance we are instruments; marching in a common band. Playing songs of hope; playing songs of peace. They are the songs of every man. God is watching us; God is watching us; God is watching us from a distance." She was right about one thing, God IS watching us. But it's not from a distance, Psalm 34:18 (NIV) says, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in Spirit."

B. Jesus delivers those who trust Him.

Not only is He watching you, He wants to deliver you in times of trouble. The Bible says, "But look, the Lord keeps his eye on those who fear him—those who depend on his faithful love to rescue them from death and to keep them alive in famine. We wait for the Lord; he is our help and shield. For our hearts rejoice in him because we trust in his holy name." (Psalm 33:18-21 CSB)

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. That's where all of us were at one time. But He delivered us from death into life. And now you can rejoice whenever you trust in His holy name.

Ornithologists estimate there are about 100 billion common sparrows on the planet and that about 40 million sparrows die every day. In Matthew 10 Jesus says not a single sparrow falls to the ground outside the Father's care. And we are worth more than many sparrows. And as the old song made famous by Ethel Waters says, "If His Eye is on the Sparrow, I know He watches over me." Your Creator knows what's going on in your life. He knows when you're flying and when you're falling, and He cares.

CONCLUSION

One of the most powerful statements about Jesus comes from the brilliant scholar, C.S. Lewis who was once a friendly agnostic until as he puts it, he experienced God's "compelling embrace." You have probably heard excerpts from this quote, but here's the whole quote to challenge you.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.'

That is the ONE thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell.

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God." (*Mere Christianity*, 1952)

Did you know that the tense of a simple verb could make the difference between heaven and hell for you? The difference between "IS" and "WAS" could determine your eternal destiny.

When you think about Jesus, do you ask, "Who WAS Jesus?" Past tense. For many people, Jesus was just a historical character who lived and died, like Plato or Alexander the Great.

On the other hand when you think about Jesus do you ask "Who IS Jesus?" Present tense. If that is the way you form the question, it indicates you believe that Jesus IS; He is alive at this moment.

Will you trust Him today and for all of your tomorrows?

OUTLINE

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The Structure of the Gospel According to John:
Seven (plus one) signs and seven "I am" claims of Jesus.

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A word is an audible or visual expression of a thought.

II. JESUS EXISTS ETERNALLY WITH GOD. "*The Word was with God...*"

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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