

Week 1, John 1:1–18

Hook



Main Point: Jesus is the one who is God.

Main Application: Believe and confess in Jesus.

Current Event: December 11, 1998, was a day of anticipation. A team from NASA launched the Mars Climate Orbiter, an instrument that would provide useful Martian atmospheric information. The Climate Orbiter was an essential component of a larger initiative to explore Mars. However, on September 23, 1999, communication with the craft was lost. As the Mars Climate Orbiter entered orbit, it approached too close to the surface of the planet causing it to disintegrate. Upon investigation, it was realized that the team that programmed the craft used the metric system and the team that built the computer software on the ground operated in the standard system of measurement. The two teams failed to communicate. Although it was one simple misunderstanding, the type of system of measurement was at the foundation of the craft. Because this fundamental decision was not discussed, the project was a complete failure, a \$125-million-dollar failure.¹²

¹ *Tragedies in Science: The Crash of the Mars Climate Orbiter.*

<http://www.visionlearning.com/blog/2012/09/21/tragedies-in-science-the-crash-of-the-mars-climate-orbiter/>

Discussion Questions:

Why do you think the NASA teams did not collaborate?

What are the consequences of not discussing and understanding the core beliefs of our faith?

John 1

Book

Main Point: Jesus is the one who is God.

Main Application: Believe and confess in Jesus.

Text Summary: In the opening of John's gospel, he wants us to be aware of one thing: the divine nature and person of Jesus. This is John's mission in writing his account down. John wastes no time seeking to nail down firmly that God has come to be with and among his people in a way like never before. The God who created all and has all power and authority has now come down to the earth He formed to be with His people in the flesh. God has become human.

John 1:1–4 (Read)

Sub Application: Build your faith on a correct understanding of the nature of Jesus.

John begins with a series of theological truths concerning the nature of Jesus: Jesus has always existed; Jesus is in community with God; Jesus is God. All four gospels begin by placing Jesus within a historical setting, but the gospel of John is unique in the way it opens. The book of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus that connects Him to David and Abraham. Mark starts with the preaching of John the Baptist. Luke has a dedication of his work to Theophilus and follows that with a prediction of the birth of John the Baptist. But John begins with a theological prologue.³

These first four verses provide the foundation for understanding the nature of Jesus. In order to have a clear understanding of who Jesus is (as revealed in what He says about Himself and the actions He takes), it is necessary to grasp His divine nature.

Jesus has always existed.

In the beginning was the Word: Jesus is from the beginning. He doesn't have a beginning; He has always existed and will always exist. Although Jesus is 100 percent man, He is also 100

² *8 Tragix Miscalculations and Miscommunications.* <http://www.businessinsider.com/8-tragic-miscalculations-and-miscommunications-2013-10>

³ Edwin A. Blum, "John" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985, Jn 1:1–8.

percent God. Why is Jesus referred to as “The Word”? The term “the Word” (Gk. *logos*) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech, and has a rich OT background. God’s Word is effective: God speaks, and things come into being (Gen. 1:3, 9; Ps. 33:6; 107:20; Isa. 55:10–11), and by speech He relates personally to His people (e.g., Gen. 15:1).⁴ Jesus is powerful, carries the weight of the godhead and has come to develop personal relationships with mankind.

Jesus is in community with God.

And the Word was with God: This doesn’t just mean Jesus and God existed with one another. There’s more of a relationship that John wants us to see. Their relationship is active and intricate. They are one. Jesus is with God in a special relationship of eternal fellowship in the Trinity.⁵

Jesus is God.

And the Word was God: Simply put, whatever Jesus does, God does, and whatever is true about God and worthy to be praised about God is true about Jesus. This foundation of who Jesus is sets the tone for the rest of the Gospel. This forms for us why, in verse 4, we can know and believe that life is found in Jesus. Why? Because John has shown us that all life comes from Him because God is life.

Verse 3 describes a Jesus who was necessary for creation. Is this the only place we see Jesus in the Old Testament?

The community of the Son with the rest of the Trinity is touched on in these verses. How is the need for community mirrored in man?

Why is Jesus’ divinity so important? How does this separate Christianity from other religious groups and cults?

John 1:5–13 (Read)

Sub Application: Find salvation in Jesus alone.

John the Baptist came as a witness to Jesus. Jesus became flesh and the Light to the world; those who follow Him will become children of God. John says that Jesus is light and that this light shines in the darkness and the darkness can’t win. This has two big implications. The first is that a connection to Genesis is made once again, to the account of God speaking light into a

⁴ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2019.

⁵ Edwin A. Blum, "John" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985, Jn 1:1.

dark and formless world. But it's not just about Genesis. Things are now changing. God is coming down to enter into this dark world and break through the darkness with Himself.

John the Baptist knew of this light. He witnessed it and from there spread the news of this great Light that now was in the world. John the Baptist knew that his job was to tell people of this great, *good* news. Before, God had been with his people and dwelt among them. We see this in the wilderness and in the tabernacle. But this light is different, because it would soon eradicate darkness. This Light will bring those far from the Father near. He will bring those in darkness to light.

How can one be saved? It's not through human effort, through genetics or even a sheer act of will. The words "receive him" in verse 12 imply not merely intellectual agreement with some facts about Jesus but also welcoming and submitting to Him in a personal relationship. "Believed in" implies personal trust. "His name" refers to all that is true about Him, and therefore the totality of His person.⁶ Those who respond in this way, in faith, become a part of God's forever family.

What darkness has Christ come to defeat?

Verse 11 says that Jesus' own people did not receive Him. Why didn't the majority of the Jewish community believe Jesus? Why might it have been difficult for them to trust the things He said?

What does it mean to "become children of God"? Are not all of humanity God's children?

Read Romans 5:10–11. How is one "reconciled to God" through Jesus?

John 1:14–18 (Read)

Sub Application: Commit to knowing Jesus more deeply.

Jesus becomes a man so that man could know God. John tells us that God has come in a way that is more personal than ever before. He has taken on human skin and now walks among His creation. This flesh referred to in verse 14 simply is used to show the division between man and God. Flesh is what man is, not God. But God has come down, as we see in this verse, to take on humanness. The uncreated becomes the created.

God became man.

⁶ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible*, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008, 2019.

Jesus puts on display for the people of earth the true and magnificent glory of God. D. A. Carson explains that Jesus displayed God's grace and His truth in a way that had never before been seen. It was greater in both clarity and magnitude. The Incarnation has accomplished what we could never have accomplished on our own, a close-up look at God.

In verse 17, John, for the first time, gives the Word a name, and His name is Jesus Christ. Jesus, the God-man, shows us in never-before-seen fashion who God is and what He is like. If Jesus were not fully divine, this intimate revelation of God's nature would not be possible. He didn't come to show good teachings or to show good morality. He came to show off the greatness and glory and goodness of God Himself to a dark and lost people. Verse 18 sums it up for us: Jesus came to make an unseen God seen. He gives grace and truth a name.

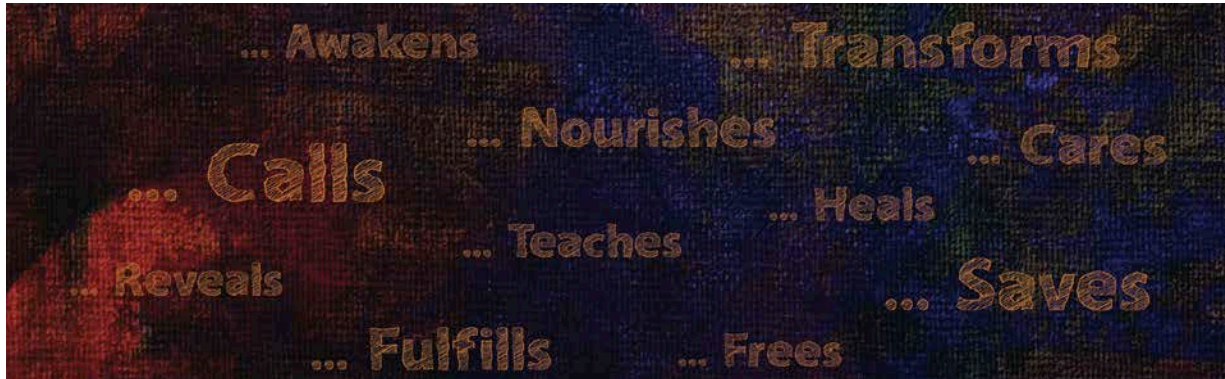
Why are both truth and grace important? How are both truth and grace displayed in Jesus?

Notice the comparison in verse 17 of the giving of the law and the arrival of Jesus. What are the differences between the law and what Jesus gave? Does Jesus nullify the law?

Verse 18 claims that no one had seen God. How do you reconcile this verse to those in the Old Testament who had encounters with God?

Week 1, John 1:1–18

Took



Main Point: Jesus is the one who is God.

Application: Believe and confess in Jesus.

In Today's Culture: After the incredible failure of the Mars Climate Orbiter, NASA was forced to meet the press. The associate administrator for space science wrote in a statement "People sometimes make errors."⁷ Some errors are more costly than others. This first chapter of John is essential and creates the foundation for understanding Jesus; a failure to grasp the theology in John 1:1–18 is a costly error. For instance, Jehovah's Witnesses translate verse 1 as "the Word was a god," thus espousing a false doctrine and manipulating the very essence of the Gospel message.⁸ Jesus took on the form of man in order that we might know God. As believers, we have the privilege and the obligation to develop a firm grasp on our theology God as we study His Word.

Class Exercise: Break your class into small groups and ask them to discuss the following question: Based on the passage today, who is Jesus and what has He accomplished? After the groups have discussed, write their answers on the board and highlight the key doctrines established in the passage.

Lesson Conclusion: Today's passage presents an essential truth about Jesus: He is God. In order to be reconciled to God, one must believe and confess in Jesus.

Challenge: This passage should challenge two groups in your class. First, challenge the believers in your class to take this study of John as an opportunity to further develop and own their

⁷*Top Ten NASA Flubs,*

http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1982672_1982673_1982667,00.html

⁸ Edwin A. Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985, Jn 1:1.

theology. Jesus reveals Himself in the book of John through His words and actions; now is the time to grow in a deeper understanding of the Savior. Secondly, challenge those who have yet to make a decision for Jesus. Today is the day to believe in and confess Jesus.