

# Getting into the Gospel of John

January 31, 2020

by David Schrock

This Sunday we begin a new sermon series called *Seeing is Believing*, a study on the Gospel of John. As we look forward to hearing God's message in this book, it might be helpful to begin to consider the why John wrote this book, how he wrote this book, and why we are going to spend many months learning from it.

First, John makes it really simple to understand why he wrote his Gospel. Writing close to thirty years after the other gospels, after the Jerusalem temple had been destroyed, and after the Jews had been scattered throughout the Mediterranean, he wrote a gospel largely intended to stress the ways Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament promises including the promises of the temple.

Knowing this historical context sets the stage for John's purpose statement in John 20:31: "These [things] written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." This is why John wrote the Gospel. For the sake of unbelieving Jews looking to find life without the temple and for the sake of all people who are looking for refuge and meaning and everlasting life, John wrote his gospel

Second, John wrote a book that is filled with Old Testament signs and symbols. Over the course of twenty-one chapters, he shows how Jesus comes to fulfill them all. And by taking time to understand the organization of John's Gospel, it makes greater sense of his message.

In John, we find a simple, four-part organization.

- Prologue (1:1–18)
- Book of Signs (1:19–12:50)
- Book of Glory (13:1–20:31)
- Conclusion (21:1–25)

In this basic outline, the prologue and epilogue balance the book with two interior sections. The first interior section, the book of signs—John will list seven "signs" in his Gospel—introduces who Jesus is through a series of extended narratives that identify him with many Old Testament images. (You can learn more about this if you watch the The Bible Project video above). The second interior section, the book of glory, shows the events leading to Christ's death on the cross—the event that displays the pinnacle of his glory.

Setting up these two "books," the prologue introduces us to the Son of God, who is the Word of God Incarnate. With a highly tuned chiasmic structure, John opens his book by focusing on how the Divine Son will bring children into the Father's family (v. 12).

1–5                      *The Word is God with God the Father*

6–8                      *The Testimony of John the Baptist*

9–10    *The Incarnation*

11            *False Israel*

**12                    *The Children of God***

13            *True Israel*

14            *The Incarnation*

15            *The Testimony of John the Baptist*

16–18    *The Son is God with God the Father*

Additionally, the prologue introduces themes about the Son of God—his eternality, his deity, his dwelling with humanity, and his fulfillment of history—which will be found throughout the book.

Finally, the epilogue closes the book with the events that took place after Jesus's resurrection. In this final section, the purpose of the book has already been disclosed (John 20:30–31), and now Jesus is sending his disciples out to bear witness to Christ. It is with great symmetry, that the book opens and closes with men bearing witness about Christ—John the Baptist is the witness who prepares the way; John and Peter are the witnesses who find greatest attention in John 21. Interestingly, this focus on witnessing is found throughout the book too and indicates the way that the Spirit blows through these pages.

This is the third thing we need to see: the reason we are studying this book is because of the way John gives such a powerful picture of Christ. You can hear more about why we should study this Gospel in this short video.

[John](#) from [Occoquan Bible](#) on [Vimeo](#).

But simply put, meditating on John's Gospel teaches us how theology is meant for evangelism and evangelism must be filled with theology—i.e., words about God, which is what theology is.

In John's Gospel we find a beautiful combination of evangelism and theology. This combination may surprise us today, but that's why we need to study his words. Much evangelism today downplays theology, saying, "Just give the message of the gospel—pure and simple!" Conversely, many theology nerds—I can say that because I am one!—may not be as evangelistic as they should. However, in John's Gospel, the beloved apostle is passionately theological *and* evangelistic. Or better, he employs theology for the purpose of producing faith, hope, and love. We can learn much from this!

The Spirit has inspired John's words to give us the most evangelistic Gospel, and it is not accidental that it is equally theological. For this reason, we come to this book to know more about God and more about how to make him known.

So pray for the beginning of this sermon series and join us to know more about God. At the same time, find someone who needs to know more about God and invite them to join you. One of the best ways we can grow in our knowledge of God is sharing the good news with others.

May God make himself known to us in this series through John and may the glory of Christ be seen and heard by all who come!

For His Glory and your joy,

Pastor David