

John Lesson # 1 Articles

Jn 1:1-18 These first eighteen verses of the Gospel have a wonderful poetic ring. But in spite of its poetic ring, the reader should be forewarned that this Prologue is one of the most complex theological statements in the Bible. An entire seminary semester's course could be taught on these eighteen verses. ¹ John started at the very beginning as Gen 1:1 does, when there was just God. He linked the incarnation with the Word that was present at the very beginning of time (**John 1:1**). In Christian theology you cannot go back further than God. In the ancient world there were creation stories of the gods, but in the Bible there is no possibility of a cosmogony involving the creation of God. *God is the beginning!*²

“The Word” (1:1). The Gk. word is *logos*, which usually emphasizes the message of a spoken word. John's point is that a key role of the Second Person of the Trinity has always been communication. The Son is the Spoken Word, the living expression of all that God has ever sought to communicate about Himself.

With God, and was God (1:1). John's point is that Jesus is both identical with the God of the O.T. and yet is distinct from Him. The concept, so familiar although mysterious to us, was stunning in the world of the 1st century. The Jews emphasized the uniqueness and unity of the O.T.'s one God. The pagans imagined a class of beings they called “gods.” But John affirms that God is one, yet exists in distinct, separate personalities. The concept is difficult, but the teaching is clear. The Word (Jesus) existed eternally with God as one God.³

Verses 12–13 give the glad news of the gospel, the fact that we, if we receive Christ, will be adopted by God as children (is it not marvelous that the neuter word ‘children’ was used—the plan of salvation does not discriminate on the basis of gender!). Notice how simply and yet thoroughly v. 13 denies that eternal life is achievable through:

- a) blood, i.e., lineage (I am a Jew so I am automatically saved; or, my parents are Christians so I am O.K.; or, I was brought up in a Christian home so I will go to Heaven),
- b) the will of the flesh, i.e., natural birth (God loves all mankind, we are all His sons, He would not send those He loves to Hell!),
- c) the will of man, i.e., man's personal desire (I have lived a good life, I have obeyed the ten commandments, I have harmed no one—so because I have exercised my will and lived a good life, I will go to Heaven. No sir, God says the power of your will will not get you into His family!)

The only way to enter eternal life is to be born of God—and that is explained with exquisite beauty and simplicity, yet inexhaustible depth, in John 3.⁴

1:4, 7, 9 Each of these three verses could suggest that all people will be saved. But verses **5, 10, and 11** all make it clear that not everyone accepted Jesus. So John must have meant that salvation was *available* through Jesus for *all* people, not that salvation automatically is applied to all people.⁵

^{1 2} Borchert, G. L. (1996). *John 1–11* (Vol. 25A, p. 100). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

³ Richards, L. O. (1991). *The Bible reader's companion* (electronic ed., p. 678). Wheaton: Victor Books.

⁴ Mills, M. S. (1999). *The Life of Christ: A Study Guide to the Gospel Record* (Jn 1:10–13). Dallas, TX: 3E Ministries.

⁵ Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1570). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.