

Episode: Three Gospels Series No. 06

Narrator: Peter

Primary Scriptures: John 1-3

Story Summary: Early ministry of Jesus

Location: Kingdom of Judea (Israel)

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: John 1:1-3, 14, 18, 29; 2:11, 19; 3:3, 5, 16-18, 30,

The first four books of the New Testament (*Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*) are known as Gospels, meaning “good news.” The books are named after their traditionally accepted authors. The first three (*Matthew, Mark* and *Luke*) are called Synoptic Gospels because they share many of the same stories, and some common passages have similar or identical wording.

In contrast, the contents of *John* are comparatively distinct from the Synoptic Gospels. *John* was likely written two or three decades after the others, and its writer included different information, and wrote in a different style than the Synoptic Gospels, with much more symbolic language and various themes.

It is traditionally assumed that the author of *John* is the Apostle John. He was with Jesus throughout his ministry, and likely refers to himself when he mentions “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” In fact, the subject of love often features in John's writings.

The opening words of *John* are reminiscent of those in *Genesis*, which opens with the beginning of the heavens and the earth, while *John* opens with the beginning of everything. It is widely interpreted that John uses the term “Word” to refer to Jesus.

The verses in John 1 are very important to gaining an understanding the nature of God, the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the humanity of Jesus. The information in John 1 about John the Baptist is also helpful in understanding just how important he was.

John is the only gospel with the story where Jesus turns water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana. John specifically points out that it is his first miracle.

John is also the only gospel writer who mentions Nicodemus. He describes a long discourse between Nicodemus and Jesus in John 3, and mentions him again on two other occasions. It is likely that the conversation with Nicodemus and Jesus was longer than the portion John recorded, but even so, that portion is full of gems. John 3:16 is possibly the best-known of all New Testament verses.

Throughout *John*, it is important to keep in mind that the author is being very selective about the information he provides. We know that because he says as much in John 20:30-31. Why is he being choosy? He chooses the things needed to make sure his readers will become believers in Jesus!

Discussion Questions:

1. Why might John's gospel be written differently than the other three gospels?
2. What was in the beginning?
3. Why is John 3:16 such a popular Bible verse?
4. What was the first miracle of Jesus? What did it signify?
5. How much water did Jesus turn into wine?

1. *John* was written much later, probably after the other gospels were well known. There was not reason to duplicate their information. John had other goals in mind than the other gospel writers. 2. According to John 1:1, Jesus and God were in the beginning, and Jesus was God. 3. Most importantly, in a few words, John presents the entire gospel message. Less importantly, in the 1970s and 1980s, Rollen Stewart attended many televised sporting events in the United States wearing a rainbow-colored wig and holding up a sign prominently displaying "John 3:16." He single-handedly made the verse well-known. 4. He turned water into wine at the wedding festival at Cana. It signified that the new way to worship God is much better than the old. 5. More than 120 gallons.

Application Questions:

1. Throughout the book of *John*, you will be presented with many word images of the nature and relationships of God, Jesus, the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Spend time thinking about John 1:1, and keep this in mind as you study the rest of *John*.
2. Nicodemus was a teacher, yet he was open-minded enough to seek out Jesus to hear his teachings. Are you open-minded about learning more about God? How will you protect yourself against false teachers and false teachings?
3. Do you think Jesus wanted to do the miracle at Cana? Why do you think that way?
4. Most modern Christians spend little time studying John the Baptist. What do you know about John the Baptist that would be important to apply to your own life?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. It is popular to say that Christians should behave like Jesus. What do you think that means? How would you take into account that Jesus could do miracles?
2. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, probably so he could talk to Jesus without anybody knowing about it. Is it possible for you to get to know Jesus in secret? Do you know anybody who tries to be a secret Christian? How might that work?
3. John the Baptist was supposed to prepare the way for Jesus, then get out of the way. What kind of characteristics does it take for someone to do the hard work in order for someone else to get the credit?