

## Worksheet #2: John 1:1-51

**Summary:** John introduces his gospel with a glorious prologue (1:1-18) that describes the doctrine of Christ's incarnation with precise language. The incarnation, foundational as it is for so many other doctrines, is challenging to explain. In this passage, each word serves a specific purpose. J. C. Ryle observes this effect when he remarks that "not a single word could be altered in the first five verses of St. John's Gospel, without opening the door to some heresy."<sup>1</sup>

Following v. 18, we have two sections that narrate events from Jesus' first week in public ministry. After the highly theological prologue, this passage places Jesus' ministry within the context of history. The passage begins with the preaching of John the Baptist, calling the Jews to repentance and proclaiming Jesus as the "lamb of God" and the "Son of God" (1:19-34). Then, in 1:35-51, Jesus begins by recruiting disciples to participate in his public ministry.

### Abbreviated Outline<sup>2</sup> (current passage in bold):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE WORD MADE FLESH (1:1-18)
- II. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE SIGNS OF THE MESSIAH (1:19-12:50)
  - A. *The Forerunner and the Coming of the Messiah (1:19-51)*
    - 1. **The Testimony of John the Baptist (1:19-34)**
    - 2. **The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (1:35-51)**
  - B. *The Cana Cycle: Jesus' Inaugural Signs and Representative Conversations (2:1-4:54)*
    - 1. Sign 1: Changing Water into Wine at the Wedding in Cana (2:1-12)
    - 2. Sign 2: One of Jesus' Jerusalem Signs: The Clearing of the Temple (2:13-22)
    - 3. Representative Conversations: Nicodemus the Jewish Ruler, the Samaritan Woman (2:23-4:42)
    - 4. Sign 3: The Second Sign in Cana: The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:43-54)
  - C. *The Festival Cycle: Additional Signs amidst Mounting Unbelief (5-10)*
    - 1. Sign 4 at an Unnamed Feast in Jerusalem: The Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-47)
    - 2. Sign 5: Galilean Passover: Feeding the Multitude and Bread of Life Discourse (6:1-71)
    - 3. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-8:59)
    - 4. Sign 6: The Healing of the Blind Man and the Good Shepherd Discourse (9-10)
  - D. *Final Passover: Climactic Sign, the Raising of Lazarus, and Other Events (11-12)*
    - 1. Sign 7: The Raising of Lazarus (11)
    - 2. Final Events of Jesus' Public Ministry (12)
- III. THE BOOK OF EXALTATION: PREPARING THE NEW MESSIANIC COMMUNITY AND THE PASSION OF JESUS (13-20)
  - A. *The Cleansing and Instruction of the New Covenant Community, including Jesus' Final Prayer (13-17)*
  - B. *The Passion Narrative (18-19)*
  - C. *Jesus' Resurrection and Appearances, Commissioning of Disciples (20:1-29)*
  - D. *Concluding Purpose Statement (20:30-31)*
- IV. EPILOGUE: THE COMPLEMENTARY ROLES OF PETER AND THE BELOVED DISCIPLE (21)
  - A. *Jesus' Third Appearance, to Seven Disciples in Galilee (21:1-14)*
  - B. *Jesus and Peter (21:15-19)*
  - C. *Jesus and the Disciple Jesus Loved (1:20-25)*

<sup>1</sup> *Expository Thoughts on John* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1987), vol 1., 6.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 307-308.

**Interpretation:** *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. In what sense does life reside in Christ, and how does his life provide light to men (1:4)?  

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2. What does it mean for John to come as a “witness” to Christ (1:6)? How does he understand his own role as a witness (1:19–27)?  

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3. What does it mean to have “the right to become children of God” (1:12)? How is that right acquired?  

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4. In 1:16, the preposition “for” (found in the phrase “grace *for* grace”) literally means “upon.” How does Christ’s coming result in God’s grace being accumulated upon more grace?  

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5. What does it mean for Jesus to be the “only begotten” Son (1:14, 18; cf. 3:16, 18)? What would it mean if he were not the “only begotten”?  

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6. What gave authority to John’s witness (1:32–34)?  

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7. Notice how the early disciples respond to Jesus by identifying him as the Messiah (1:41, 45, 47–49). How did they come to this conclusion, and how could they be so confident about it?  

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**Application:** *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage tell us about Jesus?  

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9. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?  

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10. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?  

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