

# John 1 – Introduction

These are the leaders notes from the Kielder Bible Study Group for the meeting that was held on 7th August 2012

So a little background to put things in context before we start looking at the passage in detail – the who when why

## Background

### Who

The Author is the Apostle John, brother of James and son of Zebedee. He does not use his own name in his Gospel, but the other Gospel writers mention his name 20 times.

### When

When was the Gospel written It is believed around AD 85 onwards, and before AD 95 when Revelation was written from the Isle of Patmos. It was written at a time of national unrest and red hot nationalism.

The temple had been destroyed by the Romans, as a result of the Jews of Judea rebelling in AD 66. Emperor Nero dispatched an army under the generalship of Vespasian to restore order. By the year AD 68, resistance in the northern part of the province had been eradicated and the Romans turned their full attention to the subjugation of Jerusalem. That same year, the Emperor Nero died by his own hand, creating a power vacuum in Rome. In the resultant chaos, Vespasian was declared Emperor and returned to the Imperial City. It fell to his son, Titus, to lead the remaining army in the assault on Jerusalem.

The Roman legions surrounded the city and held it in a siege. By the year AD 70, the attackers had breached Jerusalem's outer walls and began a systematic ransacking of the city. The assault culminated in the burning and destruction of the Temple that served as the centre of Judaism.

In victory, the Romans slaughtered thousands. Of those spared from death: thousands more were enslaved and sent to toil in the mines of Egypt, others were dispersed to arenas throughout the Empire to be butchered for the amusement of the public. The Temple's sacred relics were taken to Rome where they were displayed in celebration of the victory.

The rebellion sputtered on for another three years and was finally extinguished in 73 AD with the fall of the various pockets of resistance including the stronghold at Masada.

Pagan culture was in the predominance

### Why

It is believed that John knew the other Gospels had been written and what was written in them and his Gospel was written to provide clarity – John 20 v31

What the real nature of Jesus's kingdom was and His Messiahship  
He keeps his focus on Jesus – especially His power and authority

The religious authorities that there were were around at the time of Jesus were divided into different groups

The **Pharisees** – were mostly middle-class businessmen, and therefore were in contact with the common man. The Pharisees were held in much higher esteem by the common man than the Sadducees. Though they were a minority in the Sanhedrin and held a minority number of positions as priests, they seemed to control the decision making of the Sanhedrin far more than the Sadducees did, again because they had the support of the people.

Religiously, they accepted the written Word as inspired by God. At the time of Christ's earthly ministry, this would have been what is now our Old Testament. But they also gave equal authority to oral tradition and attempted to defend this position by saying it went all the way back to Moses. Evolving over the centuries, these traditions added to God's Word, believing that “the law” was the most important thing

The **Sadducees** – They were aristocrats in the main. They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including that of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin. They worked hard to keep the peace by agreeing with the decisions of Rome as Israel was under Roman control, and they seemed to be more concerned with politics than religion. Because they were accommodating to Rome and were the wealthy upper class, they did not relate well to the common man, nor did the common man hold them in high opinion.

Religiously, the Sadducees were more conservative in one main area of doctrine. The Pharisees gave oral tradition equal authority to the written Word of God, while the Sadducees considered only the written Word to be from God

The **Essenes** considered themselves to be a separate people--not because of external signs like skin color, hair color, etc., but because of the illumination of their inner life and their knowledge of the hidden mysteries of nature unknown to other men. They lived in closed communities

The **Zealots** - The zealots favoured armed rebellion against Rome. They believed that God would deliver Israel with the sword. Their reasoning went back to the days of David. When there was a gentile problem, what did David do? He got out his sword and dealt with it, and God was on his side. Surely, God would raise up a new Son of David who would do the same Simon, was a zealot Luke 6:15

Ok so hopefully that puts it into context. It was a multi faith – multi culture society – pretty much like ours today.

In essence John is writing this to quell any myths that Jesus was just a great Philosopher or Moralist – He was the Son of God.

The church had two large conferences in AD 325 at Nicea and at Chalcedon in AD 451 to discuss and clarify it's beliefs and in each case Johns Gospel was used as one of the key references.

So enough of that lets move to the chapter itself. John 1

## **John 1 1-18 (introduction)**

The first part through to the end of v18 is written as his introduction. It is full of verbs in the original text implying actions.

1-2 – There is lots written about this but in essence John calls Jesus the Word as he is telling us about God.

The Greeks used "the Word" (Logos) to mean reason or thought or wisdom. He matches Proverbs 8:22-31

The words used would have meaning to both Jews and Gentiles alike. - Showing that it was written for both audiences

3-5 – Q Why do we think John is using the word "life" ? - He uses the term 36 times in the Gospel

6-9 Q John is referred to here – who was he? John the baptist Luke 3 1-20

10-13 Q Children of God is mentioned – what is meant by this? Ephesians 2 1-10

14-18

Q What is verse 17 saying – Comparing Law and Grace

Q Why do people not recognise God as their creator? - Live in darkness

## **John 1 19-51 (start of Jesus ministry)**

19-28 In v 21 they ask John if he was Elijah – Why might they have thought that?

29-34 Q Wow what do we think about John calling Jesus the Son of God?

35-39 The expression Lamb of God is only used twice in the Bible – according to the notes Both in this chapter - Q Can we think of other times lambs have been mentioned in the Bible, which might give us a clue as to why John uses the title here? (What do we think about John calling Jesus the Lamb of God? )

The passages of Exodus 12 and Isaiah 53 help to put this section of the Gospel into

context.

Going back to 1 John 1 In v 39 the time is mentioned – It is generally thought that where things like times and specific places are given John is recording the event as an eyewitness account. He is including these details to signify that he was there.

40-42 They call Jesus the Messiah here – They would have probably meant it in a political way suggesting that Jesus was going to throw out the occupying Roman armies and restore self rule for the Jews.

Q How might this compare to the Apostle John's purpose in writing the Gospel? Being a Christian is not a hypothetical philosophy but a call to action.

43-51 Q What does v 51 remind us of ? Jacobs ladder Genesis 28 10-15

Q Why is Jesus saying this? Gateway to heaven.

## Recap

What have we learnt about

- John – the author
  - The Gospel was written to quell any myths that Jesus was just a great philosopher or moralist
  - John did not see Christianity as a hypothetical action but a call to action
  - He assumes that his readers are familiar with the other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke and builds on them.
- John – the Baptist
  - The crowds thought he might have been Elijah who had come back to this world
  - John through divine inspiration recognised that Jesus was the Son of God
  - John called Jesus the Lamb of God – recognising his sacrificial role
- Jesus
  - Jesus is God as flesh and blood – a perfect human.
  - John does not tell us about Jesus's early life
  - Jesus had a dynamic personality – people were attracted to him