

# Gamma – Gospel of John

## Study 1

### Questions

**1. The most important start to reading any book of the bible is to discover why it was written for what purpose. In this gospel you will need to look at John 20:30-31 and share what was the authors intent in writing this book**

**2. The first verse has remarkable similarities with the first book of the bible. Look at John 1:1 and then at Genesis 1:1 and discuss if there are any similarities in both parts of Scripture and why is John doing this? What difference does it make to you and me?**

The start of John's gospel is unlike any others. Mark starts off with the ministry of John the Baptist, Luke with the birth of Jesus and Matthew with the genealogy of Jesus as the Messiah. John takes us all the way back to the beginning of the universe. He takes us back to the origins of life and the real meaning of life. In the age of Greek philosophy which has really given up on reality beyond what is known John tells us that in the beginning is not nothing or eternity but a person God and that person is Jesus. Just as God was from the beginning who created the universe so is Jesus. He was with God and was God himself. Hence the equal status allows John to go about his purpose of explaining God in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus was not just some random prophet albeit with more powers but God Himself. He is the reason for our being

**3. Why does John use the "WORD" to describe Jesus in these first 4 verses? Think about our own use of local terms why do we refer to Tunku Abdul Rahman as "Bapa Malaysia"?**

The Word or Logos has a dual track meaning for the two types of audience for John's gospel. The Greek speaking Gentiles of Ephesus would have appreciated the Logos as the organising principle of life in the whole universe the reason for living according to the Stoics. Humans must live in keeping with this reason. The Logos was the spark of universal reason is in man. This reason needs to be obeyed at all costs otherwise life without dignity. Hence by using or borrowing this term from Greek culture John could immediately connect with the Greek people. It was not a new concept. It was something they were familiar with. For the Jewish audience they were familiar with the Word of God active in creation as they already had Genesis. The Word was the active in expression of like in the 10 commandments and in the prophetic word saving His chosen people time and again in the history of Israel. The Word was God in action saving Israel time and time again.

Hence when John cleverly uses Logos he immediately connects with the entire audience on some level. Obviously throughout the rest of the gospel John will then add his take on what this Word really is in terms of the Christian understanding. The Word in Greek culture was the impersonal universal Reason not unlike the “Force” in a Luke Skywalker Star Wars trilogy. John now starts off with this concept but expands it to say this this “Reason” was actually a person not part of the universe or creation but separate from it.

For the Jews John’s Word would take on a new dimension in the way the Word will actually become flesh and become a man. They have never seen or experienced that dimension in their understanding of the “Word”. Hence you can see why John would use the “Word”

The Word also has the immediate impact of being God’s message to the church not only God’s word like in the message of prophets this word is different this word is the fullest most complete and authoritative expression of God as this word is God himself present in the beginning and with God and was God. Hence the use of the word is to assign fullest of authority to this message which actually the life and ministry of Jesus

In the same way we refer to Tunku as the Father of Malaysia because of the pivotal role he played in the independence of the nation. The term Bapa conveys the idea of authority, love and pre-eminence in a family. Hence the terms immediately allows us to relate to Tunku. However the term is not exhaustive because he was not really our physical ancestor. Hence we can use the term but infuse it with our own meaning when we use it to write about him.

**3. Look at John 1:1-2 and John 1:18 and share about what these verses tell us about the nature of Jesus? And his relationship to God. Why is this important to gospel of John? How does Proverbs 8:22-31 add to the understanding of why the universe and humans were created?**

The use of the preposition “with” tells us of two things. Firstly there is a different person right from the beginning there is not just one and secondly there is a relationship. The Word right from the beginning was with God in a relationship with God. God is about relationships in the center of His being. John 1:18 adds the phrase in the “bosom” of the Father. Hence the dimension of intimacy is supreme. There is no more closer person than the one we allow to lie against our bosom. It will only be our wife or children and no one else hence the picture is vividly painted of activity within the Trinity is love.

It is important in John because of Jesus intimacy with God his revelation of God is ultimate as not only is He God he is totally bound up with God in this relationship. It is like having an ambassador like Jared Kushner (his son in law) represent Donald Trump the president of the USA in his Middle East peace negotiations and that gives authority and credibility. A totally monotheistic God will never and can never be ascribed as being love because love becomes secondary when He creates beings to love. Here love is right in the center of the Divine personality where the Father and Son love and up build each other, take joy in each other.

Proverbs 8 describes Wisdom as the Son and how the world was created in great joy v 30 *“then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,<sup>31</sup> rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man”* Hence because of the perfection of love and joy within the God head the creation of the universe and more specifically men was due to an outflow of that joy and love resulting in delight. The purpose of creation and mankind then becomes to share in the inner joy and love of the God head.

In practical terms this idea resonates so clearly within our beings because for example when we are seriously ill or at crucial times of war and danger the only things that matter to us will never be the bank account or our possessions it will be our family. At the center of our lives will be relationships that make life matter and worthwhile. This finds resonance in us because it is the reason for our creation we were created for relationships and for joy. Take this view of the creation of the universe and compare it many other philosophies that either take the view that the universe has always been or there is nothing at the beginning or that the whole universe is one big soul which is totally impersonal. That kind of ideology finds little resonance in our souls

#### **4. How does one receive His light and become a child of God? What does the emphasis in John 1:13 about the process of new birth convey to us?**

The response is by faith. John 1:12 (ESV) *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*

Receive the light is receiving Jesus in person and all that his life conveys. It is an act of faith to accept that which is given to us in the person of Jesus. The emphasis in v 13 is that this is entirely a God initiated spiritual affair. We cannot orchestrate it nor plan it nor fake it. It comes beginning to end from the purposes of God and the outward evidence of this is the act of believing and accepting this into our lives. This is completely alien to the usual religious emphasis on living an ethical life or good and moral living as a means of gaining merit and thus earn a place in heaven. Spiritual life requires something as radical as a new birth. The metaphor of a new birth implies total helplessness from any dimension of our current life that can be salvaged to achieve that which only God alone can do and He does this through His word. We see this happening in the world when we see folk receiving Him and having faith in Him. It is not the faith that saves it is the spiritual rebirth based on the work of the Word. Faith is the means by which this new birth is achieved.

#### **5. Look at John 1:14 and Phil 2:6-8 for some more corroborating evidence. What does it mean that the “Word became flesh”? Does it mean Jesus gave up being God and became just human or was it half and half? Why is this important to us? What is God’s glory and why is it important for John to testify that he had witnessed it?**

The Word became flesh means Jesus took upon himself the human nature as the word flesh would indicate. In Philippians Paul makes this clearer by saying he took upon himself the form of a servant even submitting to human birth. Hence Jesus added human nature in to his being. Some people misinterpret Paul by taking he emptied himself meaning he ceased to be God. However if you pay attention to the verse it is in the context of equality and station. By coming into the world and assuming the human nature he would have made himself in terms of status lower than God the Father but in essence there is no change. Jesus has two natures in one that of God and human

This is very important to us because if he was only human he would not be able to pay for the sins of the whole world only his own. If he was only God he would not be able to live the perfect life and sacrifice it for us if he was not human. Our sins were cast on him and he suffered as the human we should have suffered.

Any doctrine that detracts from either of these will make salvation impossible.

God's glory is His goodness and John had witnessed it supremely in the person of Jesus.

When Jesus hung on the cross it was out of His grace ---covenantal love to us which was not deserved and truth. John is a witness to this.

The rest of the gospel of John is about Jesus revealing his glory and how through his miracles and life lived John and his companions were able to see the glory of God behind the veil of human flesh.

**6. What does John 1:18 (ESV) "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." Mean? How does this verse help us grow in spirituality? How is Jesus different from Mohammad, Buddha or Marx? Why does the common acknowledgement "Jesus was a great teacher or a good man" totally inaccurate?**

The original Greek is Jesus is the exegesis of GOD which means Jesus is the explanation or the narration of God. No one has seen God it is impossible to postulate or theorise about God. Imagine if you would an ant with its tiny brain would it be able to work out in its brain what you were thinking about last Saturday night? It is so far removed in terms of levels of life that this would be impossible. In fact even amongst humans even in the best of marriages we not come close to totally understanding the other person. The difference of Christianity from all other faiths is that theirs represent the meditation and seeking after truth that is ultimately limited by the confines of the human brain and imagination. Any god so conceived can only be a hopeless grasp at and illusive eternal truth.

Instead Christianity rests upon a person not a philosophy. It rests upon Jesus showing us what God is like explaining Him to us conveying Him to us into our souls with the gift of the Spirit. How he loves and treats his people and what He does for them defines for us in our faith what God is like. Do you want to know what God is like then look at Jesus John says. Hence the way of deeper spirituality must consist on leaning and digging deeper in to the life of Christ given in the Word. The deeper we delve into His word the more and more we are immersed into His life and His light.

Jesus can never be a great teacher or even a good man if his greatest claim that is to be the Son of God is totally false. It is an all or nothing deal. We cannot accept his morals for living

because they make sense and provide for a peaceful progressive society and reject the very basis for those moral principles which are based on the will of God and His very nature and character.

### **APPLICATION AND SHARING**

1. Think about the nature of Christ and His relationship with the Father in John 1:1 and 1:18. And meditate on John 17:26 (ESV) I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” How does this make you feel? How do you make relationships and love the center of your life?
2. What does being a child of God make you feel? In John 1:4 “In him was life and the life was the light of man” How has His life become your light? Were there times in your life where something else has been your light?
3. How do we strive to know God more intimately in our lives? John 1:18