



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Like any great musical work, John's gospel opens with a lyric prelude preparing us for something wonderful to come. In fact, the first 18 verses of chapter 1 are *prelude* to John's symphonic unveiling of the deity of Jesus. As a prelude sets a melodic theme for the wider musical work, so John's opening words introduce a recurring motif: Jesus Christ is God. And John gives us four reasons why we can hold to such a belief.

Let's take a closer look at how John, the master composer, develops his theme of the deity of Christ.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

You may wish to begin this study first by reading through the entire first chapter of John. As you do, watch for recurring themes and words that offer clues to John's deeper meaning.

As we turn to this passage, we'll use the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study to observe, interpret, correlate, and apply the text. Chuck Swindoll's book, *Searching the Scriptures*, explains these methods in more detail, and you can purchase a copy at Insight for Living Ministries' [online store](#). Also, you may wish to check out [Chuck's commentary on John's gospel](#).



Observation: The Divine Attributes of God's Son

John 1:1–18 develops a theological motif which carries readers through the entirety of John's gospel. John offers four clear aspects of Jesus' nature that can only be true of deity.

Quotable

*May we, just
like the readers of
John's day, come
to terms with our
eternal destinies
and determine
that Christ alone
is worthy of our
worship and
obedience
and praise.*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Searching the Scriptures Tools

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Read the passage carefully, noticing features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.

1. He is eternal in nature:

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. (John 1:1–2)

John opens his gospel with one of Scripture's clearest statements on the eternal nature of Jesus. Jesus is the "Word" which John refers to here. In fact, the English article *the* does not exist in the original language. It was inserted for clarity much later. So John's expression would be more literally, "In the beginning . . . Word." What other things do you observe from verses 1 and 2 about how John describes the Word? What words are repeated?

In what ways do these two verses remind you of Genesis 1:1–2? What words and images do they share?



2. He is creator of all things:

God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. (John 1:3)

What words does John use in this verse to explain the power of Jesus as creator? What contrasting words does he use?

Take a few moments to meditate and reflect on what John reveals about Jesus in these three short verses. What thoughts come to your mind? Make some notes about how significant these truths may have been to John's first-century readers.

3. He is the source of all spiritual life:

The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:4–5)

What key words emerge from these two verses? How are they related?



How would you describe the relationship between the life and light that Jesus brings? What action words do you see, and to what or whom are they connected?

4. He represents the Father as God in the flesh:

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. (John 1:14)

John tells us that not everyone who encountered Jesus received Him as Messiah. But all who did received eternal life in His name through spiritual rebirth (1:10–13). John reveals Jesus as God in the flesh, which forms the New Testament doctrine of the incarnation. In your own words, how would you describe this important Christian doctrine?

Find the word *incarnation* either in your Bible dictionary or theological dictionary. Take a few minutes to read what is written about this foundational doctrine of the Christian faith.

In the space below, jot down some things you learned.



In John 1:14, what words does John use to describe the Word? How does John describe the Word's relationship to God the Father?

Using what John 1:1–14 reveals about Jesus, God's Son, write in your own words how you would describe what you believe about Jesus to an unbelieving friend?

Craft your observations into principles. For example, "Because God became human, we can trust Him to understand our struggles." What other principles do you glean?



Helpful Hint

A *principle* is a statement of truth emerging from the biblical text that is as true now as it was in Bible times. Principles bridge the past to the present, the ancient culture to modern times. Although John wrote to a specific audience in his day, the principles we learn about the deity of Jesus impact us today.





Interpretation: John's Prelude to Deity—Jesus as God

Interpretation answers the question, *What does this passage mean?* To clarify the meaning of a text, first view it through the eyes of the original audience. How did John intend his readers to understand this passage? For each phrase listed below, what do you believe John intended to convey?

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

God created everything through him. (1:3)

The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. (1:4)

So the Word became human and made his home among us. (1:14)



Correlation: John's Teaching Regarding the Deity of Jesus

In John's prelude he writes about the eternal nature of Jesus, His power in creating the world, His giving of all spiritual life, and His becoming human. Correlation helps us look at other passages in the Bible that support our interpretation of Scripture. Read the following Scripture passages and write a sentence or two about how each supports what John teaches about the attributes of God, which he and other New Testament writers ascribe to Jesus.



BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

Prelude to Deity

John 1:1–18

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

Psalm 8

Psalm 90

Isaiah 53

Colossians 1:15–20

Hebrews 1:1–4

1 John 1:1–10



Application: Taking to Heart the Lessons

If Jesus is in fact God in the flesh as John proclaims, what implications does Jesus' deity have for our lives? As you review the following principles about the nature of Jesus, God's Son, finish the sentence to form a personal application.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Because Jesus is eternal, I am able to . . .

Because Jesus created all things, I must . . .

Because Jesus is the source of eternal life, I need to . . .

Because Jesus is God in the flesh, I am able to . . .



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I praise and thank You for sending into the world Your one and only Son, Jesus. I worship Him as the Creator and Provider of all things. And I surrender my life to Him by faith. Make me more and more like Him as I follow Him in obedience. May His glory shine through my life today and in the days to come. In His wondrous name, amen.



BEHOLDING CHRIST . . . THE SON OF GOD

Prelude to Deity

John 1:1–18

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

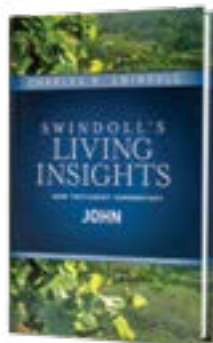
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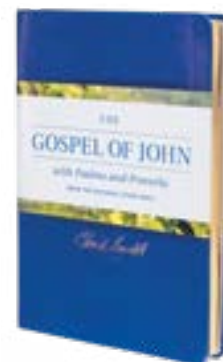
Tools for Digging Deeper



**Beholding Christ . . .
The Son of God:
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by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



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For the 2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Searching the Scriptures Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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