

THE FINAL FOUR

Gospel of John, ch. 1

This is Part #1 of a tour of four of the New Testament's 260 chapters: John 1, Romans 3, Ephesians 2 and 1 Thessalonians 4. It's a Mach 2, high altitude fly-over of the past 2,000 years.

It's *circa* AD 26. You, John, are a reporter for the *Jerusalem Post*, assigned to write the definitive story which unequivocally determines if God exists, and how that affects humanity.

DISCUSS: How will you approach this journalistic Goliath of a task?

As Jesus' BFF, this brash 20-something fisherman shadows a baffling, Nazarene carpenter for three years that changed the world. Let's read John 1:1-28, **Good News Bible, p. 951.**

"Where Do I Begin?"

Andy Williams crooned this "Love Story" theme in 1970. God's love story, the Bible, answers this ballad's question so symmetrically:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"
(Genesis 1:1).

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

"In the beginning" means "before all time and created existence." The universe "came to be," but the **Word** *never* "came to be" because He, the Son of God, *always* was (Isaiah 45:18-19, p. 649).

"**Word**" means God is the consummate communicator. "**With** God" refers to Father, Son and Holy Spirit – all were present at Creation. God is one, yet three distinct personalities. "**Was** God" affirms the Son's equality with Father and Spirit.

To reveal the Father's nature, the Son came to earth and became fully-human, yet undiminished-God. (**1 Kings 8:22-27, p. 301; Isaiah 9:6-7, p. 619; Colossians 2:9-10, p.1072**)

DISCUSS: Why should we care that Jesus is fully God and fully man?

“Ism She Lovely?” Stevie Wonders

Re our origin, Naturalism says scientific laws cause everything, omitting God or anything “super-natural.” Pantheism’s “Everything *is* God” has spawned many cults and bogus religions. Materialism says, “If you can’t touch it, it doesn’t exist.” Deism reasons that God exists but does not reveal Himself to humans. Theism affirms one God who created and rules the universe.

Why such a fuss about faith? Let’s read Hebrews 10:39-11:3, p. 1099.

DISCUSS: Why does it matter whether God created the universe or not?

Jesus came to bring us LIFE. Not “*bios*” (physical life). Not “*psuche*” (psychological life for mind, emotions and will). But “*zoe*” (the uncreated, eternal, divine life uniquely possessed by God!).

You’ve been on God’s mind since before Creation! (**Jeremiah 1:4-9, p. 670; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, p. 567; Galatians 1:11-16, p. 1055; Ephesians 1:3-10, p. 1061**)

DISCUSS: How does knowing you’re so important to God affect you?

Signs of the Times ***John 1:15-28***

Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist, got his name by baptizing people to announce Messiah’s coming (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:1-5, p. 641).

The Bonneville Dam holds back the colossal Columbia River. But that pales beside the resurrection power unleashed by *believing* in Christ’s sacrifice for you on the cross. Trusting in that gives you unending life, blotting out *all* your sins – past, present and forever! (Romans 1:16-17, p. 1016) To encourage people to believe that, John highlights seven of Jesus’ miracles (John 20:30-31, p. 977).

Sign #1: Making wine from water ID’s Him as Creator (John 2:1-11).

Sign #2: Healing the nobleman’s son shows that Christ’s spoken word has supernatural power (John 4:46-54, p. 956).

Sign #3: Healing the lame man on the Sabbath demonstrates His superiority over religious systems (John 5:1-19, p. 956).

Sign #4: Feeding the 5,000 (closer to 20,000) proved that while their hero, Moses, arranged for them to have their daily manna in the desert, on a far grander scale Jesus is “the Bread of Life” (John 6:1-15, Deuteronomy 18:16-22, p. 166, Acts 3:17-26).

Sign #5: Walking on water displays Jesus' authority over what He created (Matthew 14:22-33, John 6:16-21).

Sign #6: Healing the sightless man stresses that Jesus came to cure man's spiritual blindness (John 9:1-12, Luke 4:19).

Sign #7: Raising Lazarus proves He defeats death (John 11:1-57).

DISCUSS: Why didn't these "signs" convince everyone?

Finders, Keepers

Let's read John 1:29-51, p. 951.

John the Baptist, a sasquatch-look-alike who was beheaded by King Herod, pointed to Jesus, saying, "There's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is God's Son!" (John 6:14-29)

The first words of the adult Jesus is His penetrating "What are you looking for?" Next His invitation, "Come and see." Then Andrew's "We've found the Messiah!" Looking for -- Come see -- We've found Jesus! May it be so for us all.

Let's read Matthew 16:13-18, p. 869. Peter in Greek is *petros*, a masculine noun signifying a stone you might throw. "Rock" in "Upon this rock" is the Greek *petra*, a feminine noun for boulder. These are two very different rocks. Jesus said, "Peter, you're a stone, and on this boulder (your testimony that I am God's Son), not on a person or a religion, I will build my kingdom."

Remember, the Law demands righteousness (right living) from us, BUT GOD, in His grace, gives righteousness to us.

Blending all four of The Final Four chapters into one statement might look like this:

God moved heaven and earth to rescue you from sin's death sentence and escort you into an indescribable, undeserved, endless life with Him.

"Made by God" is branded within your unique DNA that's 3.5 billion letters long! God invites you to be part of His Imax-size story. Ray Stedman said, "Each of us has the power to accept or reject Jesus Christ, but we cannot choose the consequences of that choice."

Jesus' last recorded words in John's gospel linger today: "Follow me." Have you RSVP'd?

THE BOLDEST, MOST PROFOUND CLAIMS EVER MADE

John, the disciple, records seven “I am” claims which Jesus made to equate Himself with Yahweh, God’s Old Testament name (**Exodus 3:14-20**).

“I am who I am.” Exodus 3:14

“I am the Bread of life.” John 6:35b

“I am the Light of the World.”

“I am the Door.” John 10:7b

“I am the good Shepherd.” John 10:11a; Psalm 23:1

“I am the Resurrection and the Life.” John 11:25b

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” John 14:6

“I am the Vine.” John 15:5

Everybody has been given enough light to believe in God, so they are without excuse (John 1:9; Romans 1:18-23).

As Jesus put it, “Who do you say that I am?”

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