

Dr. Dave Turner, John, Session 1, Introduction Part 1, Literary and Theological Matters Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Turner, John, Session 1, Introduction Part 1, Literary and Theological Matters, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Turner's introductory lecture on the **Gospel of John** at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary outlines a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the text. The session explores the **historical, literary, and theological dimensions** of John, contrasting it with the synoptic Gospels and emphasizing its unique focus on **Christology**. Turner discusses John's structure, highlighting the **prologue, public ministry (Book of Signs), private ministry (Book of Glory), passion narrative, and epilogue**. Key Johannine themes like **Jesus as the revealer of God, ethical dualism, and the role of the Holy Spirit** are also introduced, alongside a consideration of the relationship between signs and faith within the Gospel.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Turner, John, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →
Gospels → John).**



**Turner_John_Session
n01.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Turner, John, Session 1, Introduction

Part 1, Literary and Theological Matters

Briefing Document: Dr. David Turner on the Gospel of John, Session 1

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. David Turner in the first session of his lecture series on the Gospel of John. The lecture serves as an introduction, covering literary and theological matters to prepare viewers for a deeper study of the text. Dr. Turner emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach, utilizing historical, cultural, and literary tools to understand John's Gospel.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Unique Perspective of John's Gospel:

- **John as the "Eagle" Gospel:** Early church tradition associated the four Gospels with the four living creatures in Ezekiel and Revelation. John's Gospel was symbolized by the eagle, signifying its soaring Christology and overall beautiful perspective, particularly evident in the prologue. *"They thought of the Gospel of John as the eagle because they thought John's Christology sort of soared over the world, particularly when they began to read the prologue."*
- **Genre: Historical and Theological:** Dr. Turner poses the question of whether John is primarily a historical or a theological book, ultimately concluding that it is both. While containing historical content, it also has a strong theological emphasis.
- **Investigation vs. Interpretation:** The lecture explores whether the Gospel authors were primarily investigating the past or interpreting it for their present audience. Dr. Turner suggests both were at play, with Luke's prologue explicitly mentioning historical research. He notes that while John's author was purportedly an eyewitness, the Gospels aim beyond simply stating facts. *"The Gospels aren't simply telling us what happened with Jesus. They are asking a question, so what? Why do we need to know about Jesus and what is so important about him that we need to do it?"*
- **Literary Creativity and Agenda:** John's Gospel is recognized for its literary beauty and distinctiveness compared to the Synoptics. John himself states his agenda at the end of the book: to present accounts that lead to belief and life in Jesus' name. *"John tells us at the end of the book that he could have told us lots of*

things about Jesus, but he's limiting what he has written to the things that have led people to faith so that they might have life."

- **Definition of Gospels:** Dr. Turner proposes that *"the Gospels creatively tell us the theological significance of the historical events of the life of Jesus."* They aim for edification and transformation, not just information.

2. Illustrative Example: John 13:30 ("It was night.")

- This verse, describing Judas' departure after taking the bread, is used to illustrate the interplay between historical fact and theological meaning in John's Gospel.
- **Historical Interpretation:** Simply a chronological detail indicating the time of day.
- **Theological/Symbolic Interpretation:** "Night" as a metaphor for Judas' spiritual darkness and lack of spiritual illumination.
- Dr. Turner argues, considering the consistent use of "light" and "darkness" throughout John's writings (Gospel, Epistles, Revelation), that while the statement is historically true, John uses it to convey Judas' benighted spiritual state.
- He quotes Augustine: *"erat autem nox, it was night, and he who went out it was night. So Judas himself personified and epitomized the night..."*
- This example highlights L.T. Johnson's description of John as *"stylistically simple, yet symbolically dense."*

3. Structure and Narrative Flow of John's Gospel:

- **Prologue (John 1:1-18):** Introduces Jesus as the Word, connecting him to Moses and John the Baptist, and as the ultimate revelation of God's glory.
- **Public Ministry (John 1:19 - Chapter 12 - The Book of Signs):** Focuses on Jesus' public ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem, with many events unique to John. This section highlights the "signs" of Jesus.
- **Private Ministry (Chapters 13-17 - The Book of Glory):** Shifts to Jesus' interactions with his disciples, including the Last Supper discourse (though Dr. Turner prefers not to use "upper room" or "farewell discourse") and the prayer in John 17. This section emphasizes the manifestation of God's glory to his disciples.
- **Passion Account (Chapters 18-19):** Follows a narrative more parallel to the Synoptics, detailing Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, and burial.

- **Resurrection Narrative (Chapter 20):** Culminates in Jesus' appearance to Thomas and the editorial comment about the purpose of the book: to foster belief and life in Jesus' name (John 20:30-31). *"these are written that you might believe and that you might have life in his name."*
- **Epilogue (Chapter 21):** An additional chapter detailing Jesus' appearance to the disciples in Galilee, his reaffirmation of Peter's ministry, and a concluding statement about the beloved disciple's witness.

4. The Significance of "Signs" in John:

- John uses the term "signs" (σημεῖα) to describe Jesus' miracles, highlighting their significance in pointing to his identity.
- Dr. Turner identifies seven key signs in John:
 1. Water into wine at Cana (John 2) - Jesus' first sign in Galilee, done in an understated way as "his hour had not yet come."
 2. Healing the royal official's son (John 4) - The second sign in Galilee.
 3. Healing the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda (John 5) - A more overtly miraculous healing.
 4. Feeding the multitude (John 6) - The only miracle in all four Gospels, reminiscent of manna in the wilderness, with Jesus claiming to be the better "manna."
 5. Walking on water (John 6) - Demonstrating Jesus' divine control over nature.
 6. Healing the man born blind (John 9) - Addressing prejudice and contrasting physical and spiritual sight.
 7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11) - The ultimate sign, significantly increasing Jesus' popularity and precipitating the plot against him.
- **Complex Relationship with Faith:** While signs can lead to belief (John 2:11, 2:23), John also shows instances where belief based solely on signs is superficial (John 2:24-25, Nicodemus in John 3), or where people seek signs without true understanding (John 4:48, John 6:26). Jesus blesses those who believe without seeing (John 20:29).

5. Major Johannine Themes and Ideas:

- **Jesus as the Ultimate Revelator of God:** The prologue (John 1:1, 1:14) establishes Jesus as the Word made flesh, the one who fully reveals the Father. *"if you have seen me, you have seen the Father, Chapter 14."*
- **Ethical Dualism:** John presents a strong dichotomy between good and evil, light and darkness, God and Satan, and their respective followers. This is not ontological but a dualism of ideas and ethical choices. *"I do the deeds of my Father, you do the deeds of your Father. They protest and say our Father is Abraham. Jesus says, no, your Father is the devil because you don't live like Abraham lived."*
- **Connection to Israel's History:** John connects Jesus to key figures like John the Baptist (the forerunner) and Moses (the prototype), highlighting Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. *"Jesus says to the people in chapter 5 that they say they believe in Moses, but if they had believed in Moses, if they had believed in scripture, they would have believed in Jesus because Moses wrote about Jesus."*
- **The Holy Spirit (Parakletos):** The Spirit is introduced early (John 1:32-33) and his role is further developed. Jesus promises the Spirit as the "Comforter," "Helper," or "Advocate" (Parakletos) who will continue his presence with the disciples, remind them of his teachings, and convict the world. *"it is expedient for you that I leave. I just think how crazy it must have sounded to Jesus' disciples for him to say to them, you'll be better off if I'm gone. Essentially, that's what he's saying. He says, if I don't go, the comforter, the advocate won't come."*

Recommended Resources (Mentioned by Dr. Turner):

- *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* by Andreas Kostenberger
- *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* edited by Richard Bauckham and Carl Moser
- *Theology of the Gospel of John* by Moody Smith
- Work by J. Louis Martin (arguing John was written for Jewish believers facing synagogue expulsion)

Conclusion:

Dr. Turner's first lecture provides a foundational understanding of the Gospel of John, emphasizing its unique literary style, theological depth, and intentional narrative structure. He highlights the importance of considering both the historical context and the symbolic meaning within the text. The introduction of key Johannine themes like Jesus as the revealer, ethical dualism, connection to the Old Testament, and the role of the Holy Spirit sets the stage for a more detailed exploration in subsequent sessions. The analogy of a child wading in a stream versus an elephant drowning aptly illustrates the simplicity and complexity inherent in studying this profound Gospel.

4. Study Guide: Turner, John, Session 1, Introduction Part 1, Literary and Theological Matters

Study Guide: The Gospel of John, Session 1

Quiz:

1. According to early church tradition, represented by figures like those who created the Book of Kells, which of the four creatures in Ezekiel and Revelation 4 symbolized the Gospel of John, and why?
2. Dr. Turner suggests that understanding different genres of writing, like newspapers with their news, editorials, comics, and classified ads, can help us approach the Bible. Explain this analogy in the context of reading the Gospel of John.
3. What is the apparent paradox or tension that Dr. Turner highlights when considering the Gospel of John as either a historical book or a theological book? What resolution does he propose?
4. How does the literary creativity of the Gospel of John, particularly in comparison to the synoptic Gospels, influence our understanding and interpretation of Jesus' story? Provide a specific example from the lecture.
5. Dr. Turner divides the narrative structure of John's Gospel into distinct sections after the prologue. Briefly describe these sections and the general focus of each.
6. What does Dr. Turner suggest is the primary purpose behind the selection and crafting of events in John's Gospel, as indicated towards the end of the book (John 20:30-31)?
7. Name at least three of the seven "signs" of Jesus discussed in the lecture from the Gospel of John. What seems to be a characteristic of the progression of these signs?
8. What is the complex relationship between "signs" and "faith" in the Gospel of John, as illustrated by examples like the reaction of those in Jerusalem (John 2:23-25) and the interaction with Thomas (John 20:24-29)?
9. According to Dr. Turner, what is a central theme of John's Gospel, evident in the prologue and throughout the narrative, concerning Jesus' relationship to God the Father? Provide a specific verse reference.

10. Dr. Turner discusses the role of the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete) in John's Gospel. Briefly explain the Spirit's function according to Jesus' teachings in the later chapters (14-16).

Quiz Answer Key:

1. The eagle symbolized the Gospel of John because early church tradition viewed John's Christology as soaring above the world, particularly when they read the prologue, offering a lofty and profound perspective on Jesus.
2. Just as different sections of a newspaper have their own way of conveying meaning and require different reading expectations, the various literary forms within the Bible, including the Gospels, demand a nuanced approach to understand their intended message and purpose.
3. The paradox is whether John primarily aims to present historical data about Jesus or to interpret that data to promote a particular theological understanding. Dr. Turner resolves this by stating that John is both, creatively telling the theological significance of historical events.
4. John exhibits significant literary creativity by selecting specific events and crafting his narrative with a clear theological agenda, such as the symbolic meaning attributed to Judas going out at "night" in John 13:30, suggesting his spiritual darkness beyond a mere chronological detail.
5. Following the prologue (John 1:1-18), the Gospel is divided into the public ministry (Book of Signs, chapters 1-12) focusing on Jesus' miracles, the private ministry (Book of Glory, chapters 13-17) emphasizing his teaching to the disciples, the passion account (following synoptic tradition), the resurrection narrative (chapter 20), and the epilogue (chapter 21) reaffirming Peter's ministry.
6. The primary purpose, according to John 20:30-31, is to present specific signs that Jesus performed, not exhaustively, but selectively, so that readers might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by believing have life in his name.
7. Examples include the transformation of water into wine (John 2), the healing of the royal official's son (John 4), and the healing of the paralytic (John 5). The signs appear to progress in their scale of miraculousness, culminating in the raising of Lazarus (John 11).
8. While some believe in Jesus upon witnessing signs, their faith is sometimes portrayed as superficial or based on self-interest. True faith, as highlighted by

Jesus' words to Thomas ("blessed are those who believe without seeing"), is presented as more profound than belief solely dependent on miraculous evidence.

9. A central theme is Jesus as the ultimate revelator of God the Father. John 1:18 states, "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known," emphasizing Jesus' unique role in revealing God's nature.
10. The Holy Spirit, as the Paraclete, is presented as continuing Jesus' presence with the disciples after his departure. The Spirit's roles include reminding them of Jesus' teachings, teaching them new things, equipping them, and convicting the world, essentially acting as Jesus' representative and empowering them for their mission.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the ways in which the Gospel of John functions as both a historical account and a theological interpretation of the life and ministry of Jesus. Use specific examples from the lecture to support your argument.
2. Discuss the significance of the "signs" in the Gospel of John. What role do these miracles play in revealing Jesus' identity and in eliciting faith (or lack thereof) from those who witness them?
3. Explore the literary structure of the Gospel of John as presented by Dr. Turner, including the prologue, the Book of Signs, the Book of Glory, and the epilogue. How does this structure contribute to the overall message and purpose of the Gospel?
4. Examine the concept of ethical dualism (light/dark, God/Satan) as a major Johannine theme. How does this dualism shape the narrative and influence the portrayal of characters and their responses to Jesus?
5. Discuss the role and significance of the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete) in the Gospel of John. According to Jesus' teachings, how does the Spirit function in relation to Jesus and his followers?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Christology:** The branch of theology concerned with the person, nature, and role of Jesus Christ.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a similar perspective and content in their accounts of Jesus' life.
- **Prologue:** An introductory section of a literary work, such as the first 18 verses of the Gospel of John.
- **Epilogue:** A concluding section of a literary work that comes after the main narrative, such as John chapter 21.
- **Book of Signs:** A designation often used by scholars for the first part of John's Gospel (chapters 1-12), which highlights Jesus' miraculous deeds.
- **Book of Glory:** A designation often used by scholars for the second part of John's Gospel (chapters 13-17), which focuses on Jesus' final teachings and his glorification.
- **Parakletos:** A Greek term used in the Gospel of John to refer to the Holy Spirit as a helper, comforter, advocate, or counselor.
- **Ethical Dualism:** The theological concept of a sharp contrast between good and evil, often represented by opposing forces or concepts (e.g., light and darkness). In John, this is more of a dualism of ideas and ethical choices rather than a metaphysical one.
- **Typology:** A method of biblical interpretation where events, persons, or institutions in the Old Testament are seen as prefiguring or foreshadowing corresponding realities in the New Testament, particularly related to Jesus Christ.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of scripture. In John 1:18, Jesus is described as the ultimate "exegesis" of God.

5. FAQs on Turner, John, Session 1, Introduction Part 1, Literary and Theological Matters, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Gospel of John

1. **How does the Gospel of John differ in its approach compared to the other Gospels?** John's Gospel, while containing historical elements, is often seen as more theologically oriented than the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). While the synoptics provide a more straightforward chronological narrative, John delves deeper into the significance of Jesus' words and deeds, aiming to reveal his divine identity and invite belief. John also uniquely includes a prologue that presents Jesus as the pre-existent Word, emphasizes Jesus' private ministry to his disciples, and focuses on specific "signs" that point to Jesus' true nature.
2. **What is the significance of the "signs" in the Gospel of John?** The "signs" in John's Gospel are miraculous events performed by Jesus that serve as evidence of his divine identity and purpose. John highlights seven specific signs, which seem to increase in their demonstration of Jesus' power, culminating in the raising of Lazarus. These signs are not merely displays of power but are intended to lead people to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that they might have life in his name. However, the relationship between seeing signs and true faith is complex in John, as some believe based on signs, while others misinterpret them or fail to grasp their deeper meaning.
3. **What does John mean by presenting Jesus as the "Word" (Logos) in the prologue?** In the prologue (John 1:1-18), John introduces Jesus as the "Word" (Logos) who existed with God from the beginning and was himself God. This concept connects Jesus to the creation of the world and positions him as the ultimate revealer of God to humanity. The Word becoming flesh in Jesus signifies God taking on human form to dwell among us and make himself known. Through Jesus, we gain the most complete understanding of God's glory and character.
4. **How does John portray the relationship between Jesus and the Father?** John's Gospel emphasizes the intimate and unique relationship between Jesus and God the Father. Jesus consistently speaks of the Father as the one who sent him and whose will he carries out. He claims to be one with the Father, stating, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father" (John 14:9). This close relationship

underscores Jesus' divine authority and his role as the perfect representation of God.

5. **What is the concept of "ethical dualism" as presented in John?** John presents a strong ethical dualism, contrasting light and darkness, truth and falsehood, and those who are "of God" versus those who are "of the devil." This isn't a metaphysical dualism of equal opposing forces, but rather a stark contrast in values and allegiances. Those who follow Jesus and believe in his teachings walk in the light and do the deeds of God, while those who reject him remain in darkness and align themselves with the forces opposed to God.
6. **What role does the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete) play in John's Gospel?** The Holy Spirit, referred to as the Paraclete (Comforter, Helper, Advocate), plays a crucial role in John's Gospel, particularly in the farewell discourse (chapters 14-16). Jesus promises to send the Spirit to his disciples after his departure. The Spirit's functions include reminding the disciples of Jesus' teachings, guiding them into further truth, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and continuing Jesus' presence and work in the lives of believers.
7. **How does John connect Jesus to figures and events from the Old Testament?** John subtly but significantly connects Jesus to key figures and events from the Old Testament. For instance, John the Baptist is presented as the forerunner prophesied to prepare the way for the Lord. More profoundly, Jesus is portrayed as the fulfillment of Moses' longing to see God's glory. Jesus claims that Moses wrote about him and implies that a proper understanding of the Old Testament scriptures should lead to belief in him. The miracle of the manna in the wilderness is also used to illustrate that Jesus is the true bread from heaven.
8. **What is the stated purpose of the Gospel of John?** The author explicitly states the purpose of the Gospel in John 20:30-31: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Therefore, John's primary aim is to persuade readers to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and the divine Son of God, leading to eternal life through faith in him.