

Dr. David L. Turner, The Gospel of John, Session 1, Introduction, Part 1, Podcast Audio Overview

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Welcome to another Deep Dive. Today, we're going to be taking a look at the Gospel of John. Oh, cool.

We've got a fascinating set of lectures from Dr. David Turner. Okay. And I have to say, his approach really caught my eye.

Yeah. He doesn't just talk about the theology of John. Right.

He brings in the history, the culture, even the literature of the time period. Huh, interesting. That's really cool.

Yeah, it's a multi-layered approach, that's for sure. Yeah. It helps us see how John wasn't just writing for theologians.

Right. He was crafting a message for everyone living in his time. It's like getting a 3D view of the gospel, isn't it? It is.

And speaking of different perspectives, did you know early church fathers connected each gospel to a creature from Ezekiel and Revelation? I did not know that. John, believe it or not, was represented by an eagle. Interesting choice, right? The soaring perspective, the sharp vision.

Yeah. It makes you wonder if they saw those qualities in John's writing. Yeah.

And that actually leads to a big question Dr. Turner tackles. Is this gospel primarily historical, theological, or could it be both? I'm hooked already. So which side does Dr. Turner take? Well, he argues it's a beautiful blend of both.

Okay. He says John isn't just concerned with the events of Jesus's life. Right.

He's revealing their significance, their deeper meaning. So it's not just the timeline of what happened. It's more like an interpretation of why it matters.

Dr. Turner uses a great analogy. Yeah. Think of a newspaper.

Okay. You've got your news stories, just the facts, right? Right. But then you've got editorials, opinion pieces analyzing those facts.

Yeah. And of course, you can't forget the comics, which convey truth in a completely different way. I love that analogy.

So John is like the opinion section of the Bible, giving us his take on Jesus's life and why it matters. Well, it's more nuanced than that. Not just John's opinion, but his inspired interpretation of who Jesus is and what he came to do.

Right. Remember, John was an eyewitness. Oh, yeah.

He walked and talked with Jesus. I was there. But like a good editorial writer, he carefully selects and arranges his material to have maximum impact on the reader.

So he's shaping the narrative, but not fabricating it. Precisely. Dr. Turner points out a fascinating example in John 13.30. Okay.

It's the Last Supper. Tensions are high. And it says Judas leaves at night.

Right. Now, on the surface level, it's a time of day. Yeah.

But Dr. Turner suggests it could also be symbolic of Judas's spiritual state. That's really interesting. So Judas living in darkness represents his turn toward betrayal, while Jesus is the light of the world.

You got it. And John uses light and darkness throughout the gospel, contrasting those who follow Jesus, who walk in the light, with those who reject him, who remain in darkness. Wow.

I never noticed that before. It seems like every little detail has a deeper meaning. Yeah.

It's making me want to go back and reread John with fresh eyes. And we see this interplay of light and darkness echoed in other Johannine writings too. Really? Like First John and Revelation.

It's like John is painting a grand interconnected picture of the spiritual realm. This is incredible. I can already tell this deep dive is going to be one for the books.

Okay. I'm already seeing John in a whole new light. Literally.

Yeah. It's like he's carefully crafting a masterpiece. He absolutely is.

Using symbolism and imagery to draw us into the story. And it's not just about pretty words. Right.

John tells us up front what he's doing. Okay. In John 20.3 v. 31, he states his purpose.

And what's that? To lead people to faith in Jesus. So everything in the gospel, all the stories and teachings, are chosen with that goal in mind. That's what Dr. Turner argues.

To bring people to faith. And to understand how John does this, we have to look at the structure. Okay.

He divides the gospel into five sections. Five sections, okay. A prologue, a section on Jesus' public ministry.

Okay. Which he calls the book of signs. Book of signs.

And the private ministry. Okay. The book of glory.

Book of glory. Followed by the passion narrative. Right.

And finally, an epilogue. That makes sense. Yeah.

So let's talk about those signs. Okay. There are seven of them in John's Gospel.

Yes. And they get increasingly, well, miraculous as you go through them. It starts with water turning to wine.

Right. Then healing the official's son. Okay.

Healing at the pool of Bethesda. Okay. Feeding the 5,000.

Wow. Walking on water. Walking on water, yeah.

Healing the man born blind. Okay. And finally, raising Lazarus from the dead.

Okay. So they definitely escalate. They do.

But if John's goal is to lead people to faith. Right. Just showing these miracles wouldn't be enough, right? That's a good point.

People have to actually believe what they're seeing. That's where it gets really interesting. Okay.

Because John shows us that seeing isn't always believing. He gives us examples of people who witness miracles. Oh.

And react in completely different ways. Give me an example that comes to mind. Think of Nicodemus.

Okay, Nicodemus. He comes to Jesus at night. Already we see that symbolism of darkness.

Clearly intrigued by Jesus's signs. He even acknowledges that Jesus must be from God to do these things. Right.

But does he exhibit genuine faith? That's not so clear. It's like he's curious. Yeah.

Maybe even impressed. But not quite ready to commit. Yeah.

Maybe he's afraid of what following Jesus would really mean for his life. That's a great point. Yeah.

And then there are those in John 6 who follow Jesus for the food. Oh. Not because they believe in who he is.

They're focused on the material benefits, not the spiritual reality. Oh, that stings a little. Yeah.

Makes you wonder how often we might do the same following for the wrong reasons. Absolutely. Are we attracted to the idea of miracles and blessings? Yeah.

Or are we truly drawn to Jesus himself? The question worth asking ourselves. Yeah, it is. Then there's Thomas, the ultimate doubter.

Yeah. He refuses to believe in the resurrection. Right.

Until he sees and touches Jesus's wounds. But even Thomas eventually comes around. Yes.

But Jesus points out a more profound truth. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. It's like, sure, seeing is believing.

But there's a deeper level of faith that transcends physical proof. Exactly. It's about trusting even when you have doubts, when you can't see the whole picture.

Yeah. It's about choosing to believe in the face of uncertainty. Exactly.

And that's the kind of faith John is trying to cultivate in his readers. Right. He wants us to see that genuine belief goes beyond just witnessing miracles.

Okay. It's about surrendering to Jesus, accepting who he is, and trusting him completely. This is so insightful.

So we've talked about how John weaves together history and theology and how he uses science to point towards faith. Right. But there's so much more to unpack here.

What other key themes run through the gospel? One of the biggest is the idea of Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God. Yeah. John calls Jesus the Word made flesh.

Right. He's saying that Jesus isn't just a prophet or a teacher. Right.

He is God himself walking among us. So if we want to know what God is like, we just need to look at Jesus. Exactly.

In John 14.9, Jesus says, whoever has seen me has seen the Father. It's that simple. This is radical.

No other religious figure has ever made such a claim. Mind-blowing. It is.

And that ties back to the whole idea of light and darkness, right? Absolutely. Jesus has the light revealing the truth about God, breaking through the darkness of ignorance and sin. Absolutely.

John portrays this struggle between good and evil, light and darkness throughout the gospel. Yeah. He calls it ethical dualism.

Ethical dualism. This is a constant battle between two opposing forces. Right.

And it's not just an abstract concept. Yeah. It plays out in the lives of the characters.

And the choices they make. Wow. It's starting to feel like a spiritual epic.

Yeah. With Jesus as the hero leading the charge against darkness. That's a great way to put it.

And it's an epic with real stakes. It is. John shows us that the choices we make matter.

We can choose to follow the light, to embrace truth and goodness, or we can remain in darkness, separated from God. Okay, this is heavy stuff. Yeah.

But incredibly inspiring at the same time. It is. It's making me rethink my own choices, my own priorities.

Good. But before we get too existential. Okay.

I have to ask, what about the Holy Spirit? Oh, yeah. We can't forget that John emphasizes the Spirit's role too, right? Absolutely. The Holy Spirit is a central figure in John's gospel.

Okay. He is described as the advocate, the helper. Okay.

The one who guides us into truth after Jesus' ascension. So even though Jesus is physically gone, he isn't abandoning his followers. Right.

The Spirit is there to guide and empower them. Exactly. And this is a crucial point for John's original audience.

Okay. Who are facing persecution and uncertainty after Jesus' death. Makes sense.

He wants to assure them that they're not alone. Yeah. Spirit is their constant companion, their source of strength and guidance.

That's so reassuring. It's like, even in the midst of darkness and uncertainty, there's this powerful force of good working within us, guiding us towards truth. Yeah.

It's almost like having Jesus himself with us. It is. Even though he's physically gone.

You've hit on a key point. Remember that phrase: the Word made flesh. Yeah.

John is showing us that God's presence isn't limited to a specific time or place. Right. Through the Spirit, God's power and presence are available to us here and now.

This is incredibly rich. I'm starting to see how all these themes are connected. Yeah.

How they weave together to create this tapestry of faith and meaning. It's an intricate tapestry, that's for sure. It is.

And we've only just begun to explore it. You're right. We still haven't even talked about John the Baptist and Moses.

And I'm dying to know how they fit into the picture. We'll get to that. Don't go anywhere, listeners.

We're just getting warmed up. We'll be back in a flash with even more insights from Dr. Turner's lectures on the Gospel of John. Welcome back to our deep dive into the Gospel of John.

It's so good to be back. I feel like we've been on this incredible journey, uncovering layer after layer of meaning in this amazing text. It's like we're putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle, and each piece reveals a little more of the big picture.

And just when you think you've grasped the main idea, you discover a new connection, a new insight that deepens your understanding even further. Exactly. Speaking of connections, we left off talking about some pretty important figures.

John the Baptist and Moses. Oh, yeah. How do they fit into John's grand narrative? Well, Dr. Turner suggests that understanding these figures is crucial for unlocking the deeper message of John's Gospel.

OK. He sees them as foreshadowing figures pointing towards the ultimate revelation of God in Jesus. OK, let's unpack that a bit.

OK. Starting with John the Baptist. OK.

He's the one who baptizes Jesus in the River Jordan. Right. But what's his larger role in the story? John the Baptist is portrayed as the forerunner of Jesus.

OK. The one who prepares the way for the Messiah. He's like the opening act getting the audience ready for the main event.

I like that analogy. So how does John the Baptist prepare the way for Jesus? He calls people to repentance. OK.

To turn away from their sins and turn towards God. Right. He announces that someone greater than him is coming.

Someone who will baptize not with water, but with the Holy Spirit. So John the Baptist is acknowledging his own limitations, pointing beyond himself to the one who truly fulfills God's promises. Precisely.

And this is where the connection to Moses comes in. OK, bring on Moses. Dr. Turner points out that there are a lot of parallels between Moses and Jesus in John's Gospel.

Oh, really? So, like, John is intentionally drawing these connections to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of what Moses prefigured. Wow. OK, I'm intrigued.

Give me an example. OK. What kind of parallels are we talking about? Well, think about the story of the Exodus.

OK, the Exodus. Moses leads the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land. In a similar way, Jesus leads us out of the slavery of sin and into the freedom of a relationship with God.

So Jesus is like a new Moses offering a new Exodus. Yeah. A liberation from the things that hold us captive.

Yes. And there's an even more mind-blowing connection that Dr. Turner points out. OK, lay it on me.

In Exodus 33 and 34, Moses begs God to show him his glory. OK, I remember that story. But God tells Moses that he can't see his face directly.

Right. Because no one can see God and live. Right.

Instead, God allows Moses to see his back as he passes by. It's intense. So what's the connection to Jesus? Well, Dr. Turner argues that Jesus is the full revelation of God that Moses longed to see.

Wow. In John 1.18, it says, No one has ever seen God, but God, the one and only who is at the Father's side, has made him known. Oh, wow.

Jesus is the one who finally reveals the Father's heart to us in all its fullness and glory. That's incredible. It's like Jesus is bridging the gap between humanity and God, fulfilling the deepest longing of Moses and countless others who yearn to see God face to face.

Exactly. And this revelation isn't just for a select few like Moses. Right.

It's for everyone who chooses to believe in Jesus. So it's for us today. Through him, we can experience a level of intimacy with God that was previously unimaginable.

This is blowing my mind. I'm starting to see John's gospel as this grand, epic narrative weaving together history, theology, and literary brilliance to reveal the ultimate truth about God and humanity. It truly is a masterpiece.

And as we wrap up this deep dive, yeah. I think it's important to remember that John's message isn't just about acquiring knowledge or appreciating the beauty of the text. It's more than that.

It's about allowing ourselves to be transformed by the truth it reveals. You're right. It's one thing to understand the story of Jesus intellectually, but it's another thing entirely to experience the power of his love and grace in our own lives.

Right. So how do we bridge that gap? Yeah, that's a good question. How do we move from intellectual understanding to genuine transformation? John gives us a clue when he emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit.

Okay. The Holy Spirit. The Spirit isn't just an abstract force.

He is the living presence of God, active in our hearts, guiding us, teaching us, and empowering us to live lives that reflect the character of Jesus. So it's not enough to just read about Jesus or even to believe in him intellectually. Right.

We need to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, to allow him to work within us, to shape us and mold us into the image of Christ. Exactly. And that transformation won't always be easy or comfortable.

Right. It might require us to let go of old patterns, to confront our fears and doubts, to step outside of our comfort zones. But it's worth it.

Right. But as we surrender to the Spirit's leading, we will begin to experience the freedom and joy that come from knowing Jesus in a deeper, more intimate way. This is so encouraging.

It's like, even though this deep dive is coming to an end, our journey with Jesus is just beginning. That's the beauty of it. John's Gospel is like a springboard launching us into a lifelong adventure of faith and discovery.

I love that. And as we continue to explore the depths of his message, we'll find ourselves drawn ever closer to the heart of God, who loves us unconditionally and longs to be in relationship with us. Well said.

To our listeners, thank you for joining us on this deep dive into the Gospel of John. We hope it sparked your curiosity and inspired you to delve into this incredible text for yourselves. Yeah.

And as you do, remember to open your hearts to the Holy Spirit, the one who makes the words on the page come alive and who guides us into all truth. Such a good point. Until next time, keep seeking, keep exploring, and keep diving deep into the truth that sets us free.