

Discuss:

Great books and films have the power to capture our attention in the very first chapter/scene. Think about one or two of your favorites movies or novels.

How do they begin? Is there something in those opening moments that provides a “glimpse of what’s to come”?

Re-telling Israel's Story

Most commentaries describe John 1:1-18 as the “prologue” to John’s Gospel. The poetic imagery and big-picture perspective of these verses set them apart from the narrative style that begins in 1:19.

In addition to their unique style, this prologue sets the stage for what we can expect in the chapters ahead. Books of the ancient world weren’t books at all, but scrolls. Without a table of contents, the opening lines of a scroll often served as a kind of outline.

So, John doesn’t waste any time in letting the reader know what he’s up to! Through a steady stream of allusions back to the Old Testament, it becomes clear... what he is about to say concerning Jesus is deeply connected to Israel’s own story.

To begin, the first five verses borrow the creation language found in Genesis 1... pointing us to a creator John calls “the Word”. Before long, we are told that this same Word that created the world has now become flesh and “made his dwelling among us”.

The Greek word for “dwelling” means to “encamp” or “tabernacle” among. This reference, along with many of the phrases found in 1:14-17 send us back in time. They point to Israel’s first encounter with a “tabernacling” God who made his dwelling with them at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 33-34).

As John evokes memories of Israel’s past, he is also signaling that something *new* is underway. The Word, now made flesh, is taking Israel’s story to a whole new level! Moses gave Israel the law at Sinai. Grace and truth have now come in Jesus! God’s glory could only be glimpsed by Moses on the mountain. Now that glory is fully on display... in His one and only son Jesus Christ!

A Closer Look:

1) Look closely at verses 1-15. What words, images, and ideas are used to describe “the Word”? Be specific.

2) While much of John’s focus here is on the Word, he is also concerned with how the Word is being received? Who is the Word sent to? What is their response?

3) A “prologue” can foreshadow what is about to come. Are there parts of verses 1-18 that prepare us for what to expect in the chapters ahead? Try to highlight a few.

Making it Personal:

- 1) One of John's purposes in writing is to connect Jesus' story with the story and background of his readers. As you read these verses today, what about you? Has this "Word" become "flesh" in your life and in your story? If so, how?
- 1) Over the next ten weeks, we'll be looking at how Jesus comes to reveal to us more of who God is... his glory, his grace, and his truth (John 1:14). Take a few moments to prayerfully consider... Do you have a sense about where God is currently working in your life? Are there new ways you'd like him to reveal Himself more fully to you?

The Passage: John 1:1-18

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") 16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 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.