

A guided read through of John's gospel, chapter 1

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#### Journey through John's Gospel with a friend

The Word One to One helps you get started with the Bible.

> On the left is text from 'John's Gospel' – one of the books of the Bible:

- John lived with Jesus for three action packed years.
- We'll read the account of what he saw and heard during that time.

### On the right are notes to chat through with a friend:

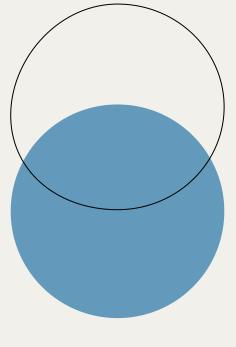
- They highlight the main points from the Bible text and provide background from the rest of the Bible.
- Many have found that talking these through with a Christian friend – one to one or in a small group – has been a real help on their own spiritual journey.

## Episode 1

# God came to earth JOHN 1:1-18

In this episode: John's eye-witness account starts with an overview.

We'll see some pretty big claims in this first episode, so don't be surprised that it'll need some unpacking.



#### This is what John wrote – read this first

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.

<sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Then use the notes to chat it through

### The God who made everything

John introduces us to 'the Word':

- Twice he says the Word was there 'in the beginning.'
- The Word existed before time, before creation, before the beginning...
- In short... the Word is eternal.

But who or what is the Word?

- The Word is God. (v. 1)
- The Word is a person, see how the sentence starts with 'He'. (v. 2)
- The Word, who is God and a person, made absolutely everything, no exceptions. (v. 3)

Already John claims to Know our Creator! <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

<sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

But what difference does the Word make for life?

- The Word is the source of life. (v. 4)
- The Word gives understanding for life (light). (v. 4)
- The darkness in our world can't stop Him bringing life and light to mankind. (v. 5)

The light of the Word shines today!

 For 2,000 years His message has been going out across our world unchanged. (v. 5) <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

<sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

<sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

<sup>9</sup> The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

#### The life He offers

John (the writer) now introduces John the Baptist. We'll see later that he was the sensation of his day – drawing huge crowds to the desert with his preaching.

Just look at his job description:

- God Himself appointed him. (v. 6)
- He testifies like a witness in a court... (v. 7)
- ...preparing people for the Word, now called the light... (v. 8)
- ...who was soon to come into the world. (v. 9)

John the Baptist is the warmup act. Through him God makes sure that the arrival of the Word is publicly known.

> We still haven't been told who the Word is...

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him.

<sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

<sup>12</sup>Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – What was the response when the 'light' came?

- The world rejected its Creator. (v. 10)
- Born a Jew, even his own people rejected Him. (v. 11)
- But look at this mind-blowing gift for those who accepted Him:
- He adopted them into God's own family! (v. 12)
- They're given the full privileges of being a child of God for ever! (v. 12)
- Imagine a helpless orphan adopted into the wealthiest, most influential family on the planet... God's gift is way bigger even than that.

<sup>13</sup> children born not of naturaldescent, nor of human decisionor a husband's will, but bornof God.

Who gets this extraordinary gift?

- Not people born into a religious family (natural descent).
- Not people who somehow became religious (human decision).
- But people adopted (born) into God's family. (v. 13)

What is on offer through the Word is a new life. A living relationship with God as a loving Father. <sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> (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."")

**Grace (v. 14):** God's undeserved kindness and love, freely given. **Truth (v. 14):** is absolute truth – the answer to all our searching.

#### God shows Himself on earth

Here is the crucial claim: our Creator became human and moved into the neighbourhood! (v. 14)

What evidence is given to back this up?

- John (the writer) was one of many who saw the Word first-hand and experienced His life-changing grace and heard Him speak the truth. (v. 14)
- They came to the conclusion He is God's Son here on earth! (v. 14)
- We also have the public and powerful witness of John the Baptist who says the person He will introduce is his Creator. (v. 15)

These witnesses are saying that the Creator came to live on earth at a specific time, in a specific place. They are saying that they were there when He came, and they want to tell us about Him.

So it's God's Son but what is His name?

<sup>16</sup> Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

<sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in the closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. This is what John (the writer) wants us to know:

- The Son is overflowing with grace. (v. 16)
- God had already given grace in the Old Testament. Now we see God's grace in all its fullness – in the person Jesus! (v. 17)
- The Word is God's eternal Son Jesus Christ. (v. 17)
- He makes God known today. (v. 18)

At last John tells us: Jesus Christ is the Word, the Creator, the eternal son of God, who makes His Father Known today.

He is not about living under a burden of rules - instead, He brings grace and truth. <sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word... and the Word was God

<sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made...

<sup>4</sup> In him was life and that life was the light of all mankind.

<sup>12</sup> ...to all who did receivehim, to those who believed inhis name, he gave the rightto become children of God...

<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God,but the one and only Son...has made him known.

#### Summary

What have we seen about Jesus, the Word, so far:

- He was there before the world existed.
   (v. 1)
- He is God. (v. 1)
- He made everything. (v. 3)
- He has life in Himself and brings light to all people. (v. 4)
- Those who receive Him become members of God's own family. (v. 12)
- The Word came to earth as a man. (v. 14)
- He claims that we can know God personally through Jesus Christ. (v. 18)

How does this introduction compare with what you had thought of Jesus Christ?

Would you like to see what happens next?

#### John 1:1–18

Why not find a moment to re-read what we've looked at in this episode?

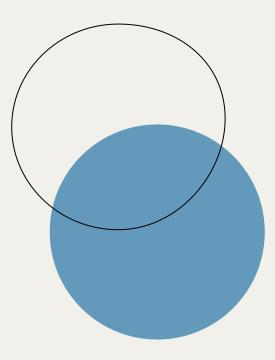
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In the next episode: John the Baptist, the warm-up act, before Jesus steps into the scene.

### Episode 2



## The warm up act JOHN 1:19-34

In the previous episode: John introduces Jesus Christ as our Creator come to earth.

In this episode: John the Baptist prepares the way for the dramatic arrival of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was.

<sup>20</sup> He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, 'I am not the Messiah.'

<sup>21</sup> They asked him, 'Then who are you? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.'

<sup>22</sup> Finally they said, 'Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?'

Levites (v. 19): priests from the Israelite tribe of Levi. Messiah (v. 20): God's chosen King, the promised Saviour who would rescue Israel and the world.

Elijah (v. 21): a famous Israelite prophet (around 860 BC) – Israel was expecting his return.

#### A great prophet arrives... but why?

John the Baptist was the top item on the news. Today, TV cameras, reporters and social media would be broadcasting his every word.

The Jewish leaders have been watching for signs of the Messiah they had been promised – understandably they wonder if John is the man.

They send religious leaders to quiz John. (v. 19)

How does the religious leaders' questioning turn out? Not well! John's testimony is clear:

- 'Are you Elijah?' No. (v. 21)
- 'Are you the Prophet' No. (v. 21)
- 'Who are you then? We need something to say to the people who sent us!' (v. 22)

John doesn't want to be the centre of attention. He is a great prophet, but he is not the Messiah.

**The Prophet (v. 21):** the greatest Israelite prophet Moses (around 1300 BC) – God had promised that He would send another like him to lead God's people.

<sup>23</sup> John replied in the words
of Isaiah the prophet, 'I am
the voice of one calling in the
wilderness, "Make straight 
the way for the Lord.""

#### Get ready...

Isaiah was another great prophet sent by God (around 700 BC). He told people what would happen when the Messiah came. John the Baptist uses words from Isaiah's book to describe his own job.

Isaiah 40:3 tells of exactly this moment: 'Prepare the way for the Lord... a highway for our God'.

In the days of great empires, it was normal practice to create wide highways as entrances to major cities, so that a victorious leader could parade, or triumph, in front of his people.

What is John the Baptist telling them?

- He is urging the people to get ready...
- God Himself is coming!

<sup>24</sup> Now the Pharisees who had
<sup>25</sup> been sent questioned him,
'Why then do you baptise if
you are not the Messiah, nor
Elijah, nor the Prophet?'

<sup>26</sup> 'I baptise with water,' Johnreplied, 'but among youstands one you do not know.

<sup>27</sup> He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

<sup>28</sup> This all happened at 
Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

#### It's not me you're looking for...

Again John is questioned, again he points forwards:

- He could only wash with water. (v. 26)
- But One far greater is on His way! (v. 27)

Back in a time of open sandals, in hot dusty streets full of animals, washing feet was a job for the lowest servant in your house.

Jesus is such a big deal that John the Baptist says he is not even worthy to untie His sandals, let alone wash His feet!

We are regularly given historically accurate details as if to say, 'Go check and see if what I am saying is correct.' (v. 28)

Pharisees (v. 24): mostly local officials, who were very religious and well respected.

**Baptise (v. 25):** an ordinary word meaning to wash (or dunk) in water. People were baptised to publicly show they wanted to turn back to God.

<sup>29</sup> The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

<sup>30</sup> This is the one I meant when I said, "A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me."

<sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.'

**Passover** remembers God rescuing His people from slavery in Egypt around 1300 BC. Pharaoh had set himself against God and His people, enslaving them and murdering their sons. Despite many warnings Pharaoh refused to change his ways.

On Passover night the angel of death passed through Egypt and killed every firstborn son as God acted in judgement. There was only one escape: the Jews were to put the blood of a spotless lamb on their doorposts. This was a lamb that had lived with the family for four days, a lamb that died in the firstborn's place. Where the blood was, a death had already taken place, and the judgement passed over.

#### The Lamb of God

And then, the moment we've been waiting for: John sees Jesus.

How does John announce Jesus' arrival?

- He shouts out this unique title: 'the Lamb of God!' (v. 29)
- He says Jesus can deal with the sin of the whole world.
- He explains that Jesus was around before John was born (v. 30). (Of course He was – He is our Creator, remember Episode 1?)
- John's job was to prepare people for Jesus's arrival... (v. 31)
- Here is our Saviour God in the flesh.

This special title tells us straight off what Jesus has come to do – Jesus will die for the sin of the world to make us right with God. (v. 29)

John can't help himself. The very first time he sees Jesus he shouts out: 'Look! see that man there? He has come from God to die. Why? To take away the sin of the world! That is His mission.'

This is an offer to all people everywhere, whoever we are. **EPISODE 2** 

<sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.

<sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.'

#### The Spirit-filled King

Like a witness in a courtroom, John the Baptist says exactly what he saw:

- In Israel's past, the Holy Spirit frequently 'fell' on God's chosen kings, but just for a short time.
- This is different. John saw the Spirit come down on Jesus... and stay!

What will Jesus, God's Spirit-filled King, do?

Jesus will fill people with God's Spirit – God's power and God's presence. No human being could do this. Only God can give Himself. (v. 33)

The Jews had been waiting since the first book of the Bible for these prophecies to be fulfilled. John puts his neck on the line and says - Jesus is the One!

Holy Spirit (v. 33): the Bible tells us that God is three in one. He is God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'

<sup>27</sup> '...whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'

<sup>29</sup> '...the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'

<sup>32</sup> 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven...'

<sup>33</sup> "...the one whowill baptise with theHoly Spirit."

<sup>34</sup> '...this is God's Chosen One.'

#### Summary

John the Baptist was all about getting people ready for Jesus. What has he taught us today?

- John the Baptist was a witness... (v. 19)
- ...a prophet preparing the way... (v. 23)
- ...but this great prophet was nothing compared to the One he introduced (remember the feet!). (v. 27)
- Jesus has come to die He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (v. 29)
- Jesus is God's Spirit-filled Son. (v. 32)
- He will flood us with God's presence (the Holy Spirit). (v. 33)
- John's testimony is clear Jesus is the One! (v. 34)

What an introduction to Jesus! The time has arrived for the prophecies to be fulfilled. The Saviour has come. Why not find a moment to re-read what we've looked at in this episode?

#### John 1:19-34

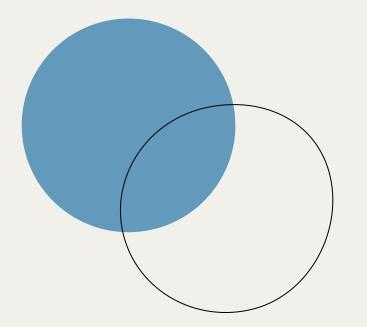
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"A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me." <sup>31</sup> I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptising with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.' <sup>32</sup> Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. <sup>33</sup> And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit." <sup>34</sup> I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One.'

In the next episode: Come and see!

## Episode 3



# Come and see!

In the previous episode: A mind-blowing claim... Jesus is God on earth. He has come to deal with what keeps us from God.

In this episode: Jesus comes centre stage and immediately attracts followers. <sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples.

<sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'

<sup>37</sup>When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. John the Baptist hands over

A day after his dramatic announcement about Jesus, John the Baptist is at it again.

He can't help himself 'Look, the Lamb of God!' (v. 36)

Immediately, two of John's followers (disciples) know they should be with Jesus. It's Jesus' time now. John's job is nearly done.

This is important. John (the writer) wants us to know that Jesus' disciples were eyewitnesses – they were there from the beginning of His public life.

**Disciples (v. 37):** one who follows someone else and learns their way of life and teaching.

<sup>38</sup> Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?' They said, 'Rabbi' (which means 'Teacher'), 'where are you staying?'

<sup>39</sup> 'Come,' he replied, 'and 'you will see.' So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about 'four in the afternoon.

#### Come and you'll see

Notice how the disciples immediately call Jesus 'Rabbi' (v. 38)

What a life-changing day for these two men! They are called by Jesus and will be with Him from this moment on.

John wants us to know the eye witness detail – even down to the time of day.

<sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

<sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did ← was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ).

<sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which, when translated, is Peter). Note that in verse 40 only one of the two is named. The other is thought to be John (the writer)...

After spending the day together, Jesus has made quite an impression on Andrew. The first thing he does is find his brother, Simon.

Andrew is so convinced he makes a huge claim - he's found the long-awaited Messiah and there is no doubt in his mind.

Andrew brings his brother, Simon, who is renamed Cephas or Peter (the Aramaic word for rock). Jesus will give him a vital leading role in building the early Christian community. <sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.'

<sup>44</sup> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

<sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'

<sup>46</sup> 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked.

'Come and see,' said Philip.

#### **Another encounter**

Jesus finds Philip and there is no doubt in Philip's mind either... he too has met the Messiah.

But Nathanael needs convincing, with good reason.

What's behind Nathanael's sceptical question?

- Nazareth is a northern town, full of different racial and religious groups. (v. 45)
- Because of the Jews' concern for religious purity, it was the last place they expected the Messiah to come from. (v. 46)

Just as Jesus says to the other two disciples back in verse 39, now Philip, with confidence, says, 'Come and see!' <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.'

<sup>48</sup> 'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, 'I saw you while you were still under the figtree before Philip called you.'

<sup>49</sup> Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.'

#### Jesus knows everything!

How is Nathanael convinced that Jesus is the Messiah?

- Jesus knows everything about Nathanael – there's no deceit in his heart. (v. 47)
- Incredibly Jesus knows where he's been and what he's been doing, even though Jesus wasn't there to see. (v. 48)
- It's enough for Nathanael! He risks his reputation by shouting out who Jesus is. (v. 49)

**EPISODE 3** 

#### <sup>50</sup> Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You will see greater things than that.' ←

<sup>51</sup> He then added, 'Very truly I tell you, you will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on" the Son of Man.'

**'Son of Man' (v. 51)** is a title Jesus often gives Himself. It's from the Old Testament book of Daniel, written in about 600 BC. Daniel sees 'one like a son of man' to whom God gives 'authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him' (Daniel 7:13–14). Jesus is saying that He is this Son of Man.

#### What does Jesus promise?

· 'You haven't seen anything yet!' (vv. 50, 51)

Whenever Jesus starts a sentence with 'Very truly I tell you...' it's always to grab our attention to a major point.

Jesus' audience would have known that this was a quote from Genesis, the first book of the Bible: '...he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it' (Genesis 28:12).

So what is Jesus saying?

- Jesus is the way to heaven!
- He bridges the gap between God and humanity.
- He is God's long-promised Messiah He brings God's presence to earth.

Come and see! The invitation to us is the same 2,000 years later. We will see great things about Jesus. <sup>36</sup> 'Look, the Lamb of God!'

<sup>37</sup> ...they followed Jesus...

<sup>41</sup> 'We have found the Messiah.'

<sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus.

<sup>46</sup> 'Come and see.'

<sup>49</sup> '...you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.'

<sup>50</sup> '...you will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on" the Son of Man.'

#### Summary

People start following Jesus and they are amazed at who he is!

- John the Baptist is back, pointing to Jesus as the Lamb of God. (v. 36)
- Two of John's followers immediately know that the time is right to start following Jesus. (v. 37)
- Even just a day with Jesus is lifechanging for these men. Invited to 'come and see', they're certain they've found the long-promised Messiah. (v. 41)
- They just can't keep it to themselves.
   Andrew tells his brother, Simon (Peter).
   (v. 42)
- And Philip gives the same invite to Nathanael: 'Come and see'. (v. 46)
- Nathanael needs convincing, but after a one-to-one with Jesus he knows that Jesus is the Son of God, the King. (v. 49)
- And Jesus is only just getting started. He makes a radical claim, that He's the bridge between God and humanity, the way to heaven itself. (v. 51)

Why not find a moment to re-read what we've looked at in this episode?

#### John 1:35-50

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<sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!' <sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?'They said, 'Rabbi' (which means 'Teacher'), 'where are you staying?' 39 'Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.' So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus.

<sup>41</sup>The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which, when translated, is Peter). <sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me.' 44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'

<sup>46</sup> 'Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?' Nathanael asked. 'Come and see,' said Philip. <sup>47</sup>When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, 'Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.' <sup>48</sup> 'How do vou know me?' Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, 'I saw you while you were still under the fig-tree before Philip called vou.' 49 Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.' 50 Jesus said, 'You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig-tree. You will see greater things than that.' <sup>51</sup> He then added, 'Very truly I tell you, you will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on" the Son of Man.'

In the next episode:

#### Chapter 1 - recap

Chapter 1 has drawn us in and invited us to take a close look at Jesus:

- Episode 1: John (the writer) says he is introducing us to God come to earth, Jesus Christ, who offers adoption for eternity into God's family.
- Episode 2: John the Baptist says Jesus fulfils the age-old prophecies. He has come to die, to pay the price we can't pay, to bring us back to God.
- Episode 3: Jesus immediately begins to gather followers. They are convinced He is the Messiah.

It's all about Jesus. It's not about the church, traditions, or sacraments. Jesus is:

- The Word the Creator God become a man.
- The Messiah long-promised as God's chosen ruler.
- The Lamb of God come to die as a sacrifice for our sin.
- The Spirit-filled Son bringing God's presence into our lives.
- The gateway to heaven!

What does this mean for us?

- The promise of John 1:12 is now possible through Jesus.

'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.' (v. 12)

> The next episodes will show Jesus backing up these words and help us to understand what it looks like to receive Him.

#### 'Come and see'

We hope you've enjoyed chatting through the first chapter of John's Gospel.

Do keep reading to see more of Jesus through John's eyes, as Jesus' public life begins and His life-changing impact on those who were there unfolds.

Keep reading at theword121.com.



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