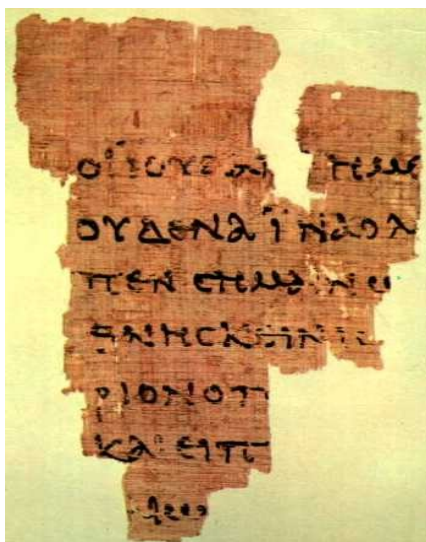


Transformed into the likeness of Christ

During this year we will be looking at being transformed by Christ at three levels: Personal, Community and Global transformation. We start this new term with Personal transformation and with the following talks on Sunday mornings:

January 8	Introduction
15	Living Water
22	Born Again
February 12	Bread of Life
19	Extravagant Generosity
26	Spiritual Blindness
March 11	Do not let your hearts be troubled
18	Serving Others
25	The promise of the Holy Spirit
April 8	Transformed by Easter
15	A fresh start
22	Love One Another

The studies are based around texts from the Gospel of John.



**A fragment of
John's gospel**

The Rylands Papyrus:—

A fragment from a papyrus codex – The oldest NT fragment so far found c.AD 125-140

About John's Gospel . . .

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, the fourth gospel, is regarded by many as the deepest and most wonderful book in the NT. Although in one sense it is simple, direct, and to be understood by common people, yet in another respect it is a sublimely profound revelation fathomed only by spiritual scholars. Some have called it the greatest book in the world.

John states his purpose for writing clearly and unequivocally in John 20:30-31: *"Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."* So the author's intent was to conduct men to saving faith in Christ, the Son of God, and so enable them to obtain eternal life.

Though the three [Synoptic Gospels](#) share a considerable amount of text, over 90% of John's Gospel is unique to him. The synoptics describe much more of Jesus' life, miracles, [parables](#), and exorcisms. John's gospel is also a story about the life of Jesus but mostly directed at the meaning of his life and work. The gospel can be divided into four parts:

- The Prologue (1:1-18) is a hymn identifying Jesus as the [Logos](#) (Word) and as God.
- The Book of Signs(1:19-12:50) recounts Jesus' public ministry, and includes the signs worked by Jesus and some of his teachings.
- The [Passion](#) narrative (13-20) recounts the [Last Supper](#) (focusing on Jesus' farewell discourse), Jesus' arrest and [crucifixion](#), his burial, and [resurrection](#).
- The Epilogue (21) records a resurrection appearance of Jesus to the [disciples](#) in [Galilee](#).

He proves Christ's divinity by relating selected miraculous signs, which he uses to demonstrating Christ's messiahship. To accomplish this spiritual aim, John records eight miracles. All but two - the feeding of the five thousand (6:4-14) and the walking on the water (6:15-21) - are unique to John. The author also seeks to accomplish his aim in various other ways by presenting the true Person and work of the Saviour and by a variety of telling figures describing Christ as the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Truth, the Way, the Life, and the Vine. In the synoptic gospels the miraculous works of Jesus are frequently performed out of mercy, but in the gospel of John they are presented as proof of His messiahship.

The dating of the fourth gospel is probably between A.D. 50 and 96. A papyrus fragment containing two verses of the gospel of John has been discovered; it belongs to the Papyrus Rylands and is dated c.A.D. 125-140. This bit of evidence suggests that the fourth gospel was in existence as early as the first half of the second century and was already in wide use.

January 8th – Introducing others to Jesus

Text: John 1:35-42 (& Mark 2:1-4)

What better way to start this series than with the most important of actions – introducing others to Jesus. In the John passage it is Andrew bringing Peter and in the Mark passage, friends bring a paralysed man to Jesus. We are also introduced to three of Jesus' descriptive names – Lamb of God, Rabbi, and Messiah.

John the Baptist singles Jesus out to declare him as the long-expected Messiah and Deliverer of the world – The Lamb of God - not only as the great sacrifice for the sin of the world, but also as the complete teacher of heavenly truth. This declaration is the reason why the disciples were happy to follow Jesus so readily. Teachers normally trained disciples, who then went out to teach others. To recommend disciples to a greater teacher was rare, required great humility and denoted confidence in the other teacher's superiority.

When Jesus asked them, "What do you want?", He was forcing them to define their purposes and goals. If they looking for a revolutionary leader to overthrow Rome, then they had better join the Zealots! Little did Andrew and John realize that day how their lives would be transformed by the Son of God.

The disciples address Jesus as Rabbi, a Jewish title meaning literally "a great one," which was applied to a teacher or master in the Jewish schools. "Where are You staying?" may have suggested, "If You are too busy now, we can visit later." Asking such indirect questions (they want to come home with him) was characteristic of ancient politeness and hospitality. Jesus responds with the hoped for invitation and invited them to spend the day with Him (**see note at the end). No doubt He told them something of His mission, revealed their own hearts to them, and answered their questions. They were both so impressed that they found their brothers and brought them to Jesus. Andrew found Simon and John brought James. Whenever you find Andrew in John's Gospel, he is bringing somebody to Jesus: his brother, the lad with the loaves and fishes ([John 6:8](#)), and the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus ([John 12:20-21](#)). No sermons from Andrew are recorded, but he certainly preached great sermons by his actions as a personal soul winner!

"We have found the Messiah!" was the witness Andrew gave to Simon. Of the four Gospels, only John uses the Hebrew or Aramaic title, Messiah. *Messiah* is a Hebrew word that means "anointed," and the Greek equivalent is "Christ." To the Jews, it was the same as "Son of God" (see [Matt 26:63-64](#); [Mark 14:61-62](#); [Luke 22:67-70](#)). When the Jews spoke about their Messiah, they were thinking of an anointed king ([1 Sam 26:11](#); [Ps 89:20](#)) who would come to deliver them and establish the kingdom.

There was some confusion among the Jewish teachers as to what the Messiah would do. Some saw Him as a suffering sacrifice, (as in [Isa 53](#)), while others saw a splendid king (as in [Isa 9](#) and [11](#)). Jesus had to explain even to His own followers

that the cross had to come before the crown, that He must suffer before He could enter into His glory ([Luke 24:13-35](#)). Whether or not Jesus was indeed the Messiah was a crucial problem that challenged the Jews in that day ([John 7:26, 40-44; 9:22; 10:24](#)).

In the final verse of today's passage, Peter is given a new name "Cephas" (Aramaic) or "Peter" (Greek) meaning "rock". Nicknames were common, and rabbis sometimes gave characterizing nicknames to their disciples. In the Old Testament, God often changed names to describe some new characteristic of a person (Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, Joshua). But for Peter, he would one day be seen as the solid person who Jesus could rely upon.

So the main thrust of the short passage is about introducing people to Jesus "that by believing (they) you may have life in his name". ([John 20:31](#))

****NOTE:-** The Jews divided their day into twelve equal parts, beginning at sunrise. If John used their mode of computation, this was about four o'clock p.m. The Romans divided time as we do, beginning at midnight. If John used their mode, it was about ten o'clock in the morning. It is not certain which he used.

Questions:

- How would you answer Jesus' question "What do you want?"
- Have YOU left all to follow him?
- Have you had the joy of leading another person to a relationship with Jesus? Can you share with the group (or another person) how it came about?
- How effective as a signpost am I?
- What do you expect to happen to a person introduced to Jesus? What does 'Life in His name' mean?
- If you were to have a change of name, what do you think would be appropriate to encompass your personality and giftings? What would others in the group call you?

Mission work must begin at home: --

"You will never make a missionary of the person who does no good at home. If you do not seek souls in your own street, you will not do so in Hindustan. If you are of no use in Whitechapel, you will be of no use on the Congo. He that will not serve the Lord in the Sunday-school at home, will not win children to Christ in China. Distance lends no real enchantment to Christian service. You who do nothing now are not fit for the war, for you are in sad health. The Lord give you spiritual health and vigour, and then you will want no pressing, but you will cry at once, "Here am I; send me!" Oh, my friends, go at once to your families, to your workshops, and declare the name of Jesus! Oh, for more spiritual life! This is the root of the matter."

C. H. Spurgeon.