

THE GOOD NEWS OF BELIEF: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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By the Book™ A Chapter by
Chapter Bible Study Series
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Let's Begin

Welcome to the Gospel of John. The portrait the apostle John paints of Jesus Christ has captured the minds and hearts of people since the first century when John penned it. Some have described it as the "profoundest book in the world" and many have pronounced it as the masterpiece of the Bible.

As we travel through the Gospel over the next several weeks, there are a few facts about which you need to be aware:

- John is not overly concerned with chronology. *That's why, for example, you face the cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus ministry in John and at the end of His ministry in Matthew (cp. John: 2:13-21; Matthew 21: 12-17).*
- John is not a biography of the life of Jesus. *Unlike biographies today which begin with someone's birth and go forward with many details, John is exclusively concerned with presenting Jesus as the Son of God.*
- John focuses on extended conversations Jesus has and what His teachings reveal.
- John fits perfectly with the other three Gospels: *Matthew was addressed to the Jews; Mark was addressed to the Romans; Luke was addressed to Gentiles; John was addressed to all humankind.*

With these few facts in mind, let's look at some particulars about the Gospel which John wrote.

I. The Penman

The Holy Spirit is the Divine Author of all the Books of the Bible. However, the way our Lord God planned it, there are also human authors He carefully selected and guarded in order to write precisely what he desired (2 Timothy 3:16). Though nowhere in the Gospel of John is the author named, virtually all Bible believing scholars name the apostle John as the author. Why? Observe some of the references below.

At the end of the Gospel, the author writes: "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true" (21:24). "That other disciple" is often mentioned throughout the Gospel (cp. 18:15-16; 20: 2-4, 8). This "other disciple" is also identified with the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Finally, we learn that John was one of the inner circle Jesus had (Matthew 17:1), and through a process of elimination, the writer is reliably inferred as John the apostle. No serious questions have been raised against John being the inspired apostle in nineteen centuries of church history (except liberal scholarship). Thus, we may safely say John is the penman of this majestic book which reveals Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

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II. The Purpose

In the preface of a book, the author usually gives the intent of his book that is, why he wrote it and why you should read it. Interestingly, John waits until nearing the end of his book to record his purpose: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20: 30-31).

Three words summarize John's purpose. First, John wrote in order to record signs. The word "sign" is translated elsewhere as "miracle" (cp. 2:11). "Miracle" is a Latin word meaning "a wonder." Thus, a sign is that which proves something.



John plainly states that all of the miracles Jesus performed are not in his Gospel. In fact, he implies his Gospel, even if combined with the other three, could not contain the signs Jesus performed! All the miracles had one clear purpose—to lead people to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Thus, *belief* is the second word that summarizes his purpose.

Finally, there is a third word about which John is concerned—*life*. The belief produced through the evident signs was to birth new life—eternal life—in Jesus Christ. John says, “...and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

III. The Presentation

“Jesus Christ, Son of God” is the theme of John’s Gospel. He is Heaven’s Man, Heaven’s answer to a world condemned in sin and darkness. With that in mind, we can easily see John’s presentation of Jesus in three unique roles.

First, Jesus Christ is the Saving One. When John the Baptist introduced Jesus to his own disciples, requesting them to follow after Him, he said “*Behold the Lamb*” (1:29). Jesus is God’s Lamb, sacrificed for the sins of the entire world. No wonder this Gospel is good news!

Second, Jesus Christ is the Sympathetic One. As Jesus stood before Pilate, awaiting His final condemnation, it was announced, “*Behold the Man*” (19:5). He is the Son of God; He is Divine; that is John’s message. He is also human, God in human flesh.

Or, as one put it, “Jesus was God, only with skin on.” Because He “had skin on” He could fully sympathize with us as mere human beings (cp. Hebrews 2:16-18; 4:15)

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Third, Jesus Christ is the Sovereign One. After Pilate had his turn mocking the Son of God, he succumbed to the political aspirations of the Jewish leaders by delivering Him to be crucified. Presenting Him to the crowds, he said, “*Behold your King*” (19:14). Pilate did not realize what he was uttering anymore than the leaders knew what they were saying when they yelled “*Crucify Him!*” Jesus indeed was their King but John gave us a glaring hint at the Gospel’s beginning as to how His own Jewish people would respond: “*He came unto his own, and his own received him not*” (1:11). Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords but His own people called for His crucifixion.

As we follow John through his marvelous book, keep in mind what else John says in the beginning: “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*” (1:12). John’s Gospel offers life to every person who will place his or her faith in Jesus Christ!

