

# ***IT'S IN THE BOOK***

**Study Guide**

**For**

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**Volume I**

**Lessons 1 - 10**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The writer's role as it pertains to the Holy Scriptures should not be underestimated. The writer is not a passive recipient—a mere recording machine. Rather, the Holy Spirit works through the individual's personality and knowledge of the subject to produce a unity of inspiration and experience (1 Peter 1:20-21). The Gospel of John is a classic example of such a unity.

Whom did the Spirit of God inspire to write this fourth gospel? Most biblical scholars believe it was John the son of Zebedee (Matthew 27:56), one of the early disciples of Jesus. He was the youngest of the Twelve when called to follow Jesus and he lived to the greatest age. His first meeting with Jesus was most likely in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John the Baptist was baptizing (John 1:28, 37, 40). At that point, the young John followed Jesus because of John the Baptist's testimony (John 1:35-37); he did not make an "instant" commitment. Not until later, when Jesus confronted him with a miracle and a challenge, did John decide to give up everything and become Jesus' disciple (Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11).

For three years John followed Jesus, enjoying special favor. For example:

- He was present at the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51).
- He witnessed Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2).
- He saw Jesus' agony in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-45).
- He was among the chosen few to whom Jesus disclosed the future destruction of Jerusalem and the signs of the end of time (Matthew 24:1-2; Mark 13:3-4).
- He was the one who leaned against Jesus during the Last Supper (John 13:23-25).
- He was the only one of the twelve disciples who courageously stayed at the foot of Jesus' cross, and he willingly accepted the responsibility of caring for Jesus' mother (John 19:26).

Some biblical scholars believe John's gospel was written close to the end of the first century after Christ, or even later. They cite negative reference to "the Jews," indicating they had become enemies of the church, and the fact that John's theology is well developed. Other scholars say some words used in this gospel, such as disciple rather than the later title apostle, prove it was written prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Also, the "Dead Sea Scrolls," discovered in caves in the city of Qumram in 1947, suggest the influence of John's gospel. Since the Qumram community dispersed prior to A.D. 70, their exposure to John's gospel must have occurred before that time. Thus some renowned scholars date the Gospel of John around A.D. 70.



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COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY

Each of the gospels was written from a unique perspective. Matthew presents Jesus as the kingly Messiah. Mark portrays Him as the Servant of God. Luke, a Gentile, projects Christ as the Son of Man and the sympathetic Friend of sinners.

John's gospel, however, introduces Jesus, the Word Incarnate, in several ways. The language is simple and beautiful; the content is practical and thought-provoking. Many of Christ's teachings that John chose to record are distinctively different from those of the other gospel writers. Accounts that are unique to his gospel include Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus about spiritual birth (3:1-21); His words to the Samaritan woman about living water (4:1-30); and His discourse on the good shepherd (9:35 - 10:30).

John had exceptionally profound insight into Jesus' life and ministry. Only an eyewitness could reveal such in-depth knowledge. John provides the divine background of Jesus; the incredible resources of life that emanate from Jesus as the Incarnate Word of Life; the mystery and secret of a fulfilled life; the power that sustains and stimulates the regenerated life here and now; and the true meaning of love that produces a lifelong commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Later in our study, as we consider the gospel in detail, we will be constantly amazed and refreshed by the reality and ministry of Jesus Christ—which so directly meets the basic needs of human life—through the Holy Spirit, who breathed upon the Apostle John and enabled him to project the character and work of the Lord in such unique and relevant ways.

Thus, at the conclusion of his gospel, John was able to clearly state his purpose: *"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"* (John 20:31).

In summary, this gospel is unique in that John concentrates on Jesus Christ as a person rather than on His teachings. Perhaps because of John's special relationship with Jesus, he emphasizes Jesus' relationships with individuals rather than His general public ministry. How exciting it is to realize that each of us is like those to whom Jesus related—individuals with distinct needs. So anticipate meeting and knowing this one named Jesus. Whether you have extensive knowledge of Him and His ways or have little personal exposure to Him, it is hoped that you will thoroughly investigate His claims and honestly respond to the truth that you discern.

During the next week, it would be helpful for you to read through the entire Gospel of John. This will enable you to gain a general feeling for John and his message. You also may find it beneficial to glance through the study questions each week before reading the designated Scripture passages. Ask God to give you understanding. He will do so because it is His greatest desire to communicate His loving intentions toward *you*.

*All Scripture quotes are taken from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, unless otherwise noted. Please record Scripture verses where your answers are found. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) may require extra thought and/or additional Bible knowledge.*

## Lesson 1 Introduction

**PLEASE NOTE:** If you are in a group, share with each other: who you are, why you have come together to study the Gospel of John, and what you hope to learn.

- 1) The Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, is identified as the writer of the Gospel of John. Who is his brother and what is their trade (Mark 1:19-20)? Who is their partner (Luke 5:8-10)?
  
- 2) a. The first time John met Jesus was probably at the Jordan River, where John the Baptist was baptizing. John begins to follow Jesus at this point. Why does he do so? (See John 1:28-40.)  
  
b. John later decides to give up everything and become a disciple of Christ. Read Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11, and describe the reasons for this.
  
- \*3) It is obvious that John's commitment was not as "instant" as it may seem to be upon a casual reading of the gospels. Relate this to your relationship with God, whether you know you are His child or you are in the process of seeking Him.
  
- 4) The author of the Gospel of John describes himself as "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*" (John 21:20, 24). This disciple (John) is with Jesus at some very special times in His life. Read the following references and briefly describe where the disciple is privileged to be present.
  - a. Mark 5:37-43
  
  - b. Mark 9:2
  
  - c. Mark 14:33
  
- 5) What is the dictionary definition for the word *gospel*?
  
- 6) What is John's purpose in writing this gospel? (See John 20:30-31.)

**Personal Thought:** Would you like to have John's purpose fulfilled in your own life? If so, why not bow your heart before God right now and ask Him to help you understand His plan for your life and have it become a reality for you as you study the Gospel of John?