

THE  
STORY OF  
JESUS

*A Guided Journey through  
the Gospel of John*

*Devotional material by  
Kevin Emmert*



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*The Story of Jesus: A Guided Journey through the Gospel of John*

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## Introduction

The account you hold in your hands is a biographical testimony to the life of Jesus. It has been read by millions of men and women since it was written by one of Jesus' disciples a few generations after Jesus lived. Perhaps no other single document has influenced the world as widely and deeply as the Gospel of John.

From earliest days this was called a "Gospel," which means "good news." John wrote to tell us news of an astonishing series of events. The Gospel of John is not about a heroic ancient figure whom we should strive to emulate, as much other ancient literature is, but rather about what this ancient figure has done on our behalf. Rather than striving to emulate him, we collapse into the freedom of his work in our place—living a life of perfect love and service we could never live, dying a death of rejection and condemnation we deserved to die, and rising to the new life of indestructible glory that we could never achieve.

John quietly shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of every ancient longing and promise of earlier parts of Scripture. Jesus is the sacrificial lamb who takes away the sin of the world. He is the loving shepherd who cares gently for his wayward sheep. He is the door through which all must come to the Father.

Jesus not only fulfills ancient promises from way back then; he fulfills every longing of the human heart today. He is the bread of life without whom our souls will remain

## INTRODUCTION

ever hungry. He is the living water without whom our thirst will never be quenched. He is the light of the world without whom our very best days remain shrouded in darkness. He is the true vine without whom our most strenuous efforts at a fruitful and flourishing life finally wither and die away.

John wrote this book to give you Jesus Christ, the only hope in this misery-filled world.

# Preface

## THE BIBLE

The words of the Bible are the very words of God our Creator speaking to us. They are completely truthful;<sup>1</sup> they are pure;<sup>2</sup> they are powerful;<sup>3</sup> and they are wise and righteous.<sup>4</sup> We should read these words with reverence and awe,<sup>5</sup> and with joy and delight.<sup>6</sup> Through these words God gives us eternal life,<sup>7</sup> and daily nourishes our spiritual lives.<sup>8</sup>

## THE ESV TRANSLATION

The English Standard Version® (ESV®) stands in the classic stream of English Bible translations that goes back nearly five centuries. In this stream, accurate faithfulness to the original text is combined with simplicity, beauty, and dignity of expression. Our goal has been to carry forward this legacy for this generation and generations to come.

The ESV is an “essentially literal” translation that seeks as far as possible to reproduce the meaning and structure of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. We have sought to be “as literal as possible” while maintaining clear expression and literary excellence. Therefore the ESV is well suited for both personal reading and church ministry, for devotional reflection and serious study, and for Scripture memorization.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 119:160; Prov. 30:5; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18 <sup>2</sup> Ps. 12:6 <sup>3</sup> Jer. 23:29; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23 <sup>4</sup> Ps. 19:7–11

<sup>5</sup> Deut. 28:58; Ps. 119:74; Isa. 66:2 <sup>6</sup> Ps. 19:7–11; 119:14, 97, 103; Jer. 15:16 <sup>7</sup> John 6:68; 1 Pet. 1:23

<sup>8</sup> Deut. 32:46; Matt. 4:4

## PREFACE

### THE ESV PUBLISHING TEAM

The ESV publishing team has included more than a hundred people. The fourteen-member Translation Oversight Committee benefited from the work of fifty biblical experts serving as Translation Review Scholars and from the comments of the more than fifty members of the Advisory Council. This international team from many denominations shares a common commitment to the truth of God's Word and to historic Christian orthodoxy.

### TO GOD'S HONOR AND PRAISE

We know that no Bible translation is perfect; but we also know that God uses imperfect and inadequate things to his honor and praise. So to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and to his people—we offer what we have done, with our prayers that it may prove useful, with gratitude for much help given, and with ongoing wonder that our God should ever have entrusted to us so momentous a task.

*Soli Deo Gloria—To God alone be the glory!*

*The Translation Oversight Committee*

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO  
JOHN



## The Word Became Flesh

John's Gospel focuses on the most important question of all time: Who is Jesus? In this first chapter John introduces Jesus as "the Word," who was "with God" and who "was God" (1:1). As God, he created everything (1:3-4). And just as he spoke light and life into existence, so now he is bringing light and life into our dark and dying world.

John also tells us that "the Word became flesh" (1:14). The Word, Jesus Christ, is both God and human. And the Word came to save us because the law, which came through Moses, could not save us (1:14-17). The law pointed to Christ, who has finally come. And, whereas Moses could not see God's face, Jesus shows us the Father because he is the only Son of the Father (1:18).

Yet John does not simply want us to know who Jesus is. He wants us to receive Jesus, to believe he is who he says he is (1:11-12). When we do so, we receive the new life that only Jesus can give.

### JOHN 1:1-18

**I**n the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

JOHN 1:1-18

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

<sup>9</sup>The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) <sup>16</sup>For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <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; God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

*Who does John say Jesus is? Does this portrait of  
Jesus change the way you think about him?*

## Behold, the Lamb of God

John the Baptist is an important character in John's Gospel because he is the first to announce that God's plan to save sinners is culminating in Jesus. Specifically, Jesus is the "Lamb of God" (1:29), the one who takes the punishment we deserve for our sin so he can give us the grace we could never earn. John wants us to see Jesus not just as a moral example but, far more important, as the sacrifice for our sin.

In the rest of this chapter Jesus is identified not only as the "Lamb of God" but also as the "Messiah" (anointed one), the "Son of God," the "King of Israel," and the "Son of Man"—titles that take on a fuller meaning throughout John's Gospel. And at the heart of all these titles is the truth that Jesus has come to save. We do not climb our way up to God; God came down to us in Christ (1:51). Jesus has come for you and for me—to save us!

### JOHN 1:19–51

**A**nd this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"<sup>20</sup> He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."<sup>21</sup> And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."<sup>22</sup> So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"<sup>23</sup> He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

<sup>24</sup>(Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) <sup>25</sup>They asked him, “Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” <sup>26</sup>John answered them, “I baptize with water, but among you stands one you do not know, <sup>27</sup>even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.” <sup>28</sup>These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

<sup>29</sup>The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ <sup>31</sup>I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” <sup>32</sup>And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup>I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>34</sup>And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”

<sup>35</sup>The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God!” <sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, “What are you seeking?” And they said to him, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?” <sup>39</sup>He said to them, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. <sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. <sup>41</sup>He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah”

(which means Christ). <sup>42</sup>He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter).

<sup>43</sup>The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “Follow me.” <sup>44</sup>Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup>Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” <sup>46</sup>Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” <sup>47</sup>Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” <sup>48</sup>Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” <sup>49</sup>Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” <sup>50</sup>Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” <sup>51</sup>And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

*What does Jesus' identity tell us about his work?*

*What does he want to do for you?*

## Who Is Jesus?

The miracle of turning water into wine is the first of seven “sign” miracles recorded by John. Signs answer the question Who is Jesus? They do so in part by affirming one or more of the titles ascribed to Jesus in the prologue (1:1–18).

This first sign reveals that Jesus has power over the universe and is the long-awaited Savior who gives abundant life (see 10:10)—wine represents fruitfulness and provision. Moreover, he transforms the daily Jewish purification rites by the power of his perfect life (2:6–7). He makes us spiritually clean by his own shed blood (represented by wine).

From there John records Jesus’ cleansing of the temple. Jesus not only fulfills the Old Testament prophecy that the Savior would purify the worship of God’s people. He also declares that he is the new temple (2:21)—the place where God meets his people. Jesus is God with us. The temple is no longer needed, because God is present with us in Jesus.

### JOHN 2

**O**n the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup>Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. <sup>3</sup>When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” <sup>4</sup>And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” <sup>5</sup>His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

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<sup>6</sup>Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup>Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup>And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. <sup>9</sup>When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup>and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” <sup>11</sup>This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

<sup>12</sup>After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

<sup>13</sup>The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. <sup>15</sup>And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup>And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.” <sup>17</sup>His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

<sup>18</sup>So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” <sup>21</sup>But he was speaking about the temple of his body. <sup>22</sup>When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered

## JOHN 2

that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

<sup>23</sup>Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

<sup>24</sup>But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people <sup>25</sup>and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

*Many people think Jesus is merely a good moral teacher. What does this chapter teach you about who Jesus is and what he does?*