

INTRODUCTION TO THE CSB EVERYDAY STUDY BIBLE®

Christianity claims to tell the true story of the whole world. Scripture reveals a grand narrative, one that explains the foundational questions of life: where we came from, who we are, what has gone wrong in our world, what the solution is, and where we are going. In these sixty-six writings, the contours of this authoritative and truthful story come into perspective.

CREATION

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in his image to live joyfully in his presence, in humble submission to his gracious authority.

FALL

But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

REDEMPTION

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with his choosing the nation of Israel to display his glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing his people from slavery and then giving them his holy law. But God's people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God. Then, in the fullness of time, in the person of Jesus Christ, God himself came to renew the world and restore his people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, he suffered the consequences of human rebellion by his death on a cross. But three days later, God raised him from the dead. Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

RESTORATION

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us:

repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, and you will be saved.

Learning how to interpret the Scriptures correctly isn't a hobby for church leaders and seminary students. It's a vitally important part of the Christian life for every believer. Relationships rise and fall with communication, and God has chosen to communicate his plan of redemption, his purposes for us, and his promise of resurrection through the Bible—his inspired Word. We can't hear from God if we're not listening to his words.

The *CSB Everyday Study Bible*® represents the work of more than a hundred scholars who have devoted their lives to living and teaching the truths of Scripture. They come from different denominations and diverse backgrounds. The contributors reflect a broad sampling of evangelical scholars whose ministries are based at seminaries, colleges, and churches. They have sought a balanced approach on controversial issues, and each note and essay has been pored over by a team of theological editors.

The goal of each tool in this study Bible—whether study notes, essays, or book introductions—is to serve the text of Scripture by bringing to light facts that aid comprehension. As servants to the text, the study tools are designed to keep the focus on Scripture and never on the tools themselves. We should never approach the Bible as hobbyists trying to master a book, but as worshipers seeking to hear from our Master, our God who is gracious to speak to us. For this reason, the text of Scripture is never positioned beneath a study tool. The uppermost feature on any given page is the text of Scripture itself.

The goal of this study Bible is to provide you with tools for engaging God's Word on a deeper level, so that you experience life transformation and true knowledge of God. We pray the study helps in this Bible will draw you deeper into the inspired Word of God that continues to speak to us today. May all who use this Bible hear the voice of Christ and faithfully follow him as King!

Trevin K. Wax
General Editor

FEATURES OF THE CSB EVERYDAY STUDY BIBLE®

The CSB was undertaken as a translation that strongly supports Bible study. In the *CSB Everyday Study Bible*®, the Scripture is primary. All features and tools are designed to help you understand the Scripture and be transformed by it.

Two kinds of CSB notes enable you to see for yourself how the translation was derived. When translators do their work, they begin with several possible translations that reflect the original language.

① **ALTERNATE TRANSLATIONS** marked by *Or*. See some of the options CSB translators considered. A second kind of note marks ② **LITERAL TRANSLATIONS**. They are indicated by *Lit*. CSB aims to be as literal as possible. Where a literal translation doesn't conform to good English style, CSB translators find a way to render the expression that optimizes accuracy and readability. The *Lit* feature enables you to see the literal translation for yourself and compare it with what the CSB translators view as the most accurate translation of the sentence or phrase.

OTHER FEATURES OF THE CSB EVERYDAY STUDY BIBLE

- ③ **STUDY NOTES** provide historical, cultural, linguistic, and biblical information that enhances your understanding of a given passage. Words in bold are directly from the Scripture text.
- ④ **BOLDED TEXT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT** are words quoted directly from the Old Testament.
- ⑤ **ILLUSTRATIONS** recreate architectural structures that were part of the landscape in which the Bible was written. Being able to visualize these structures provides a context in which to read and study passages of Scripture. Both the writer of the passage and many of his first readers knew these structures first hand.
- ⑥ **INTRODUCTIONS** lay the foundations of the books by describing the Author, Date, Big Picture, Summary, Key Verses, Food for Thought, Takeaway, and Principle to Live By.
- ⑦ **ESSAYS** give in-depth coverage to major biblical/theological issues.

1 ALTERNATE TRANSLATIONS

LITERAL TRANSLATIONS 2

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LUKE 2:20

took place while^a Quirinius was governing Syria.³ So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

⁴ Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, ⁵ to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him^b and was pregnant. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger; ^c because there was no guest room available for them.

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ANGELS

⁸ In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."^e ¹¹ Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

¹² This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger."

¹³ Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host^f with the angel, praising God and saying:

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!^{g,h}

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

¹⁶ They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had seen and heard, which were just as they had been told.

^a2:2 Or *this registration was the first while, or This registration was before* ^b2:4 Lit *betrothed* ^c2:7 Or *feeding trough, also in vv. 12,16* ^d2:9 Lit *they feared a great fear* ^e2:10 Or *the whole nation* ^f2:13 Lit *heavenly army* ^g2:14 Other mss read *earth good will to people* ^h2:14 Or *earth to men of good will*

from 6 to 4 BC, and then AD 6 to 9. Jesus was born during the period of the **first registration**. There was also a census registration in Quirinius's second term (Ac 5:37).
2:3-4 His own town refers not to where Joseph presently lived (**Nazareth in Galilee**) but to the town of his ancestral roots (**Bethlehem in Judea**), which was called the **city of David** because King David grew up there (1Sm 16:1). Joseph was descended from David (Lk 1:27). The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem would have taken three days and covered roughly ninety miles.
2:5-6 As months before in 1:27, **Mary** at this time was still only **engaged** to Joseph because they had not yet consummated their marriage via intercourse. Nevertheless, she was **pregnant** (see note at 1:31-33) and ready to **give birth**.
2:7 The words **her firstborn Son** naturally implies that Mary later had other children (Mt 13:55-56). That baby Jesus was **laid . . . in a manger** indicates that the family was forced to stay in a stable, or perhaps a cave that served as a stable, because there was no other room available in Bethlehem.
2:8 The sheep used for temple sacrifices in Jerusalem were kept in fields outside Bethlehem. The work of **shepherds** was more important at night because of the threats from thieves and predators. Though the social position of shepherds was lowly, the

role is often viewed positively in the Bible. God is pictured as a shepherd (Gn 49:24; Ps 23:1). King David was the shepherd of God's people (2Sm 5:2). Jesus called himself "the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11).
2:9-10 The glory of the Lord was a bright light (in the midst of the darkness of night), indicating God's glorious presence. It is only natural to be **terrified** at the sight of an angel (see note at 1:11-12), not to mention a sudden, overwhelming light from the sky. The angel spoke to calm the shepherds and refocus their attention on the proclamation of the gospel (**good news**). **All the people** could refer to Israel, but given Luke's emphasis on the gospel spreading to the Gentiles, it probably means "all nations."
2:11-12 Savior means "deliverer, redeemer." **Messiah** (Gk *christos*, equivalent to the Hb *meshiach*) means "anointed one," especially focusing on being anointed as king. **Lord** (Gk *kurios*) was used of secular rulers, but it is also the standard translation of the primary name of God in Hebrew, *Yahweh*. The shepherds would have been shocked to hear that a divine messianic ruler had been born, but to be told he was **lying in a manger** and born to a man and a woman of humble means would have seemed preposterous.
2:13-14 The praise of the **heavenly host** is well-known today as the "Gloria in Excelsis Deo," from the first words of

v. 14 in the Latin Vulgate (**Glorry to God in the highest**). To give "glory to God" does not give him something he otherwise lacks. Rather, it is a confession of the wondrous glory he forever possesses. The **peace** to be found on **earth** was not the *Pax Romana* (the "universal peace" of the Roman Empire) but peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 5:1; see note at Lk 1:78-79). The people whom **God favors** are those who have found God's undeserved favor, or grace, through Christ.
2:15 What has happened refers to the birth of the Savior, who is Christ and Lord (see note at vv. 11-12).
2:16 On lying in the manger, see note at v. 7.
2:17 On the message they were told about this child, see note at vv. 9-10.
2:18 All who heard it included anyone in or around Bethlehem with whom the shepherds had the opportunity to share their story (vv. 8-14).
2:19 It is possible that Luke gained much of his knowledge about what happened in chaps. 2 and 3 from talking to **Mary**, who recalled the things she had "treasured" in **her heart**.
2:20 The **shepherds returned** to the fields outside Bethlehem to tend their flocks. They were **glorifying and praising God** because everything they found in Bethlehem was just as the angel said it would be (vv. 10-12).

3 STUDY NOTES

needs them, and he will send them at once."
 4 This took place so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled:

5 Tell, Daughter Zion,
 "See, your King is coming to you,
 gentle, and mounted on a donkey,
 and on a colt,
 the foal of a donkey."^a

6 The disciples went and did just as Jesus directed them. 7 They brought the donkey and its foal; then they laid their clothes on them, and he sat on them. 8 A very large crowd spread their clothes on the road; others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them on the road. 9 Then the crowds who went ahead of him and those who followed shouted:

Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!^b

Hosanna in the highest heaven!

10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in an uproar, saying, "Who is this?" 11 The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

12 Jesus went into the temple^c and threw out all

CHILDREN PRAISE JESUS

14 The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. 15 When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonders that he did and the children shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant¹⁶ and said to him, "Do you hear what these children are saying?"

Jesus replied, "Yes, have you never read: **You have prepared^d praise from the mouths of infants and nursing babies?**"^e

17 Then he left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

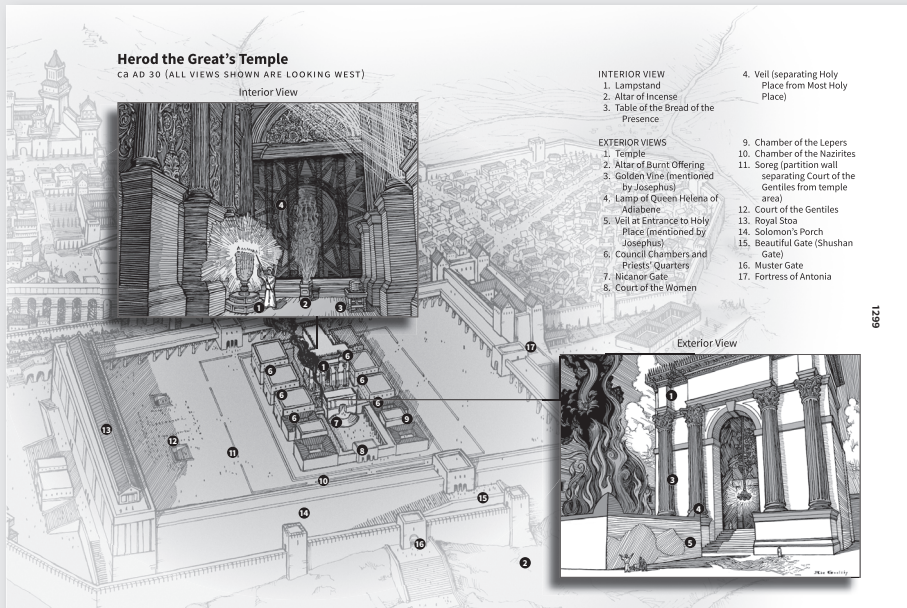
THE BARREN FIG TREE

18 Early in the morning, as he was returning to the city, he was hungry. 19 Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, he went up to it and found nothing on it except leaves. And he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from you again!" At once the fig tree withered.

20 When the disciples saw it, they were amazed and said, "How did the fig tree wither so quickly?"

21 Jesus answered them, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not

4 BOLDDED TEXT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT



5 ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW

AUTHOR:

Technically anonymous, but early Christian tradition assigned this Gospel to the apostle Matthew.

DATE

AD 55–65

BIG PICTURE

Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah, created the church, and commissioned his followers to tell others the good news.

KEY VERSES

Matthew 28:19-20: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

That Jesus told his followers to make disciples of all nations shows the inclusive nature of the gospel. Abraham, from whom Matthew traced Jesus' lineage (1:1-2), was

6 INTRODUCTIONS

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ARTICLE

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR MISSIONS

M. DAVID SILLS

Not only is there a biblical basis for missions, it is accurate to see a missionary purpose for the entire Bible. If God had not revealed himself in Scripture, we would know only that there is a Creator God (Ps 19; Rm 1:18-20) and that we are sinners (Rm 2:14-15). Such general revelation is not sufficient to lead us to saving knowledge of God.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the only answer to humanity's need for holiness and salvation (Jn 3:16; 14:6; Ac 4:12; 2Co 5:21). We are all sinners by birth and choice (Rm 3:23). Therefore, everyone must repent and be spiritually born again because sin separates us from God (Rm 3:2). People are not spiritually neutral until they hear the gospel and reject it; as sinners, they are already condemned and hopeless. Therefore, God gave us the Bible that we might know him and make him known. Making God known is what missions is all about.

The Bible teaches that God has a missionary heart. After their fall into sin, God came to Adam and Eve and announced the protoevangelion (First Gospel), that One was coming to destroy the serpent of the wilderness (Gen 3:15). When God led

people from many nations to join with his people. We even see this on display in the lineage of Jesus, which includes Gentile ancestors (Mt 1:1-17; Lk 3:3-38).

We see God's missionary purpose and heartbeat in three key elements of the Gospels: the Great Commission, the Great Commandments, and the Great Compassion. In the Great Commission, Jesus charges his followers to make disciples of all nations by going to them, winning and baptizing them, and teaching them to obey all he has commanded (Mt 28:19-20). In Matthew 22:33-40, the Great Commandments teach us to love God and our neighbor. If we love God, we will obey his commands and strive to see the whole world worship him. If we love our neighbor, we will want him to have eternal life. As we seek to imitate Jesus, the Great Compassion that characterized his life will shape ours also. Mark 6:34 shows that Jesus had compassion for the crowds who were like sheep without a shepherd. He said in Luke 19:10 that he came to seek and save those who were lost. Our compassion should be like his.

7 ESSAYS

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN

AUTHOR

Technically anonymous, but early Christian tradition assigned this Gospel to John.

DATE

About AD 80-90

BIG PICTURE

Jesus is the sign-working Son of God who gives eternal life on the basis of his death and resurrection to all who believe in him.

SUMMARY

After a prologue (1:1-18), in which John presented Jesus as the eternal Word who became man, and a brief section explaining the role of John the Baptist in relation to Jesus (1:19-51), John's Gospel is divided into two main parts. In the first section (chaps. 2-11) the focus is on Jesus's ministry to the world and the seven signs he performed that served as authentication for his nature and mission. The second major section (chaps. 12-21) reveals Jesus's teaching to his disciples about his sacrificial death. In a Farewell Discourse (13:31-16:33) unique to John's Gospel, Jesus told his disciples about the coming helper, the Holy Spirit, and prayed a prayer for himself, his disciples, and all believers (chap. 17). John showed that Jesus died as the true Passover Lamb (19:14) and narrated several different resurrection appearances—including those when Thomas was present and when Peter was restored and commissioned (chaps. 20-21).

KEY VERSES

John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 3:16: "For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

John makes clear Jesus is the Logos, the Word of God who was with God and ever was God. Jesus is God in the flesh. Further, Jesus used the significant phrase "I am" seven times in John, claiming the personal name of God as his own and making remarkable claims about both his person and his work. We should not be surprised when the message of Christ's deity leads either to saving faith or to total rejection of his claims and the salvation he offers.

TAKEAWAY

John explicitly stated his purpose for writing his Gospel near the end of his book—so that people would believe in Jesus and experience eternal life (20:30-31). Since that was John's purpose, we should use this Gospel to reach unbelievers with the gospel.

PRINCIPLE TO LIVE BY

Acceptance or Rejection (Jn 9:1-41).

We should not be surprised when the message of Christ's deity leads either to saving faith or to total rejection of the salvation story.

PROLOGUE

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was with God in the beginning.³ All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.⁴ In him was life,^a and that life was the light of men.⁵ That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome^b it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John.⁷ He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him.^c

⁸ He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.^d

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him.¹¹ He came to his own, and his

own people did not receive him.¹² But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be^e children of God, to those who believe in his name,¹³ who were born, not of natural descent,^f or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man,^g but of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and dwelt^h among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Sonⁱ from the Father, full of grace and truth.¹⁵ (John testified concerning him and exclaimed, "This was the one of whom I said, 'The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'")¹⁶ Indeed, we have all received grace upon^j grace from his fullness,¹⁷ for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side^k—he has revealed him.

^a1:3-4 Other punctuation is possible: . . . *not one thing was created. What was created in him was life* ^b1:5 Or *grasp, or comprehend, or overtake*; Jn 12:35 ^c1:7 Or *it (the light)* ^d1:9 Or *The true light who comes into the world gives light to everyone, or The true light enlightens everyone coming into the world.* ^e1:12 Or *become* ^f1:13 Lit *blood* ^g1:13 Or *not of human lineage, or of human capacity, or of human volition* ^h1:14 Or *and dwelt in a tent; lit and tabernacled* ⁱ1:14 Son is implied from the reference to the Father and from Gk usage. ^j1:16 Or *in place of* ^k1:18 Other mss read *The one and only Son, who is at the Father's side*

1:1-18 John's prologue presents Jesus as the eternal, preexistent Word-become-flesh (vv. 1,14) and as the one-of-a-kind Son of the Father who is himself God (vv. 1,18). Jesus brought God's plan of salvation to a culmination. Previous to Jesus this plan included God giving the law through Moses (v. 17), his dwelling among his people in the tabernacle (v. 14), and the sending of John the Baptist (vv. 6-8,15). The prologue introduces several themes that are emphasized later in the Gospel, including Jesus as life, light, and truth, believers as God's children, and the world's rejection of Jesus.

1:1 In the beginning was the Word echoes Gn 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John located Jesus's existence in eternity past with God. **The Word was God:** Not only did Jesus exist before creation, he is also the same God who created the heavens and the earth. "The Word" (Gk *Logos*) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech (Ps 19:1-4). God's Word is effective. He speaks, and things come into being (Gn 1:3,9; Is 55:11-12).

1:2-3 Everything that exists owes its existence to Jesus.

1:4-5 The references to **life . . . light, and darkness** continue to draw on Genesis themes (cp. Gn 1:3-5,14-18,20-31; 2:7; 3:20). Light symbolism is also found in later OT messianic passages (Is 9:2; 42:6-7; 49:6; 60:1-5; Mal 4:2; cp. Lk 1:78-79).

1:6 Unlike Jesus, John the Baptist was merely a **man**, but like Jesus he had a particular mission to perform.

1:7-8 On John as a **witness** to Jesus, see note at 5:31-47.

1:9 As the rest of John's Gospel makes clear, all did not in fact receive the light, though the light was available to all.

1:10-11 **His own people did not receive him** refers to the Jewish people, the recipients of God's covenants, the law, and promises of a Messiah (Rm 9:4). Messiah's rejection by the Jews despite convincing proofs of his messiahship (esp. the "signs") is a major subject in the first half of John's Gospel (cp. 12:37).

1:12-13 Reference to **children of God** builds on the OT characterization of Israel as God's children (Dt 14:1; cp. Ex 4:22). **Born, not of natural descent . . . but of God** makes clear that true children of God come into being through faith in Messiah, not physical birth or ethnic descent (8:41-47; cp. 3:16). This opens the way for Gentiles to become God's children (11:51-52; cp. 10:16).

1:14 **The Word** continues the theme of 1:1. **Became flesh** does not mean the Word stopped being God; rather, the Word was made flesh. **Dwelt among us** literally means "pitched his tent" (Gk *skenoō*), an allusion to God's dwelling among the Israelites in the tabernacle (Ex 25:8-9; 33:7). In the past God demonstrated his presence to his people in the tabernacle and the temple. Now God has taken up residence among his people in the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17). The references to God's **glory** hark back to OT passages that describe the manifestation of God's presence and glory in theophanies (appearances of God), the tabernacle, or the temple (Ex 33:22; Nm 14:10; Dt 5:22). The Greek word *monogenēs* underlying **one and only Son from the Father** means "only child" (Jdg 11:34; Jr 6:26; Am 8:10; Zch 12:10). "Only" may mean "one of a kind," as in the case of Isaac, who is called Abraham's "one of

a kind" son in Gn 22:2,12,16 (in contrast to Ishmael, cp. Heb 11:17). In the OT, Israel and the Son of David are called God's "first-born" son (see Ps 89:27). The reference to God's "giving" of his "one and only Son" in Jn 3:16,18 may allude to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gn 22).

Full of grace and truth recalls "faithful love (Hb *chesed*) and truth (Hb *emet*)" in Ex 34:6 (cp. Ex 33:18-19), where the expression refers to God's covenant faithfulness to his people Israel. According to John, God's covenant faithfulness found ultimate expression in his sending of his "one and only Son," Jesus (see textual note at 1:14). **1:15** John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus (Lk 1:24,26), and he started his ministry earlier than Jesus (Lk 3:1-20). Usually, priority in time (such as being the firstborn) implied preeminence, but Jesus's preexistence overrode John's temporal precedence.

1:16 This verse resumes the thought of 1:14. **We** refers to the same group as "we" and "us" in v. 14, that is, the apostolic circle or the whole believing community.

1:17 The contrast between the **law and grace and truth** is not that the law was bad and Jesus was good; rather, both the giving of the law and the coming of Jesus Christ mark stages in God's reaching out to humanity. Jesus, however, marks the final, definitive revelation of God's grace and truth. He is superior to Abraham (8:53), Jacob (4:12), and Moses (5:46-47; cp. 9:28).

1:18 **No one has ever seen God**—not even Moses (Ex 33:18-23). God is spirit (4:24), and humans are sinful, preferring darkness to light (3:19). Thus humans are unable to see God in his fullness. But Jesus Christ, **the one and only Son who is himself God** (1:1), has revealed God

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S TESTIMONY

¹⁹This was John's testimony when the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?"

²⁰He didn't deny it but confessed: "I am not the Messiah."

²¹"What then?" they asked him. "Are you Elijah?"

"I am not," he said.

"Are you the Prophet?"

"No," he answered.

²²"Who are you, then?" they asked. "We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What can you tell us about yourself?"

²³He said, "I am a **voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord**^a — just as Isaiah the prophet said."

²⁴Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵So they asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you aren't the Messiah, or Elijah, or the Prophet?"

²⁶"I baptize with^b water," John answered them. "Someone stands among you, but you don't know him. ²⁷He is the one coming after me,^c whose sandal strap I'm not worthy to untie."²⁸ All this happened in Bethany^d across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

THE LAMB OF GOD

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"³⁰ This is the one I told you about: 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.'³¹ I didn't know him, but I came baptizing with water so he might be revealed to Israel."³² And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and he rested on him."³³ I didn't know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water told me, "The one you see the Spirit descending and resting on — he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit."³⁴ I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."^e

³⁵The next day, John was standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"

³⁷The two disciples heard him say this and followed Jesus. ³⁸When Jesus turned and noticed them following him, he asked them, "What are you looking for?"

They said to him, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

³⁹"Come and you'll see," he replied. So they went and saw where he was staying, and they

^a1:23 Is 40:3 ^b1:26 Or *in*, also in vv. 31,33 ^c1:27 Other mss add *who came before me* ^d1:28 Other mss read *in Bethabara*
^e1:34 Other mss read *is the Chosen One of God*

the Father in a way that Moses and the law (1:17) never could. As Jesus says later in John's Gospel, "The one who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9).

1:19–2:11 This introductory unit presents the first week of Jesus's ministry: day 1, John's witness about Jesus (1:19–28); day 2, John's encounter with Jesus (1:29–34); day 3, John's referral of two of his disciples to Jesus (1:35–39); day 4, Andrew's introduction of his brother Peter to Jesus (1:40–42); day 5, the recruitment of Philip and Nathanael (1:43–51); and day 7, the wedding at Cana (2:1–11). During this early stage Jesus was hailed by John the Baptist as the "Lamb of God" (1:29,36), gathered his first disciples, and performed his first "sign"—turning water into wine (2:11).

1:19–21 John denied being the Messiah (cp. vv. 8,15; 3:28), **Elijah, or the Prophet**. "The Messiah" refers to the coming greater Son of David, predicted in the OT (2Sm 7:11–16; Hs 3:5). Elijah, who never died (2Kg 2:11), was expected to return in the end time (Mal 4:5) to "restore everything" (Mt 17:11; cp. Lk 1:17). John the Baptist resembled Elijah in his rugged lifestyle (Mt 3:4; cp. 2Kg 1:8) but denied being Elijah. Moses predicted the coming of "a prophet" in Dt 18:15,18 (cp. Ac 3:22; 7:37), who was expected in Jesus's time (Jn 6:14; 7:40); John denied being this prophet as well (though he was *a* prophet; see 10:40–41; Mt 11:11–14).

1:22–23 John was a **voice . . . crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of**

the Lord in keeping with Isaiah's words (Is 40:3; cp. Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4). This messenger of God was to prepare the way for the Lord's coming by preaching repentance and divine judgment. Isaiah's vision in Is 40–55 drew heavily on exodus typology and envisioned a new exodus of God's people in which God's glory would be revealed and his people delivered. This would be accomplished by the coming of the Servant of the Lord (see esp. Is 52:13–53:12).

1:24–27 To untie and remove another's sandal was the task of a slave. John the Baptist does not fully answer their question until the next day, in 1:32–34. The purpose of his baptism was to prepare people for the Messiah.

1:28 John was baptizing at the Jordan River. Luke 3:1 places this event in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius (AD 14–37), or AD 29. John would have been about thirty-three years old. The **Bethany across the Jordan** (cp. 10:40) was probably not the village near Jerusalem where Lazarus was raised (cp. 11:1,18) but the region of Batanea in the northeast (called Bashan in the OT).

1:29 On the next day, see note at 2:1–2. John the Baptist's references to Jesus as **the Lamb of God** may echo the lamb led to the slaughter mentioned in Is 53:7. John may also have proclaimed Jesus as the apocalyptic warrior lamb who would bring judgment (Rv 5:6,12; 7:17; cp. Mt 3:7–12; Lk 3:7–17). **Takes away the sin of the world** refers to Jesus's sacrificial, substitutionary

death, which appeased God's wrath against sin and sinners (1Jn 2:2; 4:10).

1:30 Again the fact of Jesus's preexistence is declared.

1:31 By **I didn't know him**, John probably meant that he did not know Jesus was the Messiah until he saw the sign from God mentioned in vv. 32–33.

1:32–34 The Spirit did not just descend on Jesus, he **rested** on him (cp. 3:34)—a sign of Jesus's divine anointing. In the OT, the Spirit came upon people to enable them to accomplish specific tasks. Isaiah predicted that Messiah would be full of the Spirit at all times (Is 11:2; 61:1; cp. Lk 4:18; see note at 5:31–47).

1:35 In 1:35–4:42 John narrated events that fell between Jesus's baptism and the start of his Galilean ministry. On the next day, see note at 2:1–2.

1:36–37 John the Baptist shows great humility here as he recommends Jesus as the greater teacher. What exactly the disciples understood by **the Lamb of God** is unclear, but they did not understand it fully.

1:38 "**Rabbi**" (which means "Teacher") is one of six instances where John translated an Aramaic term for his readers. The others are *Messiah* (Christ, v. 41; 4:25); *Cephas* (Peter, 1:42); *Siloam* (Sent, 9:7); *Thomas* (Didymus, "Twin," 11:16; 20:24; 21:2); and "Place of the Skull" (*Golgotha*, 19:17).

1:39 Giving the time of day shows that this account was based on eyewitness testimony.

stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon.^a

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard John and followed him. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah"^b (which is translated "the Christ"), ⁴² and he brought Simon to Jesus.

When Jesus saw him, he said, "You are Simon, son of John. ^c You will be called Cephas" (which is translated "Peter"^d).

PHILIP AND NATHANAEAL

⁴³ The next day Jesus^e decided to leave for Galilee. He found Philip and told him, "Follow me."

⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth."

⁴⁶ "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael asked him.

"Come and see," Philip answered.

⁴⁷ Then Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said about him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

⁴⁸ "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you," Jesus answered.

⁴⁹ "Rabbi," Nathanael replied, "You are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel!"

⁵⁰ Jesus responded to him, "Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." ⁵¹ Then he said, "Truly I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

THE FIRST SIGN: TURNING WATER INTO WINE

2 On the third day a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee. Jesus's mother was there, and ² Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding as well. ³ When the wine ran out, Jesus's mother told him, "They don't have any wine."

⁴ "What does that have to do with you and me, ^f woman?" Jesus asked. "My hour has not yet come."

^a1:39 Lit *about the tenth hour* ^b1:41 Both Hb *Messiah* and Gk *Christos* mean "anointed one" ^c1:42 Other mss read "*Simon, son of Jonah*" ^d1:42 Both Aramaic *Cephas* and Gk *Petros* mean "rock" ^e1:43 Lit *he* ^f2:4 Or "*You and I see things differently*," lit "*What to me and to you*," Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24; 5:7; Lk 8:28

1:40 Andrew was one of the two; the other disciple is not named. He was probably John, the son of Zebedee.

1:41 On Messiah . . . the Christ, see note at v. 38.

1:42 Cephas is an Aramaic word meaning "rock" (cp. Mt 16:16-18; see note at Jn 1:38). In OT times, God frequently changed people's names to indicate their special calling.

1:43 On the next day, see note at 2:1-2. Jesus's calling of his disciples (follow me) differed from customary practice. Usually it was a disciple who took the initiative to follow a rabbi (15:16).

1:44 Most likely, Andrew and Peter grew up in Bethsaida and later moved to Capernaum (Mk 1:29; cp. Mk 1:21), located only a few miles west. Similarly, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth (Jn 1:45), and later moved to Capernaum (Mt 4:13).

1:45 Nathanael is also mentioned in 21:2. Nathanael may be the personal name of Bartholomew (*Bar-Tholomaios* = son of Tholomaios), who is linked with Philip in all three Synoptic lists (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:14). Philip's reference to the one Moses wrote about in the law may allude to predictions of a coming prophet in Dt 18:15,18 (see note at Jn 1:19-21). The expression "the Law and the Prophets" commonly referred to the OT in its entirety (Mt 5:17; 7:12).

1:46 Nathanael, who hailed from the small village of Cana in Galilee (21:2; cp. 2:1-11), used something of a double

standard when he displayed prejudice toward insignificant Nazareth. Nazareth was a small town of no more than two thousand people.

1:47 Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. Note that Jacob/Israel was characterized by deceit.

1:48 Jesus displayed supernatural knowledge (I saw you), identifying himself as Messiah.

1:49 Son of God and King of Israel are both messianic titles. "Son of God" identifies Jesus as the prophesied Messiah (2Sm 7:14; Ps 2:7); "King of Israel" likewise is a common OT designation for Messiah (Zph 3:15). The two terms also appear in Mt 27:42; Mk 15:32.

1:50 Though Nathaniel had come to know who Jesus was, he had a great deal more to learn.

1:51 Truly I tell you translates Hebrew *amen, amen*, a solemn affirmation emphasizing the authoritative nature of Jesus's pronouncement. The phrase appears twenty-five times in John's Gospel. Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending recalls the story of Jacob in Gn 28:12-15. The greatness of the Son of Man will far surpass the vision of Jacob the patriarch (Jn 4:5-6,11-12). Jesus is the "new Bethel" where God is revealed, and the "new Israel." The expression Son of Man harks back to the mysterious figure of "one like a son of man" in Dn 7:13-14. The Son of Man would be "lifted up" by crucifixion (see note

at Jn 3:14-15), provide divine revelation (6:27,53), and act with end-time authority (5:27; 9:39).

2:1-2 Third day is probably counted from Jesus's encounter with Nathanael. Cana of Galilee was later the site of Jesus's third sign ("the second sign" performed in Cana, 4:54). Jewish weddings were community events, a time of special focus not just on bride and groom but also on their extended families. Jesus's mother may have been a friend of the family, helping behind the scenes. Jesus's disciples probably included the five mentioned in 1:35-51.

2:3 The wedding party's running out of wine ironically calls to mind the spiritual barrenness of first-century Judaism.

2:4 Jesus's use of woman to address his mother established a polite but firm distance between them, as did his question: What does that have to do with you and me? On Jesus's hour has not yet come, cp. 7:6,8,30; 8:20. Because of misconceptions about the coming Messiah, Jesus chose not to reveal himself openly to Israel (though he did perform numerous messianic "signs"; see note at 2:11). John portrays Jesus as the "elusive Christ" via Jesus's pattern of occasional withdrawal (7:6-9; 10:40-41; 11:56-57), his realism about people's true motives (2:23-25), and his ability to elude his opponents when charged with blasphemy (7:44; 8:59; 10:39). Jesus remained elusive until his time finally arrived (12:23,27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1).

INCARNATION AND CHRISTOLOGY

STEPHEN J. WELLUM

The word *incarnation* derives from a Latin word developed from *in + caro* [flesh], which literally means “in the flesh.” In Christian theology the term refers to the supernatural act of God, effected by the Holy Spirit, whereby the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead, took into union with himself a complete human nature apart from sin. As a result of that action, the Son of God became the God-man forever, the Word made flesh (Jn 1:1,14; Rm 1:3-4; 8:3; Gl 4:4; Php 2:6-11; 1Tm 3:16; Heb 2:5-18; 1Jn 4:2).

The means whereby the incarnation came about is the virgin conception, commonly known as the virgin birth—the miraculous action of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary—so that what was conceived was fully God and fully man in one person forever (Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:26-38). He did this in order to become the Redeemer of the church, our Prophet, Priest, and King, and thus to save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21). By becoming one with us, the Lord of Glory not only shares our sorrows and burdens, he is also able to secure our redemption by bearing our sin on the cross as our substitute and being raised for our justification (see Rm 4:25; Heb 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 1Pt 3:18).

THE HUMANITY AND DEITY OF JESUS IN SCRIPTURE

Biblical evidence for the full deity and humanity of Christ is abundant. In regard to his humanity, Jesus is presented as a Jewish man who was born, underwent the normal process of growth and development (Lk 2:52), experienced a full range of human experiences (e.g., Mt 8:10,24; 9:36; Lk 22:44; Jn 19:28), including growth in knowledge (Mk 13:32), and the experience of death (Jn 19:30). Apart from his sinlessness, which Scripture unequivocally affirms (Jn 8:46; 2Co 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1Pt 1:19), he is one with us in every way.

Scripture also affirms that the *man* Christ Jesus is also the eternal Son of God and thus God equal with the Father and Spirit. From the opening pages of the NT, Jesus is identified as the Lord: the One who establishes the divine rule and inaugurates the new covenant era in fulfillment of OT expectation—something only God can do (e.g., Is 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Jr 31:31-34; Ezk 34). That is why Jesus’s miracles are not merely human acts empowered by the Spirit of God; rather they are demonstrations of Jesus’s own divine authority over nature (e.g., Mt 8:23-27; 14:22-23), Satan and his hosts (Mt 12:27-28), and all things (Eph 1:9-10,19-23). Because he is

God the Son, Jesus has the authority to forgive sin (Mk 2:3-12), call himself the fulfillment of Scripture (Mt 5:17-19; 11:13), view his relationship with the Father as one of equality and reciprocity (Mt 11:25-27; Jn 5:16-30; 10:14-30), and do the very works of God in creation, providence, and redemption (Jn 1:1-18; Php 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:1-3).

THEOLOGICAL EXPRESSION OF JESUS’S NATURES

Later church reflection, especially at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), affirmed that we cannot do justice to Scripture without confessing that Jesus of Nazareth was fully God and fully man. God the Son, who gave personal identity to the human nature he had assumed and did so without putting aside or compromising his divine nature, must be confessed as one person who now exists in two natures. Additionally, Chalcedon affirmed that we must not think that the incarnation involved a change in the properties of each nature so that some kind of blending resulted which was neither divine nor human, as the Eutychians wrongly affirmed. Rather, we must affirm that the properties of each nature (human and divine) were preserved so that Jesus is all that God is in all of his perfections and all that we humans are except in terms of sin.

This affirmation entails at least two important points. First, *the man* Jesus from the moment of conception was personal by virtue of the union of the human nature in the person of the divine Son. At no point were there two persons or two centers of self-consciousness, as the Nestorians wrongly affirmed. That is why in our Lord Jesus Christ we come face-to-face with God. We meet him, not subsumed under human flesh, not merely associated with it, but in undiminished moral splendor. The deity and humanity coincide, not because the human has grown into the divine, but because the divine Son has taken to himself a human nature for our salvation. He is the divine Son who subsists in two natures, who has lived his life for us as our representative head, died our death as our substitute, and been raised for our eternal salvation. This is why the Lord Jesus is utterly unique and without parallel and thus the only Lord and Savior. Second, since in the incarnation the eternal Son took to himself a human nature, he can now live a fully human life. Yet he was not totally confined to that human nature as if for a period of time the divine nature was divested of its attributes or function. That is why Scripture affirms that even as the

incarnate One, the divine Son continued to uphold and sustain the universe (Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:1-3) even while he lived out his life on earth as a man dependent upon the Father and empowered by the Spirit (Jn 5:19-27; Ac 10:38).

Our affirmation of the biblical Jesus is beyond our full comprehension, but it is only in such a Jesus that we have One who can meet our every

need. Apart from him as God the Son incarnate, we do not have a Redeemer who can stand on our behalf as a man, let alone satisfy God's own righteous demand upon us due to our sin. After all, it is only God who can save us. By becoming one with us, our Lord not only becomes our sympathetic Savior, he also accomplishes a work that saves us fully, completely, and finally.

⁵ "Do whatever he tells you," his mother told the servants.

⁶ Now six stone water jars had been set there for Jewish purification. Each contained twenty or thirty gallons.^a

⁷ "Fill the jars with water," Jesus told them. So they filled them to the brim.⁸ Then he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the headwaiter."^b And they did.

⁹ When the headwaiter tasted the water (after it had become wine), he did not know where it came from — though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He called the groom¹⁰ and told him, "Everyone sets out the fine wine first, then, after people are drunk, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now."

¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

¹² After this, he went down to Capernaum, together with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples, and they stayed there only a few days.

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

¹³ The Jewish Passover was near, and so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and he also found the money changers sitting there.

¹⁵ After making a whip out of cords, he drove everyone out of the temple with their sheep and oxen. He also poured out the money changers' coins and overturned the tables.

^a2:6 Lit two or three measures ^b2:8 Lit ruler of the table

2:5 Mary's instruction, **Do whatever he tells you**, recalls Pharaoh's instructions in Gn 41:55.

2:6 The number of jars (six) may indicate incompleteness since seven represented fullness. Since each contained twenty or thirty gallons, this added up to as much as one hundred eighty gallons. The Jewish purification ritual may have involved the washing of the guests' hands and certain utensils used at the wedding.

2:7 Filled them to the brim points to the abundance of Jesus's messianic provision (3:34).

2:8-9 The headwaiter was in charge of catering. He supervised the serving of food and drink, and employed several servants.

2:10 John shows Jesus not only miraculously making wine, but making high-quality wine.

2:11 The fact that Jesus's turning of water into wine at the wedding is called the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, leads the reader to expect more signs to follow. The corresponding reference in 4:54 is to Jesus's healing of the royal official's son again while at Cana, "the second sign Jesus performed after he came from Judea to Galilee." Beyond this, Jesus's signs include the non-miraculous but prophetic temple clearing (2:13-22, one of Jesus's Judean signs; cp. v. 23; 3:2); his healing of a lame man (5:1-15); the feeding of the crowds (6:1-15); the healing of the man born blind (chap. 9); and the raising of Lazarus (chap. 11).

In each case, the emphasis is on the way the "sign" revealed Jesus's messianic nature (12:37-40; 20:30-31) and on the striking nature of the feat. These signs pointed unmistakably to Jesus as Messiah—whether it be the large quantity and high quality of wine (2:6,10); the short span required by Jesus to "rebuild" the temple (vv. 19-20); the long-distance healing of the royal official's son (4:47,49-50); the lame man's thirty-eight years as an invalid (5:5); the abundance of food Jesus produced (6:13); the man's congenital blindness (9:1-2); or Lazarus's four days in the tomb (11:17,39). The phrases **he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him** hark back to 1:14.

2:12 Jesus went down from Cana (in the hill country) to Capernaum (situated by the Sea of Galilee). Capernaum was about fifteen miles northeast of Cana and could be reached in a day's journey. Capernaum served as Jesus's headquarters after John the Baptist's imprisonment (Mt 4:12-13; Lk 4:28-31; cp. Mt 9:1).

2:13-22 Jesus's first major confrontation with Jewish leaders in John's Gospel took place when he cleared the Jerusalem temple at Passover. The Synoptic Gospels record a later clearing, just before the crucifixion (Mk 11:15-19). By clearing the temple, Jesus displayed zeal for God's house (Jn 2:17; cp. Ps 69:9) and performed a sign of judgment on the Jewish leaders who had allowed worship to deteriorate

into commerce. His action also prophetically foreshadowed his crucifixion and resurrection, which would establish him as the new center of worship, replacing the old temple.

2:13 This is the first reference to a Jewish festival in John's Gospel and the first reference to Passover. Later, John referred to two more Passovers at 6:4 (Jesus in Galilee) and 11:55; 12:1 (Jesus's final Passover in Jerusalem). Beyond this, Mt 12:1 may refer to another Passover not recorded in John. If so, Jesus's ministry included four Passovers and extended over about three and one-half years, spanning from AD 29 to 33 (see note at Jn 1:28). Apart from these Passover references, John also mentioned Jesus's activities at an unnamed Jewish festival in 5:1 (possibly Shelters); at the Festival of Tabernacles (or Shelters in 7:2); and at the Festival of Dedication (or Hanukkah) in 10:22. People are described as traveling up to Jerusalem because it was located at a higher elevation than Galilee.

2:14 Merchants (selling oxen, sheep, and doves) and money changers (exchanging idol-free coins for those tainted with pagan engravings) eased the logistical burden on pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem from afar by providing them with appropriate animals and coins for sacrifices and offerings. By conducting their business within the temple, however, they disrupted worship (esp. for Gentiles) and obstructed the temple's purpose.

¹⁶ He told those who were selling doves, “Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a marketplace!”^a

¹⁷ And his disciples remembered that it is written: **Zeal for your house will consume me.**^b

¹⁸ So the Jews replied to him, “What sign will you show us for doing these things?”

¹⁹ Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple,^c and I will raise it up in three days.”

²⁰ Therefore the Jews said, “This temple took forty-six years to build,^d and will you raise it up in three days?”

²¹ But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²² So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the statement Jesus had made.

²³ While he was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many believed in his name when they saw the signs he was doing. ²⁴ Jesus, however, would not entrust himself to them, since he knew them all ²⁵ and because he did not need anyone to testify about man; for he himself knew what was in man.

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

3 There was a man from the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to him at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs you do unless God were with him.”

^a2:16 Lit a house of business ^b2:17 Ps 69:9 ^c2:19 Or sanctuary, also in vv. 20,21 ^d2:20 Or was built forty-six years ago
^e3:3 Or from above, also in v. 7 ^f3:10 Or the teacher

2:17 Jesus’s clearing of the temple reminded his disciples of the righteous sufferer in Ps 69:9. First-century Jews expected Messiah to purge and reconstitute the temple. Jesus was passionately concerned for the holiness and purity of God’s house.

2:20 This temple took forty-six years to build seems to indicate that the reconstruction of the second temple had taken forty-six years. Alternatively, it can be read: “This sanctuary was completed forty-six years ago [and has stood since that time].” The Jews were amazed that Jesus claimed he could raise it up in three days, an impossibly short time. The misunderstanding is cleared up in v. 21.

2:22 The Scripture may be Ps 69:9 (cited in Jn 2:17). The statement Jesus had made refers to v. 19.

2:23-25 Believed . . . would not entrust himself is a wordplay in the original Greek. Jesus’s knowledge of people’s hearts was displayed in his encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman; see note at v. 4.

3:1-4:42 The bulk of chaps. 3 and 4 is devoted to Jesus’s encounters with Nicodemus, a representative of the Jewish religious establishment, and an unnamed

woman representing Samaritan religion. Interspersed are explanatory sections (3:16-21,31-36) and a vignette on John the Baptist (3:22-30). The encounters with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman are a study in contrasts. Nicodemus’s status as a Sanhedrin member differs sharply from the lowly Samaritan woman who had a sinful past and present. Yet in both cases Jesus discerned deep spiritual need. He confronted Nicodemus about his need for regeneration and the woman about her sin.

3:1 Nicodemus was a common name in first-century Palestine. **Ruler of the Jews** refers to the Jewish governing body known as the Sanhedrin.

3:2 Nicodemus’s coming to Jesus at night may have negative overtones (“night” is probably negative in 13:30 but not in 21:3; see also the reference to the present event without apparent negative connotation in 19:39). Coming from a “teacher of Israel” (3:10), the address **rabbi** denoted respect, especially since it was known that Jesus did not have formal rabbinic training (7:15). The signs mentioned in John’s Gospel presumably included those performed in Jerusalem (2:23), possibly the temple clearing (cp. 2:18; see note at 2:11).

3:3-8 The discussion of the need for spiritual rebirth develops the reference to the “children of God” who are “born . . . of God” in the prologue (1:12-13). On “children of God,” see 8:39-58 and 11:51-52. The phrase **born of water and the Spirit** probably refers to spiritual birth that cleanses from sin and brings spiritual transformation (Ezk 36:25-27). The **kingdom of God**, a major topic in the other Gospels, is mentioned by John only in vv. 3,5 (see the reference to Jesus’s kingdom in 18:36).

3:7 You is plural, probably indicating Nicodemus and other Sanhedrin members (cp. vv. 1,11).

3:8 Jesus illustrated his pronouncement of vv. 3-5 with an analogy between wind and a person born of the Spirit. **Wind** and **Spirit** translate the same Greek and Hebrew words (Gk *pneuma*; Hb *ruach*). While the wind’s origin is invisible, its effects can be observed; it is the same with those born of the Spirit.

3:9-10 Jesus may here be “returning the compliment” (see note at v. 2), though he chastised Nicodemus for his lack of understanding.

3:11-12 Jesus’s knowledge is firsthand rather than speculative or based on hearsay.

36 99 ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

REGENERATION (JN 3:3-8)

Regeneration takes place at the beginning of the Christian life, and is the miraculous transformation, or the new birth, that takes place within an individual through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (Ti 3:5). It is the divine side of conversion (a person turning to Christ in repentance and faith), being the work of God within a person’s life that causes him or her to be born again, a work that human effort is unable to produce.

³ Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again,^e he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

⁴ “How can anyone be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked him. “Can he enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born?”

⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. ⁸ The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

⁹ “How can these things be?” asked Nicodemus.

¹⁰ “Are you a teacher^f of Israel and don’t know these things?” Jesus replied. ¹¹ “Truly I tell you, we speak what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you do not

accept our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven — the Son of Man.^a

¹⁴ "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him may^b have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God loved the world in this way: ^c He gave^d his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. ¹⁹ This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, ^e so that his deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But anyone who lives by^f the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God."

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

²² After this, Jesus and his disciples went to the Judean countryside, where he spent time with them and baptized.

²³ John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water

37 99 ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

FAITH (JN 3:16-21)

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation. More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1Jn 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (Jn 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

there. People were coming and being baptized, ²⁴ since John had not yet been thrown into prison.

²⁵ Then a dispute arose between John's disciples and a Jew^g about purification. ²⁶ So they came to John and told him, "Rabbi, the one you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing — and everyone is going to him."

²⁷ John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly^h at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."

THE ONE FROM HEAVEN

³¹ The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is from the earth is earthly and speaks in earthly terms. ⁱ The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He testifies to what he has seen and heard, and yet

^a3:13 Other mss add *who is in heaven* ^b3:15 Other mss add *not perish, but* ^c3:16 Or *this much* ^d3:16 Or *For in this way God loved the world, and so he gave, or For God so loved the world that he gave* ^e3:20 Lit *and does not come to the light* ^f3:21 Lit *who does* ^g3:25 Other mss read *and the Jews* ^h3:29 Lit *with joy rejoices* ⁱ3:31 Or *of earthly things*

The **earthly things** probably refers to the teaching on spiritual regeneration.

3:13 Jesus's statement may allude to Pr 30:4. Only Jesus **descended from heaven** and returned there (Lk 24:51; Ac 1:9).

3:14-15 The reference to the **Son of Man** being **lifted up** is the first of three "lifted up" sayings in John (8:28; 12:32). All three speak of the future "lifting up" of the Son of Man in double meaning (possibly inspired by the language of Is 52:13). The reference in this verse invokes **Moses's** lifting up of a serpent in the **wilderness** so that everyone who had been bitten by a poisonous snake and looked at the serpent in faith was healed (Nm 21:8-9). The third and final "lifted up" saying (Jn 12:32) emphasizes that the lifting up of the Son of Man refers to Jesus's crucifixion (cp. 12:33 and the similar reference to Peter's martyrdom in 21:19).

3:16-18 God, out of love, **gave his one and only Son** (cp. 1:14,18), so that everyone who believes in him will **have eternal life** (see notes at 5:26; 14:4-6).

John's favorite designation for Jesus is the Son sent by the Father (3:34-36; 5:19-26; 6:40; 8:35-36; 14:13; 17:1), imagery taken from the Jewish concept of the *shaliach* (messenger), according to which the sent one is like the sender himself and faithfully pursues the sender's interests (13:16,20). Jesus is that "sent one" par excellence (9:7), and he in turn sends his disciples (see note at 20:21-22). Being sent implies that the commission, charge, and message are issued by the sender rather than originating with the ones sent. The messengers' role is to fulfill their commission according to their sender's will.

3:19-21 On Jesus as the **light**, see note at 8:12.

3:22 Jesus left the vicinity of Jerusalem and headed to the **Judean countryside**. In 4:3, Jesus left Judea altogether, returning to Galilee (2:12) by way of Samaria.

3:23-25 The ministries of Jesus and John overlapped and led to a dispute between their respective disciples.

3:26 On John the Baptist as a witness to Jesus, see note at 5:31-47.

3:27 John points out that Jesus would not be having such success unless God was in it.

3:28 John's assertion that he had **been sent ahead** of the Messiah may allude to Mal 3:1 (cp. Mt 11:10; Mk 1:2; Lk 7:27).

3:29 John's reference to Jesus as the **groom** (cp. Mt 9:15) identified Jesus as Israel's long-awaited King and Messiah. In the OT, Israel is frequently depicted as God's "bride" (Is 62:4-5; Jr 2:2; Hs 2:16-20). John's role was that of **the groom's friend**, who selflessly rejoiced with the groom (1:6-9,15,19-36).

3:30 John the Baptist downplayed his disciples' concerns expressed in v. 26. Now that the light had come (1:6-9), the "lamp" had done its work (see note at 5:35).

3:31-32 **The one who comes from above** is Jesus. The **earthly** one is John the Baptist, but it speaks not of sin but of finiteness.

no one accepts his testimony.³³ The one who has accepted his testimony has affirmed that God is true.³⁴ For the one whom God sent speaks God's words, since he^a gives the Spirit without measure.³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hands.³⁶ The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son^b will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

4 When Jesus^c learned that the Pharisees had heard he was making and baptizing more disciples than John² (though Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were),³ he left Judea and went again to Galilee.⁴ He had to travel through Samaria;⁵ so he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar near the property^d that Jacob had given his son Joseph.⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, worn out from his journey, sat down at the well. It was about noon.^e

⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. "Give me a drink," Jesus said to her,⁸ because his disciples had gone into town to buy food.

⁹ "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" she asked him. For Jews do not associate with^f Samaritans.⁶

¹⁰ Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would ask him, and he would give you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," said the woman, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. So where do you get this 'living water'?"¹² You aren't greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and livestock."

¹³ Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks from this water will get thirsty again.¹⁴ But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again. In fact, the water I will give him will become a well^h of water springing up in him for eternal life."

¹⁵ "Sir," the woman said to him, "give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and come here to draw water."

¹⁶ "Go call your husband," he told her, "and come back here."

¹⁷ "I don't have a husband," she answered. "You have correctly said, 'I don't have a husband,'" Jesus said.¹⁸ "For you've had five

^a3:34 Other mss read *since God* ^b3:36 Or *refuses to believe in the Son, or disobeys the Son* ^c4:1 Other mss read *the Lord*
^d4:5 Lit *piece of land* ^e4:6 Lit *about the sixth hour* ^f4:9 Or *do not share vessels with* ^g4:9 Other mss omit *For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.* ^h4:14 Or *spring*

3:33 Has affirmed (Gk *sphragizo*) means literally "to seal" in the sense of confirming or authenticating something as true (see note at 6:27-29).

3:34 On Jesus as the recipient of God's Spirit, see note at 1:32-34 (see also Rv 3:1; 5:6).

3:35 The Father has given the Son authority over all things because of his love.

3:36 Has eternal life indicates that eternal life is not just a future expectation but is already a present experience. The wrath of God remains on him makes clear that unless a person believes in Jesus the Messiah, he remains under God's judgment (vv. 19-21).

4:1-42 Jesus's encounter with the Samaritan woman took place by divine necessity (v. 4). Unlike Nicodemus, the woman progressed in her understanding. She viewed him first as a Jew (v. 9), then as someone who could make her life easier (v. 15), then as a prophet (v. 19), and then possibly as Messiah (v. 29). The woman's fellow townspeople concluded that Jesus was the Savior of the world (v. 42).

4:1 The Pharisees had investigated John the Baptist's credentials (1:19, 24); now they were looking into those of Jesus.

4:2 John the Evangelist, author of this Gospel, here clarified the earlier statement in 3:26.

4:3 On Jesus going from Judea to Galilee, see note at 3:22.

4:4 Had to travel may indicate that Jesus's itinerary was set by the sovereign plan of

God (9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9). Through Samaria was the most direct route from Judea to Galilee, but strict Jews, wishing to avoid defilement, bypassed Samaria by taking a longer, less direct route. This involved crossing the Jordan River and traveling across from Samaria on the eastern side of the river.

4:5 Sychar was located just east of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. The reference to the property that Jacob had given his son Joseph reflects the customary inference from Gn 48:21-22 and Jos 24:32 that Jacob gave his son Joseph the land at Shechem that he had bought from the sons of Hamor (Gn 33:18-19) and that later served as Joseph's burial place (Ex 13:19; Jos 24:32).

4:6 Jesus was worn out from his journey. This underscores his genuine, full humanity.

4:7 The first sentence would have raised the question: What will Jesus do? Those who knew the Samaritans would have been shocked by Jesus's request.

4:8 Jesus and his disciples usually carried little or nothing to eat on their journeys. Rather, they brought money to buy provisions along the way (12:6; 13:29). Purchasing food was a common assignment given to disciples. Jesus did not fear being defiled by food bought in a Samaritan village.

4:9 The author's aside that Jews do not associate with Samaritans explained to

his Diaspora readership that rabbis considered Samaritans to be in a continual state of uncleanness.

4:10-15 The references to Jesus as the giver of living water involve double meaning (see notes at 3:3-8, 14-15). Literally, the phrase refers to fresh spring water (Gn 26:19; Lv 14:6). God was known as the source of life (Gn 1:11-12, 20-31; 2:7) and "the fountain of living water" (Jr 2:13; see Is 12:3). In Nm 20:8-11, water gushed out of the rock, a much-needed provision for the Israelites.

4:11 Jacob's well may have been the deepest well in Palestine. It is more than a hundred feet deep today and was probably deeper in Jesus's day.

4:12 The woman's account of Jacob giving the Samaritans the well and drinking from it himself was based on tradition, not Scripture. The book of Genesis does not record Jacob digging a well, drinking from it, and giving it to his sons.

4:14 The phrase will become a well of water springing up in him is reminiscent of Is 12:3 (cp. Is 44:3; 55:1-3).

4:16 Jesus's instructions gave the woman the opportunity to admit that she was living with a man who was not her husband.

4:17 While technically truthful, the woman's statement was potentially misleading because it could be taken to imply that she was unattached. Jesus knew the full truth.

4:18 The woman had had five husbands—or five "men" (the Gk *aner* can