



The Life of Christ

FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

BY FRANK HAMRICK

The Life of Christ

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Foreword

Jesus Christ is the unique personality of all time. He has changed the course of history as has no other person or influence. Countless excellent books have been written about the life of Christ, offering huge amounts of information and elaborate essays on chronology and contemporaneous history, customs, and events. Thousands of teachers and preachers have offered innumerable glimpses of the many-faceted life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Yet, sometimes it is still easy to think of Christ as some invisible, impersonal God who is far away somewhere in space. This Bible study on the life of Christ, however, acquaints you with the *visible* and *personal* Jesus, the Christ of God. As you proceed through this study, you will share food with Jesus on the mountainside and laugh with Him at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. As you journey to Jerusalem on the tan grit roads, dust will thicken on your blistered feet and congest your nostrils. Through a dust-choked throat, you will convince Him to rest a little along the way as your muscles wilt from the strain.

You will roam along the coastal area of Galilee, see the soft-colored flowers, and soak up the smell of fresh water from the shimmering sea. And you will rove among the fair maidens, laughing children, and carefree fishermen. You will hear the dogs barking insults at the teasing seagulls. As the azure sky of a sunlit afternoon deepens into the fiery red of evening, you will sleep by His side in a peaceful pasture. You will hear Him rearrange His slumber on the ground at night with a muffled yawn. You will awaken in the middle of the night to the sound of His soft voice speaking to one named Nicodemus.

Then, as you enter the city of Jerusalem with Him, you will see people swarm around and block His way. The sick will throw themselves in His

path. They will grasp for His clothing, calling to Him for help: “Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!” Others will hide their faces. You will see His eyes glisten as a smile creases His strong, tanned face.

Finally, your heart will pant and all of your limbs will be seized with shaking and trembling as soldiers come to arrest Jesus and lead Him away as a lamb to the slaughter.

In this study, you will see Jesus as one who lived just as you do today. You will come to Him face to face and heart to heart. You will better know Him personally. This study will cause you to *admire* Him as an individual, to *identify* with Him, and to be *proud* of Him.

The desire of the staff at Positive Action For Christ is that through this study of *The Life of Christ from the Gospel of John* you, the student, will develop a deep *love* for Christ, a sense of His *commission* to you, and a devoted *following* of Him. We pray that your eyes will ever be on that prospect of which He Himself spoke in the very last sentence of John’s Gospel: “Till I come.”

Features

This student textbook offers several features for your benefit. Preview each of them so that you can take full advantage of them.

Scripture Readings and Recommended Memorization

Each lesson states the exact Scripture passage that you will be studying in that particular lesson. Be sure to read the selected reference(s) carefully and follow it as your teacher presents the lesson. Following this Foreword is a Recommended Scripture Memorization Plan. Follow your teacher’s instructions concerning the proper memorization of each verse or passage for each lesson. (Your teacher might ask you to write the text from memory on either your chapter quizzes or unit tests as part of the evaluation process.)

Introductory Readings

Each chapter begins with a brief introductory reading that sets the stage for the material that will be covered in your personal Bible study/lesson research and the teacher’s lesson. Read these pages very carefully, paying particular attention to any personal applications that you might be able to make from the material.



Student Work

Each chapter includes a number of questions designed to help you imagine yourself as part of the story of Christ. These questions will help you to put yourself in the place of the disciples, the Pharisees, or the multitudes as you investigate for yourself just who this Jesus is. These exercises may be different from anything you have done before, so don't become discouraged if it is difficult at first. Your teacher will give you more specific instructions and will probably discuss the questions and answers in class. Keep in mind that Scripture does not give us the answers to all the questions. Some of the other questions will be difficult to answer correctly until after your teacher teaches the lesson. Don't let that bother you, since the purpose of these exercises is not to give you the correct answers right away, but to help you engage your mind to understand what is taking place in the Gospel of John.



Notes from the Teacher's Lesson

Each chapter provides space for you to take notes on the teacher's lesson. Reproduced in your student textbook are duplicates of the overhead transparencies that the teacher will use. As the teacher presents the lesson, fill in the blanks in your textbook, using margins for additional notes.

Assignments and "Fill in the Blank" Sections

Some chapters will include assignments that will require you to study selected Bible references or passages to gather more information on the topic of the lesson. Some chapters will include sections that require you to study some of the other Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) to gain information about the life of Christ that John's Gospel does not include. Be very careful to complete these sections because this exercise will give you a more complete picture of what Christ did during His earthly ministry and will help you to know Him better.



"Digging Deeper"

At the end of each chapter in the student textbook is a section titled "Digging Deeper." These sections suggest activities for further study that your teacher might ask you to do at his or her discretion. The activities include readings from books, in-depth studies of certain Bible characters or great Christians, creative projects, and other exercises designed to help you take a deeper look at how you can learn more about the topic of each lesson and make practical applications of the major points in the lessons.

Recommended Scripture Memorization Program

Lesson	Scripture Reference to Be Memorized
1	Romans 15:4
2	John 20:31
3	John 1:1–3
4	John 1:10–12
5	John 1:14
6	John 1:27
7	John 1:41
8	John 2:4
9	John 2:19
10	John 3:3, 6, 16–20
11	John 4:13–14
12	John 4:35
13	John 5:8–9
14	John 5:24
15	John 6:5–6
16	John 6:27
17	John 6:35, 37
18	John 7:17
19	John 7:38
20	John 8:12, 32
21	John 9:4
22	John 10:9–10
23	John 10:27–29
24	John 11:25–26
25	John 12:7–8
26	John 12:24–25
27	John 12:46, 48
28	John 13:34–35
29	John 14:1–3
30	John 15:4–5, 7
31	John 17:14–18
32	John 18:36
33	John 19:11
34	John 20:29
35	John 21:22

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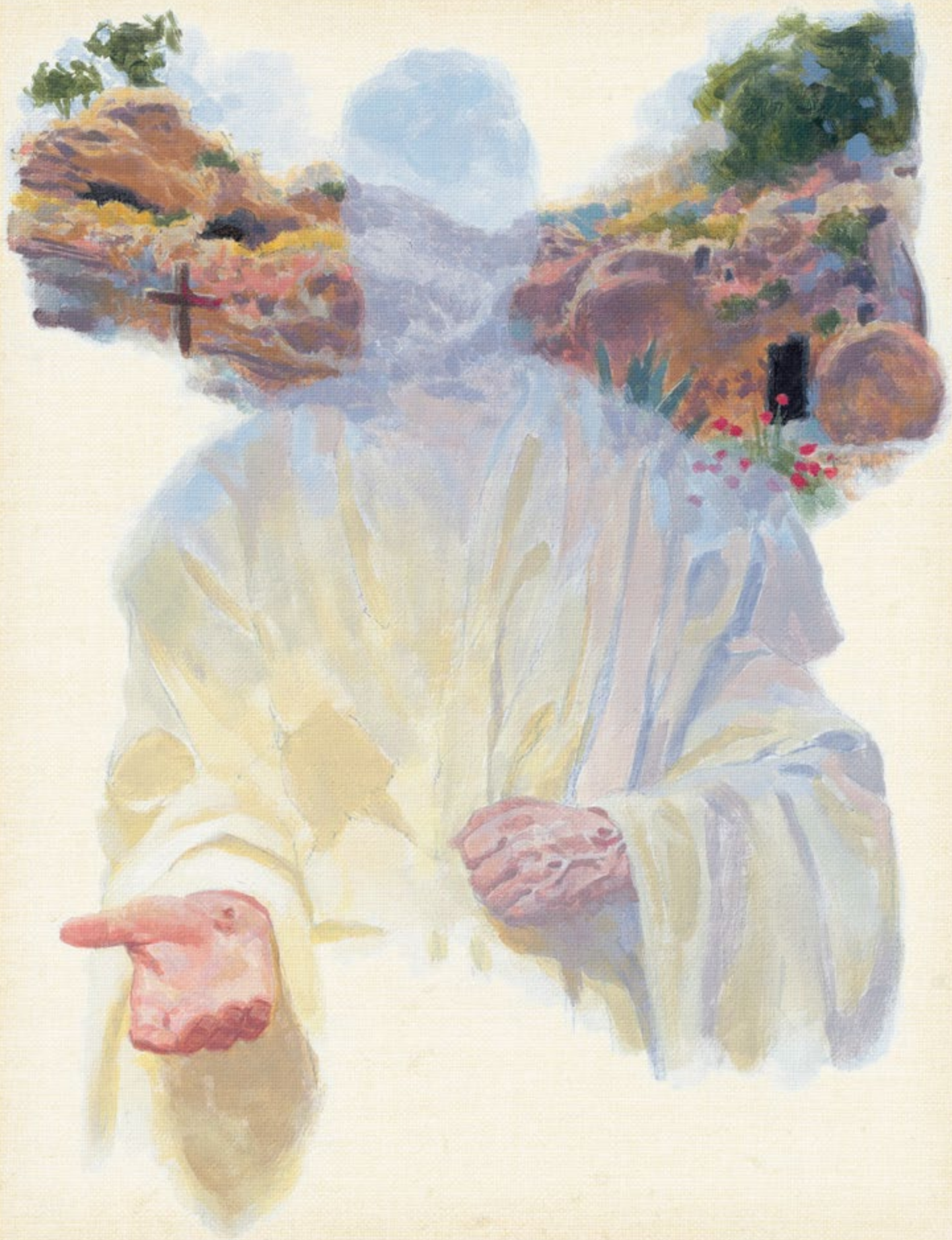
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Unit 1

Background Information for a
Study of the Life of Christ in
the Gospel of John



1

An Introduction to the Gospel of John

All of the other apostles were dead. John was the last of the original Twelve who could give an apostle's eyewitness account of Christ's life on earth. Heresies about Christ were creeping into the church. In light of these facts, John's writings could not only present a true account of what Christ had done, but also combat the false teachings about His life and doctrines.

But John's primary reason for writing his Gospel was different. He stated in John 20:30: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book..." But his purpose was not to tell *what Christ did*. In fact, John chose to write about only seven of Christ's miracles. Rather, it was to tell *who Christ is*, as is stated in vs. 31: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

We are about to embark on a study of one of the most precious, most important, and most powerful books of the Bible. Although the vocabulary and style of writing used by its author are simple, leading some scholars to refer to it as the "simple Gospel," his simple style and elementary vocabulary are a bit deceptive because the Gospel of John is the most profound of the four Gospels. Its message is so theologically deep in some places that Bible scholars have studied it for centuries in attempts to understand fully its meaning and implications, and they still don't know it all.

Various scholars have referred to the Gospel of John as “the heart of Christ.” D. A. Hayes called it “the worthy and adequate picture of the life of Jesus among men.” A. T. Pierson said, “John leads us past the veil into the Holy of Holies.” Jerome said, “John excels in the depths of divine mysteries.”

Although the book recounts the events of the ministry of Christ, it also teaches some very profound doctrines that provide the heart of the gospel of salvation. In his Gospel, John states a glorious *principle*: people’s souls can be saved by believing in Christ and His atoning work on the Cross. John reveals a glorious *person*: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God in the flesh. Although this doctrine of the deity of Christ is in the forefront of the book, it does not lose sight of the humanity of Christ. But John’s Gospel also shows a glorious *privilege*: one can have eternal life through believing on Jesus Christ.

Other interesting facts concerning the book of John include the following.

- Surprisingly for a book with the deity of Christ as its theme, the name *Jesus* is used more often than the name *Christ*.
- The word *Jew* occurs more than sixty times in John.

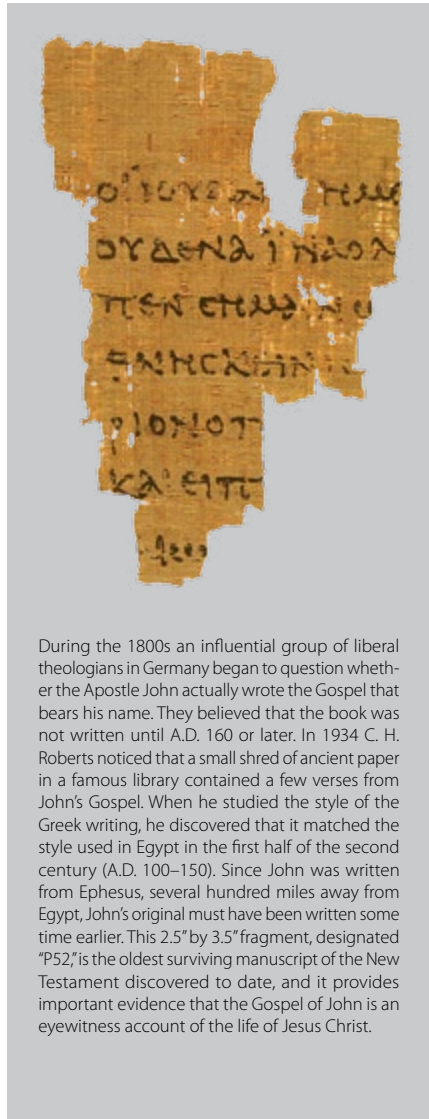


- The word *believe* is used almost one hundred times in John, whereas it appears only about forty times in the other three Gospels.
- The word *faith* does not occur even once in John.
- *Eternal life* appears thirty-five times in John but only twelve times in the other Gospels.

The Gospel of John is one of four books in the Bible that depict the life of Christ. Of the four Gospels, John's message is the most profound, its task and purpose the loftiest, and its passages among the most treasured. Before we begin our study of the book of John, however, we must consider some of the background of the book so as to better understand what we do study.

The Date of Its Writing

The date when the book of John was written has been much disputed. (A sampling of sources indicate the following suggested dates: A.D. 150 "or a little earlier" [Oxford], "late first century" [Thompson], A.D. 90–94 [Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown], about A.D. 90 [Eerdman's Dictionary], and not later than A.D. 85–90 [Unger].) Interestingly, those who think that the book was written sometime well into the second century would eliminate John the Apostle as its author because he would have been long dead! More recent discoveries, however, affirm the date of the Gospel's writing to be during the last quarter of the first century, probably around A.D. 80–90 (see note at right). In fact, the oldest surviving copy of any portion of Scripture is a fragment from John's Gospel.



During the 1800s an influential group of liberal theologians in Germany began to question whether the Apostle John actually wrote the Gospel that bears his name. They believed that the book was not written until A.D. 160 or later. In 1934 C. H. Roberts noticed that a small shred of ancient paper in a famous library contained a few verses from John's Gospel. When he studied the style of the Greek writing, he discovered that it matched the style used in Egypt in the first half of the second century (A.D. 100–150). Since John was written from Ephesus, several hundred miles away from Egypt, John's original must have been written some time earlier. This 2.5" by 3.5" fragment, designated "P52," is the oldest surviving manuscript of the New Testament discovered to date, and it provides important evidence that the Gospel of John is an eyewitness account of the life of Jesus Christ.

The Author



Read John 21:20, 24. According to these verses, who clearly wrote this Gospel? _____
The disciple Jesus loved



According to Luke 6:14–16, who were the disciples? _____
Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,
Matthew, Thomas, James, Simon, Judas, and Judas Iscariot

(Note that Bartholomew was probably the same person as the man called Nathanael in John 1:45.)

How We Got Our Bible

No one has discovered the original copies of Scripture written by John, Paul, and others, but at this time we possess well over 5,500 handwritten copies of different portions of Scripture. Some of these manuscripts are as old as the second century A.D. The oldest manuscripts have been found in the warm, dry climates of Northern Africa and Palestine, but the vast majority of what we have today were created in Eastern Europe and Turkey in the ninth century or later.

At first, individual believers labored over their work, using primitive ink pens to write on stretched animal skins or paper made from reeds. Later, when the number of Christians grew, the demand for more copies led to the development of scriptoria. In these rooms, one man read from the manuscript while several copyists recorded the words, thereby making new copies. These scriptoria were most common around Byzantium, the capital of the Eastern Empire (today's Istanbul, Turkey). In Byzantium, Greek was still the dominant language, so the Church aggressively produced copies in the original language of the New Testament.

The number of copies of Scripture we have today is overwhelming compared to all the other pieces of literature written about the same time as the New Testament. Although none of these manuscripts match perfectly because of human copying errors, the level of agreement far exceeds other ancient writings. Almost all of these inconsistencies are obvious and easily corrected. These manuscripts prove that our Bible is a reliable record of the inspired Word of God.

The author of this Gospel was one of those twelve men, but he never used his own name in his Gospel account. We can, however, by process of elimination, determine who the author was *not*.



Read the following verses and write the names of the disciples who could *not* have written this Gospel:

- John 1:40— Andrew, Simon, Peter's brother
- John 1:41— Simon
- John 1:43— Philip
- John 1:45— Nathanael
- John 6:70–71— Judas Iscariot
- John 11:16— Thomas
- John 14:22— Judas, not Iscariot



Eliminating these men leaves only five possibilities. Who are they? James, John, Bartholomew, Matthew, and James the son of Alphaeus



It must be one of the seven disciples in John 21:2, but of those men, three mentioned by name we have already eliminated. That leaves four, two of whom are identified as the sons of Zebedee. Who are those two men? James and John

The other two are simply called “two other of His disciples.”



Read John 21:2–7. Was the disciple whom Jesus loved one of these four? Yes

So, this exercise gives us a good idea of who the author of this Gospel was. We conclude that John was the author because he is the most likely possibility among the five remaining disciples. All the historical accounts point to John. The most compelling is that Ignatius knew Polycarp, and Polycarp studied under John. Ignatius wrote that Polycarp said John had written the Gospel.



Based on your reading of the following verses, record the instances in which the author of this Gospel refers to himself by stating the event, the circumstances, and what he was doing.

- John 1:37–41— Andrew and the author heard Jesus, followed Him, and stayed with Him.

(In this passage, the author records the name of only one of the two disciples, the unnamed one being the author himself.)

- John 13:23— **The disciple whom Jesus loved leaned on Jesus' breast.**
- John 18:15–16— **Simon Peter and the author followed Jesus; the author went in with Jesus.**
- John 19:16–27— **The disciple whom Jesus loved stood by Jesus' mother beneath the cross, and Jesus instructed him to look after her.**
- John 20:2–10— **Mary Magdalene told Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved that Jesus was gone.**
- John 21:2, 7, 20, 24— **The disciple whom Jesus loved told Peter that it was the Lord, and Peter jumped into the water and swam to shore.**

Predominant Thinking Patterns

To understand the Gospel of John properly, we must understand the thinking patterns of the people to whom it was written.

Gnosticism

Gnosticism (pronounced nos'-ti-sis-im) was a rapidly developing philosophy in John's day. Gnostics believed that God was absolutely good and that matter was absolutely evil. A good God, they taught, could not create evil matter, so there must be other beings descending from God in a chain. These beings were called aeons (pronounced ay'-ons), and each one had a little less deity than the one above it. The last aeon they called Christ.

The Gnostics were divided into two groups, the Docetists and the Cerentians. The Docetists taught that Christ did not have a flesh-and-blood body; He only *seemed* to have one. The Cerentians, however, taught that Christ neither was born nor died. They believed that the aeon Christ came upon Jesus at His baptism and left Him at the Cross.

The Mosaic System

The Mosaic system of laws and regulations influenced the thinking of the people of John's day. The Jews followed the Old Testament Law of Moses and rejected the idea that the Messiah would establish salvation for the whole world. Instead, He was to come for only the Jews. This view, of course, explains why the Jewish rulers were so upset at Jesus' teaching that "God so loved the *world* . . . that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Such teaching opened the door of salvation to everyone, Gentiles (non-Jews) as well as Jews.

John's Attack

In his Gospel, John attacked the popular thinking of the time. In the first eighteen verses of his Gospel, he served notice that both Gnosticism and the reliance upon the Mosaic system for salvation were incompatible with Christian doctrine.



Read John 1:1–3. How did John attack the Gnostic idea of a creator being who was less than God but more than man? _____

He wrote that the Creator was in the beginning with God and was God.



How did John answer the Docetic beliefs in John 1:1–14? _____

He wrote that the Word was made flesh.



How did John prove that the Mosaic system was replaced by Christ in John 1:1–18? **He wrote that although Moses gave the** _____

law, Christ brought grace and truth.



What did John write about the Jewish belief that Christ was to come for only the Jews? **He came to them, but they did not** _____

receive Him; however, whoever did receive Him became the sons of God.



Notes from the Teacher's Lesson

An Introduction to the Gospel of John

The Place of John in the New Testament

- One of the four _____ **Gospels**
- One of the _____ **longest** books of the New Testament
- The _____ **best-loved** book of the New Testament

The Contents of John

- Different from the _____ **other Gospels** _____
- Answers the questions posed by the _____ **Synoptics** _____
 - Who is this great King? _____ **Matthew** _____
 - Who is this great Servant? _____ **Mark** _____
 - Who is this great Man? _____ **Luke** _____

The Unique Characteristics of John

- John emphasizes _____ **evangelism** _____ .
- John records only _____ **seven** _____ miracles.
- John focuses on Judea rather than on _____ **Galilee** _____ .
- John emphasizes Jesus' own _____ **words** _____ concerning Himself.
 - John is not trying to prove Christ's _____ **deity** _____ so much as he is letting Jesus Christ prove His own _____ **deity** _____ .

The Application of the Gospel of John

- Jesus Christ ought to be more real to each of us, and we should love and admire Him more than ever before.
- Jesus Christ is more than a fact in history. He still lives! He longs for us to know Him, not just to know about Him.

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Portrait of Christ	King	Servant	Man	God
Prominent Words	Fulfilled	Straightway	Son of Man	Believe
Audience	Jews	Romans	Greeks	All Men
Emphasis	Words	Works	Humanity	Deity
Outstanding Sections	Sermons	Miracles	Details of Birth and Crucifixion	Claims to Deity
Basic Characteristics	Historical	Historical	Historical	Spiritual



Digging Deeper

1. Conduct a study of the life of John the Apostle. Specifically, describe his position among the other eleven disciples and his relationship to Christ. Write a brief biography of John. Include in the biography information concerning other books of the New Testament he wrote and the circumstances surrounding them. (You might want to consult such resources as Herbert Lockyer's book *All the Men of the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958], pp. 196–197.)
2. Select one major incident in the life and ministry of Christ, then consult a harmony of the Gospels (e.g., Benjamin Davies, ed., *Harmony of the Gospels* [Greenville, S.C.: BJU Press, 1976]), comparing and contrasting the four authors' accounts of that event. Report your findings to the class.
3. Conduct a more detailed study of Gnosticism, describing its major points. Show on a two-column chart how each major teaching of that philosophy is unscriptural. (In the first column, write the belief of the Gnostics; in the second column, write out the verses of Scripture that refute that belief.)
4. Obtain a harmony of the Gospels, a book such as that suggested in item 2 of this list of activities which compares and contrasts the four Gospel accounts, for use during our study of John. You will find it helpful in putting together a complete picture of Christ's ministry on earth.

