

JOHN



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and Paul M. Smalley



REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS
Grand Rapids, Michigan

John

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Reformation Heritage Books

3070 29th St. SE

Grand Rapids, MI 49512

616-977-0889

orders@heritagebooks.org

www.heritagebooks.org

Printed in China

23 24 25 26 27 28/10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 979-8-88686-084-9

For additional Reformed literature, request a free book list from Reformation Heritage Books at the above regular or email address.

PREFACE

In Deuteronomy 17, Moses leaves final instructions concerning the future of Israel. As a prophet of God, he foretells that Israel will set a king over the nation (v. 14). This king must be an Israelite, not a foreigner (v. 15), and is forbidden to do certain things (vv. 16–17). In verse 18, Moses transitions to what the king should do. The king is commanded not to simply acquire a copy of the law (the entire book of Deuteronomy), but to handwrite his own copy of the law. The purpose was so that he would read it, fear the Lord, obey, avoid pride, not deviate, and enjoy a long reign (vv. 19–20; cf. Prov. 4:20–27).

More than three thousand years later, modern educators have discovered that students who write out notes by hand have a much higher retention rate than those who simply hear or visually read the information. Apparently, God knew this to be true for the kings of Israel also.

This series of books, known as *The Bible Journal*, was born from the insight found in Deuteronomy 17:18. Your Bible Journal gives you the opportunity to write out your own copy of a portion of the Holy Scriptures, just as the ancient kings of Israel were instructed to do. Writing out the words of the Bible helps a person to engage the Word of God by slowing down the process of reading the text. Writing answers to the discussion questions also helps you to thoughtfully engage the text. Furthermore, by completing a journal, you leave a legacy to pass on to future generations your insights and personal applications of the text (Deut. 6:6–9; Ps. 78:4–7).

To prepare you to meditate on this portion of the Holy Scriptures, we include an introduction to the book of the Bible to help you understand more thoroughly the Bible book you are about to write out in full. Study Questions and Devotional Reflections have been added after the blank pages set aside for copying each chapter of God's Word. The Study Questions focus on individual verses to keep you thinking about what you are writing, and the Devotional Reflections are designed to help you focus on a few of the major takeaways for

your practical Christian life that each Bible chapter provides. We wish to thank Reformation Heritage Books for allowing us to use material drawn from *The Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible* for the Bible Introduction material and for the Devotional Reflections. The Study Questions have been written by the authors of *The Bible Journal*. Thus, *The Bible Journal* walks you through a process of getting acquainted with a book of the Bible, copying a chapter by hand, reflecting on the meaning and application of that chapter, and then repeating the process for the next chapter. Families, friends, and small groups can work through a journal together, discussing their meditations for mutual edification as guided by the discussion questions.

The mass production of the Bible since the invention of the printing press has greatly blessed the world. However, there is also great benefit for Bible readers of all ages in following the Deuteronomy 17:18 principle and producing your own handwritten copy of the text.

May God richly bless you in writing and learning His Word through *The Bible Journal* (Rom. 1:16).

—Rob Wynalda, Joel R. Beeke, and Paul M. Smalley

Introduction to the Book of **JOHN**

AUTHORSHIP: The author of this gospel does not identify himself by name but only as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:20, 24). However, there is strong evidence that he was the apostle John, one of the sons of Zebedee. He was an eyewitness of Jesus Christ’s life (1:14) and was present at the Last Supper, reclining at the meal beside Jesus (13:23). This identifies him as one of the twelve apostles (Mark 14:17). It may also imply that he was one of the apostles particularly close to Christ, whom the Gospels identify as Peter, James, and John (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33). This gospel names other apostles at the Supper, implying that the unnamed disciple was not Thomas, Philip, or the other Judas (John 14:5, 8, 22). Christ chose the beloved disciple to care for His mother, Mary (19:26), another sign that he was especially close to the Lord. He is clearly distinguished from Peter (13:24; 21:20). James, the son of Zebedee, died very early (Acts 12:1–2) and so is unlikely to have written this Gospel. Though it is theoretically possible that one of the lesser known apostles wrote the Gospel, the evidence heavily favors John, the other son of Zebedee, as its author (21:2, 7). This is confirmed by the testimony of later writers, such as Irenaeus (second century AD).

When we refer to the authorship of the books of the Bible we must always remind ourselves that the writers were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). God is their ultimate author. So sublime a book as the Gospel of John can only be accounted for as the fruit of divine inspiration. This is how the Bible writers are to be regarded. They were so guided and controlled by God in what they wrote that their writings are to be received by men as infallible and therefore in every way reliable.

DATE: The apostle John died in the last decade of the first century AD. The exact date when he wrote this gospel is not known, but it is probable that he composed it in the last years of his life (AD 90–100).

THEME: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, God-in-the-flesh sent by the Father to give eternal life to all whom the Father has given to Him.

PURPOSE: To call people to believe in Christ and so to have eternal life (20:30–31).

SYNOPSIS

The Contribution of John to Redemptive Revelation

We refer to the first three New Testament Gospels as the Synoptic Gospels because they have much in common. (The Greek word *synopsis* means “seeing together”). John’s gospel is noticeably different from the other three, though it does not contradict them. It supplements the three Synoptic Gospels and throws wonderful light on the heavenly and glorious person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus of Nazareth is both God and man (1:1, 14). He showed His glory by His miracles (2:11; 11:39–44) and by His power to rise again from the dead (10:17–18; 20:1–31). He revealed His identity by teaching that He is the Son in a unique relationship with the Father, such that they share one divine essence, power, knowledge, and life (1:18; 5:17–20,26; 10:28–30). He is the Father’s eternal Word (1:1), and to see Him is to see the Father (14:9). Therefore Jesus does the works of God, such as judgment and resurrection (5:21–22), and receives worship as God (20:28), not as a rival to the Father but as the One through whom we can know and honor the Father (5:23; 14:9; 17:3).

Jesus used simple illustrations prefaced by the words “I am...” to teach us aspects of His grace and saving power, for example, “I am the light of the world” (8:12). Yet through such simple words He communicated profound truths. The repetition of “I am” (Greek *egō eimi*) at key points in this gospel identifies Christ with *Jehovah* (8:58), the Lord whose name means “I am” (Ex. 3:14). This phrase appears (in the Greek text) on Christ’s lips at times when He was demonstrating supernatural power and knowledge (4:26; 6:20; 13:19; 18:5–6). Thus when Jesus used the “I am” phrase to declare that He is the bread of life; the light of the world; the door; the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, and the life; and the true vine (6:35; 8:12; 10:7,11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1), He was declaring that He is the fullness of God come to fill His people in all their needs (4:14; 6:35; 7:37).

With the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit receives a great deal of attention in this gospel. Jesus spoke of the Spirit as “another Comforter” (14:16), whose ministry would resemble Christ’s and continue His work after He had returned to the Father (16:7). Jesus said that the Spirit comes from the Father “in my name” (14:26), not as an

independent third party but as One who brings the things the Son received from the Father to the souls of men so that Christ is glorified (16:13–14). The Spirit acts as the Lord and Life-giver (6:63), bringing sinners to a new birth according to the Spirit's sovereign will (3:3–8), so that the wicked become worshipers who exchange worldly lusts for eternal satisfaction in God (4:10,14,23–24; 7:37–39). The Holy Spirit does this work through His Word (6:63), for He is the Spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). He is the witness convicting the world of its guilt (16:8–11) and the guide teaching believers the whole counsel of God (16:13). John gives us a glorious theology of the Trinity that is profoundly relevant for evangelism, worship, and the Christian life.

The triune God appears in John's gospel as a missionary God. John's remarkable teachings about God come in the context not of an abstract theological treatise but as the good news of the divine mission into a perishing world. This appears in John's use of two Greek words, both translated as "send" or "sent" (about sixty times). The Father sent the Son to save perishing sinners out of the world (3:16–17; 6:38–39), and the Spirit anoints and assists Christ in His work (1:32–33; 3:34). The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to reveal and glorify the Son (14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The Son also sends His disciples into the world to bear witness to Him by the power of the Spirit (15:26–27; 17:18; 20:21–22). Thus the mission of the church is Trinitarian and God-centered; it comes from God, is performed by God, and aims at God's glory (17:1–5, 10).

Though the book contains many lofty and transcendent teachings, it also portrays Jesus in a most personal way, recording His conversations with a number of individuals. Jesus revealed Himself to an ever-widening group of people: to His early disciples (1:1–51), to the rabbi Nicodemus (3:1–16), to the Samaritan woman (4:1–26), to the man at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1–16), etc. As Christ talked with people, He made it clear that no one has eternal life except those who are born again and so have saving faith in Himself. Formal religion by itself is not pleasing to God. To profess faith without true love for Christ as God's dear Son is worthless in the end. Thus the gospel calls for a personal response to Jesus Christ, as John stated clearly: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (20:31).

OUTLINE

- I. Christ, the Eternal Son of God (1:1–18)

- II. Christ Reveals His Glory in His Public Ministry (1:19–12:50)
 - A. Christ's Early Ministry (1:19–4:54)
 - B. Christ Rejected by Unbelievers (5:1–6:71)
 - C. At the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1–53)
 - D. The Woman Taken in Adultery and the Light of the World (8:1–59)
 - E. The Healing of the Man Born Blind (9:1–41)
 - F. The Good Shepherd (10:1–42)
 - G. The Raising of Lazarus (11:1–57)
 - H. Conclusion to the Public Ministry (12:1–50)

- III. Christ Reveals His Glory in His Passion, Death, and Resurrection (13:1–21:25)
 - A. Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet (13:1–38)
 - B. Jesus's Upper Room Discourse and High Priestly Prayer (14:1–17:26)
 - C. Jesus's Arrest, Trial, Crucifixion, and Burial (18:1–19:42)
 - D. Jesus's Resurrection and Appearances (20:1–21:25)

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STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Verse 1: What name is given to Christ here, and what is said about Him?
2. Verse 3: How is Christ related to creation?
3. Verse 7: Why did God send John the Baptist?
4. Verses 10–11: How did most people react when Christ came to earth?
5. Verse 12: How can a person receive Christ? What does Christ give to those who receive Him?
6. Verse 13: What influence has brought them to receive Christ by faith?
7. Verse 14: What does this verse teach about Christ's becoming man?
8. Verse 18: How is it possible to know the invisible God?
9. Verse 23: What prophecy did the ministry of John the Baptist fulfill?
10. Verse 29: What did John say of Christ? What does this mean?
11. Verse 33: What does the descent of the Spirit on Jesus show us about Him?
12. Verses 35–37: How did John's witness about Christ influence some of John's disciples?
13. Verse 41: How is Andrew an example for us of witnessing to people about Christ?
14. Verse 46: Why did Christ's coming from Nazareth not help His reputation?
15. Verse 51: What does Christ's statement to Nathanael mean (see Gen. 28:12–13; Dan. 7:13–14)?

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTIONS

1. When John called Jesus “the Word,” he implied that Christ not only brings us a message from God but is Himself the Message. Jesus is God in the flesh, the infinite glory and grace of the Father dwelling among men in the tabernacle of a human body. Therefore, to believe in Christ is much more than trusting Him to teach us or help us; saving faith is receiving Him as our God, our very life. What difference does it make to the Christian faith that Christ is God?

2. John the Baptist shows us that a preacher’s calling is to point away from himself to Christ and to lift the Savior high before men’s eyes. A minister can do this only by having a low view of himself and a high view of Christ. A Christ-centered ministry is particularly a cross-centered ministry, focusing regularly (though not exclusively) on Christ’s death as the Lamb of God. How can you pray for ministers that they would be like John in this manner?

3. To find Christ is the most wonderful discovery of all. It is too good to be kept to oneself. How can you become more like these early disciples who eagerly told their family and friends about Jesus?

