



JOHN

Meet God Face to Face

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NLT Study Series: John

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SERIES FOREWORD

The purpose of the *NLT Study Series* is to call individuals and groups into serious conversation with God and engagement with his word.

We have designed these studies to provide you and your group with a complete, new Bible study experience. Our aim has been to help you engage seriously with the Bible's content, interacting with it in a meaningful and deeply personal way, not just regurgitating rote answers to fill-in-the-blank questions or producing purely subjective opinions. We also hope to encourage true community study with the honest sharing of different perspectives and experiences. Most of all, we want to help foster your direct communication with God, encouraging you to tell God what is on your mind and heart. We want to help you understand what God is teaching you and apply it to the realities of personal and community life.

To this end, each study in the *NLT Study Series* includes twelve weeks of individual and group studies focusing on understanding the meaning of the text of Scripture, reflecting on it personally and with others, and responding actively to what God is saying to you through it.

Each volume of the *NLT Study Series* can be used by itself, with no other resources, but you can also use it with your Bible of choice. Each volume of the *NLT Study Series* includes, along with the twelve-week study, one book of the *NLT Study Bible*, with both the text of Scripture and all of the study aids alongside it. The *NLT Study Bible* was designed to open up the world of the Bible and to make the meaning and significance of Scripture clear, so it makes a great personal and small-group study resource.

It is our hope and prayer that these studies will help you and those in your group to understand God's word more clearly, to walk with God more fully, and to grow with one another in relationship with our God.

Open my eyes to see

the wonderful truths in your instructions. PSALM 119:18

Come . . . let us walk in the light of the LORD! ISAIAH 2:5

Sean A. Harrison
General Editor

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INTRODUCTION TO THE Gospel of John Study

JOHN'S GOSPEL is one of the most beloved books in the Bible and may well be the most often read. This is because the Gospel so clearly states the good news of salvation and the way to an eternal relationship with our Creator God. The most famous verse in the whole Bible, John 3:16, comes from this Gospel: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." This sentence says it all: what motivated God to save us, how he did it through the gift of his Son, how we must respond in faith in order to be saved, and what the result of our salvation will be—eternal life with God.

John's Gospel is written in a simple style and with simple vocabulary. Certain words occur again and again: believe, remain, send, life, truth, word, love, light, the way. Yet beneath this simplicity lies profound spiritual truth. The Gospel's prologue (John 1:1-18) summarizes its central theme: Jesus the Son of God is the "Word" or "Message" (*logos*), through whom God reveals himself to human beings. The Word was with God from all eternity and the Word *was* God. God created all things through him. The Word became a human being, but the world that he created rejected him. Yet those who believed in him and accepted him became children of God and received eternal life. Those who believe in the Son come to know the Father, while those who reject the Son also reject the Father. The Son's purpose is to do the Father's will and to reveal him to a lost world. We can know God the Father because Jesus the Son, who is fully divine, became a human being and came to earth to suffer and die as the Passover lamb to pay the penalty for our sins.

As you read this Gospel, keep this central message in mind. Notice how often Jesus speaks about his relationship with God the Father and the truth about God that he is bringing. Every conversation Jesus has, every miraculous sign that he performs, every conflict or debate in which he engages, contributes to this central theme. The purpose of the book, as the author himself states, is "that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name" (John 20:31).

Mark L. Strauss
San Diego, California
March 2009

How to Use This Study

THE PRIMARY WAY we recommend using this Bible study guide is for personal daily meditation and study, along with weekly fellowship and discussion.

The introductory session (p. A11) is designed to launch the group study. Group participants need not prepare for this session, but the leader is encouraged to work through it in advance in order to be able to guide the group effectively. The introductory session provides orientation to the Gospel of John, and gives a taste of what the daily and weekly study will be like for the following twelve weeks.

Each week, there are five personal daily studies plus a group session. You can use the daily study guide for your personal daily conversation with God, or you can use it around the table with your family.

You don't need to participate in a weekly group meeting in order to use this study guide. For instance, you can just do the study individually, working through the daily studies and then using the weekly group session as a time of reflection.

Similarly, you don't have to use the study on a daily basis in order to benefit from using it in a group setting. You can just do the study with the group each week by reading the passages, thinking about the discussion questions, and participating in the group discussion.

Ultimately, it's between you and God how you use this study. The more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. If you are meeting with a group, we encourage you to decide together what your level of commitment will be, and then encourage each other to stick with it. Then keep up your part of your commitment to the group.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DAILY STUDY

Each daily study is designed to be completed within 15 minutes, but optional "Further Study" is usually provided for those who want to go into greater depth.

Start the daily study by reading the passage recommended for each day. Reflect on what it means, and write down your questions and thoughts about it.

You can use the space provided in the book to write thoughts and answers to questions. If you find that you need more space, we recommend purchasing a small blank book with lined paper to use as a Bible study journal. Use the journal to write your answers to the reflection questions, your own thoughts about the passage, what you think God is saying to you, and your prayers to God about what you have studied.

The NLT Study Series is designed to be used with the *NLT Study Bible*. The Gospel of John from the *NLT Study Bible* is included for your reading and study. You can also use the *NLT Study Bible* itself, either the print edition or the online version at www.nltstudybible.com. The included section of the *NLT Study Bible* retains its page numbering, so the study guide can be used to refer to either the included section or the *NLT Study Bible* itself.

It can be helpful to highlight or mark the Bible text and study materials where they answer your questions or speak to you in some way. You can:

- underline, circle, or highlight significant words and phrases,
- put brackets around sections of text,
- write keywords in the margin to indicate a topic,
- write page numbers cross-referencing the study guide,
- write dates cross-referencing your journal entries.

Finally, talk with God about what you are learning and how you are responding to it, but also take time to listen to him and hear what he might be saying to you through it. Cultivate your relationship with God day by day.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROUP STUDY

When the group comes together, read the entire passage for the week together, then spend some time letting each person share their own dialogue with God and the Bible that week: insights they've gained, questions they have, and so on.

Then use the discussion questions to stimulate the discussion for that week. You don't have to do all of the questions—you can pick just one.

When the discussion is winding down, spend some time reflecting on what God is saying to you as a group, and how you are going to respond to what God is saying. Spend some time praying together about these things.

Finally, take a look at the passage for the coming week, and make sure everyone understands what they will be doing in preparation for the next meeting of the group.

INTRODUCTORY SESSION

Orientation to John and Prologue

SESSION GOALS

- Get oriented to the Gospel according to John.
- Discuss what members hope to learn and how we hope to grow in this study.
- Introduce how we are going to be studying together.
- Answer any questions about how to begin.
- Commit ourselves to the Lord and to each other, to participate to the best of our ability.

GETTING ORIENTED TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Answer the following questions, either individually, or in discussion together with your group.

What do you know about the apostle John? Can you recall any events from John's life?

What do you know about the Gospel of John? Can you recall any key verses from it?

What do people in the world today think about who Jesus was?

How do you hope to grow spiritually from your study of the life of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John?

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Read the "Setting" in the Introduction to John's Gospel, pp. 1764–1765. What kinds of debates were going on in Ephesus at the time John wrote his Gospel? How might the Gospel be a response to these debates?

Read the "Meaning and Message" section of the Introduction, p. 1767. What aspect of the meaning and message of John's Gospel are you most interested in exploring?

READING: JOHN 1:1-18

Read this passage aloud; if you're in a group, choose one reader. Read slowly, clearly, and thoughtfully. What questions or observations do you have after reading this passage?

STUDY

Jesus is identified as the "Word" (Greek, *logos*) in John 1:1-2. What does this mean?

Make a list of things we learn about the "Word" in this passage (1:1-18). What do you think is the most important?

John 1:14 states, "The Word became human . . ." Also read John 1:12-13, 16-18. Why did the Word become human?

What, according to John 1:18, does Jesus do for us?

FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Read "The Word," p. 1769. What was stunning about Jesus being "the Word"?

REFLECTION

John 1:12 says that we have become "children of God" because Jesus came to save us. What does it mean practically to live in this world as God's children?

What is this passage saying to you? What might God be saying to you through this passage?

QUESTIONS

Do you have questions about doing the daily study or preparing for the next meeting?

PRAYER

Take turns praying about this Bible study and the next twelve weeks. You can tell God what your thoughts and questions are, and ask him for his help, strength, and insight. You can thank him for this Bible study and for the Bible itself. You can ask him to speak to you and to the others in the group. The leader, in closing, can also commit this study to God.

WEEK
ONE

*Testimonies
about Jesus and
Cleansing the
Temple*

JOHN
1:19-2:25

OUTLINE



DAY 1 ... John 1:19-28

DAY 2 ... John 1:29-34

DAY 3 ... John 1:35-51

DAY 4 ... John 2:1-12

DAY 5 ... John 2:13-25

Group Session

DAY 1 ♦ John 1:19-28

READING: JOHN 1:19-28

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

This section is identified in the *NLT Study Bible* as the beginning of the “Book of Signs” (John 1:19–12:50). Throughout this section Jesus’ identity is being revealed: through the testimony of others, through Jesus’ miracles (called “signs”), and through his teaching.

STUDY

When John the Baptist is asked about his identity, what does he deny, and what does he affirm, about himself and his role?

In 1:22-23, John quotes from Isa 40:3 to describe his role. Why did John consider himself “a voice”? How did John fulfill that role?

Read the study note on 1:24. What were the Pharisees’ expectations for the Messiah?

FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Read the study note on 1:27. Why would John consider himself a slave?

Read Isa 40:1-11. How does the prophet Isaiah described relate to the coming of Jesus?

REFLECTION

John the Baptist downplays his own importance and exalts Jesus as the Messiah. In what practical ways can we turn attention away from ourselves and toward Jesus?

What do you think God is saying to you through your study of this passage?

PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

DAY 2 ♦ John 1:29-34

READING: JOHN 1:29-34

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

This episode describes John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus and his description of Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

STUDY

John calls Jesus the "Lamb of God." According to the study note on 1:29, what are the possible backgrounds for this title? What did John realize about Jesus to have used it?

John the Baptist describes what happened at Jesus' baptism (1:32-34). Also read Matt 3:13-17. What is the significance of John's testimony about the Holy Spirit descending?

In 1:34, John calls Jesus "the Chosen One of God." Read Isa 42:1-4 for background. What do you think it means that Jesus is given this title? Why would John use this title? (See study note on 1:34.)

FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Why do you think the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism (1:32)?

Read Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18. What role did the Holy Spirit play in Jesus' life?

What role(s) does the Holy Spirit play in our lives?

REFLECTION

This passage relates to John's testimony about Jesus. In what ways can you testify about Jesus in your daily life?

What do you think God is saying to you through your study of this passage?

PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

DAY 3 ♦ John 1:35-51

READING: JOHN 1:35-51

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

This episode repeats the testimony of John the Baptist about Jesus and tells about Jesus' call of several disciples. Following Jesus in discipleship is central to the Christian life.

STUDY

Again John calls Jesus the "Lamb of God." See Isa 53:7 for background to this title. What is Isa 53:7 about, in the context of Isa 52:13–53:12?

Read the study note on 1:41. What is the significance of applying the title "Messiah" to Jesus? What does it mean for Jesus to be the "Anointed One"?

Read the study note on 1:46. Nathanael assumed that Nazareth could not be the origin of "anything good." What changed his mind about Jesus (read 1:47-48)?

FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

"Cephas" means "rock" in Aramaic, the language Jesus and his disciples spoke. "Peter" (*petros*) is a Greek translation of this word. Why do you think Jesus called Simon "Rock"?

In John's Gospel Jesus often begins important sayings with the phrase "I tell you the truth." According to the study note on 1:51, what is the significance of this phrase?

See the study note on 1:51 for the background to the title Son of Man and the allusion to Jacob's ladder in Gen 28:10-22. What was Jesus saying about himself? What would the disciples have understood from Jesus' statement?

REFLECTION

This passage recounts how the new disciples brought friends to Jesus. Identify someone you would like to introduce to Jesus and write out one way that this might happen.

What do you think God is saying to you through your study of this passage?

PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

DAY 4 ♦ John 2:1-12

READING: JOHN 2:1-12

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

At a wedding in Cana of Galilee, Jesus turns water to wine, the first of seven “miraculous signs” Jesus will perform in John’s Gospel. It not only reveals his glory, but also symbolically shows that he is bringing the “new wine” of messianic salvation that will replace the waters of Jewish ritual.

STUDY

Locate Nazareth on the map at the introduction to the Gospel of John (p. 1764). Cana was a small village just north of Nazareth. Read John 4:43-54 to learn about another miracle that occurred there. Is there any connection between these two miracles?

When asked to help, why did Jesus tell his mother that his time had not yet come? What did Jesus mean by “his time”? (Read study note on 2:4.)

Why do you think Jesus went ahead and created more wine for the wedding feast?

FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

Read the study note on 2:6. The water jars were used for Jewish ceremonial washing. What might this symbolize about Jesus’ ministry?

Read “Miraculous Signs,” p. 1772. How is a “sign” different from a “miracle”? What does this difference tell you about the purpose of Jesus’ supernatural acts?

REFLECTION

This passage climaxes in the claim that Jesus revealed his glory and the disciples believed in him (2:11). Can you identify a time in your life when you saw God’s glory and this experience increased your faith in him?

What do you think God is saying to you through your study of this passage?

PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

DAY 5 ♦ John 2:13-25

READING: JOHN 2:13-25

Begin with prayer, asking God to give you insight, understanding, and an open heart to listen to and follow his word.

Jesus’ “cleansing” of the Temple was actually a symbolic act of destruction. By judging the Temple this way, Jesus showed that his sacrificial death on the cross would end the need for animal sacrifices in the Temple and would provide a new and perfect way to God.

STUDY

Read the study note on 2:13. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus attends only one Passover celebration in Jerusalem—at the end of his ministry. What is the significance in John of Jesus attending three Passover celebrations throughout his ministry?

How had the religious leaders in Jerusalem turned religious activity into commerce?

What is the significance of the objection Jesus raises against the sellers in 2:16?

What does Jesus mean in 2:19 when he says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”? Compare 2:21-22 and the study note on 2:19.

FURTHER STUDY (Optional)

The study note on 2:14-17 explains that a similar episode appears near the end of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). What is the significance of Jesus referring to himself as the temple? What does this say about where God was dwelling at that time?

REFLECTION

Jesus “cleansed” the Temple because many of God’s people had forgotten that the Temple was to be a place of prayer and worship. Can you identify an area in your life that needs to be cleansed and once again made into a place that honors God?

What do you think God is saying to you through your study of this passage?

PRAYER

Talk to God about what you have read, any questions or concerns you might have, and what you think he might be saying to you today. You can write your prayer here if you wish.

GROUP SESSION

READING: JOHN 1:19–2:25

Read John 1:19–2:25 together as a group.

DISCUSSION

You can use the following questions to guide what you share in the discussion. Give each person at least one opportunity to share with the others.

What did you learn from John 1:19–2:25? What was one thing that stood out to you as you studied this passage? How did John 1:19–2:25 surprise you? Do you have questions about this passage or the study materials that haven’t been answered? What does God seem to be saying to you through what you have studied?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

You can choose from among these topics to generate a discussion among the members of your group, or you can write your thoughts about one or more of these topics if you're studying solo.

1. What role does John the Baptist play in the ministry of Jesus?
2. What is the role of "Miraculous Signs" in John's Gospel?
3. Why did Jesus cleanse the Temple? What is the significance of this event for John's Gospel?

GROUP REFLECTION

What is God saying to us as a group through this passage?

ACTION

What are we going to do, individually or as a group, in response to what God is saying to us?

PRAYER

How should we pray for each other in response to God's message to us in this passage?

Take turns talking to God about this passage and about what he is saying.

NEXT: JOHN 3:1-36 (Nicodemus and More Testimonies from John the Baptist)

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

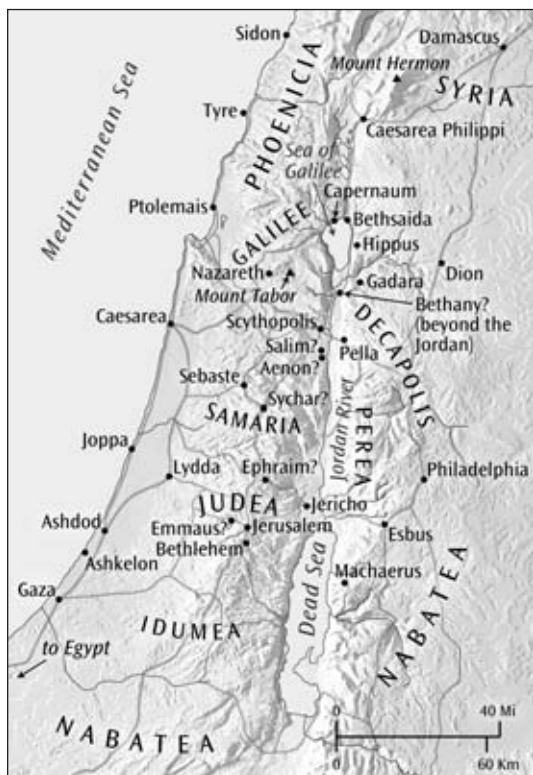
John wrote his Gospel to inspire faith. John knew Jesus intimately, and John's Gospel provides an intimate portrait of the Lord. John referred to himself as "the disciple Jesus loved." His Gospel has become the "beloved Gospel" of the church. Here we meet Nicodemus, doubting Thomas, Lazarus, and the Samaritan woman at the well. John records for us Jesus' most memorable sayings, his longest sermons, and his most profound miracles. Here we meet God face to face.

SETTING

A small community of Christians lived in ancient Ephesus during the late first century AD. They had learned the remarkable story of Jesus from the apostles Paul and John. This early church became strong in faith under the leadership of these men. While many stories circulated about Jesus, the apostle John had his own recollections and insights. In the later years of his life, John wrote these stories down, providing his followers—and us—with the fourth Gospel.

As an evangelist, pastor, and theologian, John's desire above all was for his followers to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (20:31). He realized that they had not had the privilege of seeing Jesus' many signs and miracles as he had (20:29). John's authority and deep experience with Jesus ring out from every story he told. As a valued eyewitness to Jesus' life (19:35), John was the source of many stories from faraway Galilee and Judea. John had heard, seen, and touched the Word of life (see 1 Jn 1:1-4). He told about Nicodemus and rebirth, described Jesus' miracle at Cana, and recorded many other episodes.

As the Christians of Ephesus told their fellow citizens about Jesus, they quickly found themselves debating about Jesus with rabbis in the local synagogues. Was Jesus truly the Son of God? How could he



◀ **Key Places in the Gospel of John.** The book of John describes Jesus' ministry in GALILEE (2:1-12; 4:43-54; 6:1-7:9), JERUSALEM (2:13-3:21; 5:1-47; 7:10-10:42; 12:12-50), JUDEA (3:22; 11:1-44; 12:1-11), and SAMARIA (4:4-42). The book includes a full account Jesus' death and resurrection in JERUSALEM (13:1-20:31) and his post-resurrection appearance to his disciples beside the SEA OF GALILEE (21:1-23).

be the Messiah? Can Christians legitimately claim to be “children of Abraham”? Could anyone prove that Jesus’ claim of being sent from God was true? Guided by the Holy Spirit in his teaching and writing, John brilliantly led his Christian readers through these debates.

Tensions grew. As more Jews converted, small churches grew up alongside synagogues and began converting their members. Opposition to the Christian believers was inevitable. However, John stood by the church during terrible persecution and conflict. When it seemed that the fledgling church’s struggle with the prestigious

synagogue community would overwhelm them, John courageously gave witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ. When false teachers later brought internal controversy and conflict to the church, John again gave the community strength. Writing letters to encourage and exhort (see 1, 2, and 3 John), John became the heroic pastor–theologian of Asia Minor.

John’s writing is as beloved today as it was in the earliest years of the church. Few books of the Bible have influenced Christian life and thought like John’s profound and dynamic Gospel. By combining intimacy of expression with penetrating insight, John provides a deeply satisfying portrait of Christ.

OUTLINE

1:1-18

Prologue: Christ, the Eternal Word

1:19–12:50

*The Book of Signs:
The Word Displays His Glory*

13:1–20:31

*The Book of Glory:
The Word Is Glorified*

21:1-25

*Epilogue: The Word
Commissions His Followers*

SUMMARY

John divided his Gospel into two main sections: chs 1–12 and chs 13–21. The first section, which has been called “The Book of Signs,” tells about Jesus’ public ministry of revealing himself to the Jewish world. The second section, sometimes called “The Book of Glory,” records Jesus’ private words to his disciples and tells of his death and resurrection.

Chapters 1–12. The Gospel prologue (1:1-18) artfully summarizes the entrance of God’s Word into the world. Jesus was baptized and called his earliest followers (1:19-51). Then a series of remarkable events (chs 2–4) highlights Jesus’ revelation of himself to the Jews. At a wedding in Cana, Jesus turned water into wine. In Jerusalem, he used a whip to drive corruption and money-dealing out of the Temple. He debated the meaning of spiritual rebirth with a rabbi named Nicodemus. At a well in Samaria, he met a woman with a checkered marital history and offered her “living water,” which no well can ever duplicate. In each of these events, Jesus unveiled his identity.

In the following section (chs 5–10), Jesus appears at a number of Jewish festivals, using ancient OT symbols and practices to reveal himself to God’s people. On the Sabbath, Jesus worked by healing a lame man. On Passover, Jesus provided bread for 5,000. In the symbolic light of the Festival of Shelters, Jesus healed a blind man, reinforcing his own identity as the light

TIMELINE

about 6~4 BC

Birth of Jesus

AD 18~36

Caiaphas as high priest

AD 26~36

Pontius Pilate as governor of Judea

AD 28~29

Jesus clears the Temple

Passover, AD 30 or 33

Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection

AD 65~70

Mark writes the Gospel of Mark

AD 65~80

Matthew writes the Gospel of Matthew, Luke writes the Gospel of Luke

before AD 90

*John writes the Gospel of John
John writes 1–3 John*

AD 60s or 90s

John writes Revelation

of the world. John's clear message is that Jesus came to fulfill what Judaism had promised since OT times.

Then Jesus began to prepare for his death and resurrection. John describes Jesus' arrival in Bethany, a town just east of Jerusalem (ch 11). His friend Lazarus had died, and Jesus raised him to life. Following this event (ch 12), Jesus made his final public appeal to the world to believe in him and his mission.

Chapters 13–21. John turns to Jesus' death and resurrection, reminding readers that the cross is not a sign of despair but a picture of glory and wonder. Jesus was returning to the Father and needed to prepare his disciples for his departure. At his final Passover meal (chs 13–17), Jesus disclosed to his disciples the things nearest to his heart. He told them candidly about his death and departure to the Father. He reassured them that he would not abandon them, but that he would return and turn their sorrow into joy. He promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Finally, Jesus prayed for them.

Following this Passover meal, Jesus led his followers east of the city and across a valley to an olive grove called Gethsemane (ch 18). Judas soon appeared with a large contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards. Following his arrest, Jesus stood before the Jewish high council to be interrogated, first by Annas and then by Caiaphas, the reigning high priest. By morning, the Jewish leaders took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who asked probing questions about Jesus' identity. Pilate, coaxed by the Jewish leaders, decided to crucify Jesus (ch 19).

The climax of John's Gospel is Jesus' resurrection from the dead (ch 20). This event begins a series of dramatic stories in which Jesus appeared to his followers and encouraged them. He gave them the Holy Spirit and commissioned them to represent him to the world. Jesus then gave his disciples their marching orders (ch 21). He reminded them of his power (21:1-14), reinstated Peter (21:15-17), and instructed him to follow him in his mission (21:18-23).

AUTHOR AND DATE

As with the other Gospels, John provides no explicit evidence as to its author, although the enigmatic figure of the "beloved disciple" provides clear clues (see 13:23; 19:26-27; 20:2-10; 21:7, 20-24). The Gospel of John must be connected with this person, for he is identified as the eyewitness source of this record of Jesus' life (19:35; 21:24).

Who was this beloved disciple? Leaders in the early church, beginning in AD 125, wrote that it was the apostle John, the son of Zebedee (see, e.g., Eusebius, *Church History* 3.23). This traditional view is sound and fully defensible. John was one of the Twelve and, along with James (his brother) and Peter, formed an inner circle around Jesus (Mark 3:17; Acts 1:13). The Gospel reflects this close perspective as it highlights Peter and John. Most scholars believe that John completed writing his Gospel by AD 90.

RECIPIENTS

John most likely wrote his Gospel for Jewish Christians living abroad in the Mediterranean world; with their grasp of Hebrew slipping, these believers were caught between the Jewish and Greek cultures.

*The truth which this
Gospel enshrines—
the truth that Jesus
Christ is the very
Word Incarnate—
[is] the one study
which alone can
fitly prepare us for
a joyful immortality
hereafter.*

J. B. LIGHTFOOT,
Biblical Essays

John's knowledge of Palestine and Judaism is reflected throughout his Gospel.

John assumed that his audience was unfamiliar with some particulars of Jesus' world. For example, he explained that *rabbi* is a Hebrew word meaning "teacher" (1:38), and he gave an alternate name for the Sea of Galilee (6:1). At the same time, John assumed that his readers were familiar with Jewish traditions, concepts, and festivals. They probably were also familiar with the basic story presented in Mark's Gospel. For example, John refers to John the Baptist's imprisonment (3:24) without ever telling the complete story.

MEANING AND MESSAGE

Revelation and Redemption. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it" (1:5). The light of God has inhabited the world: Christ reveals the Father (14:9). In Christ we see the glory of God in a human being. Even though Jesus was persecuted, tried, and crucified, the light cannot be extinguished. Jesus' purpose in revealing God is to redeem people: "The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone" (1:4). Those who embrace Christ's revelation and redemption with faith will gain eternal life.

Worship and the Spirit. Worship must take place "in spirit and in truth" (4:24), energized and formed by the Spirit of God. Nicodemus had to be born of "water and Spirit" to enter the Kingdom of God (3:5). In Galilee, after feeding the 5,000, Jesus told the crowd that living bread is available in his body, which was to be sacrificed. He instructed them to consume his body and blood, symbolic of the Lord's Supper (6:51-59). Yet worship focusing only on the individual elements and not accompanied by the Spirit of God is worth nothing (6:63).

Jesus Christ. John recorded Jesus' descriptions about his nature, origin, and relationship to the Father. Jesus affirmed his oneness with the Father (10:30; 14:9-10) and their unity of purpose (5:17; 8:42), as well as their personal distinctiveness (14:28; 17:1-5). Jesus even used the very title ("I AM") that God used for himself in the OT, thus affirming his own deity (8:58; 18:5; Exod 3:14).

The Holy Spirit. John's Gospel underscores the Holy Spirit as a central feature of Jesus' human experience (chs 4, 7) and of our lives (ch 3). The transforming power of God's Spirit is a hallmark of true discipleship.

The Mission of the Church. God sent Jesus into the world (8:18) to proclaim his glory and to testify to the Good News of redemption. In his departure, the Son passed this mission on to the Spirit (16:5-11), who in turn would fill the church and empower believers to fulfill the mission of Jesus in the world (20:20-23; Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:7-8).

The End Times. Early Christians anticipated the return of Christ, and John affirms this anticipation. Yet in the meantime, believers can experience Jesus' longed-for presence in the Holy Spirit. Jesus' announcement of the Spirit's coming echoes the language of his own second coming (see 14:15-23). In a vital way, Jesus is already with us in the Spirit as we continue to look forward to Christ's personal return at the end of history.

I like the comparison of John's Gospel to a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is both simple and profound. It is for the beginner in the faith and for the mature Christian. Its appeal is immediate and never failing.

LEON MORRIS,
The Gospel according to John

FURTHER READING

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1. PROLOGUE: CHRIST, THE ETERNAL WORD (1:1-18)

- 1** In the beginning the ^aWord already existed.
 The ^aWord was with God, and the ^aWord was God.
² He existed in the beginning with God.
³ God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.
⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.
⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.
⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist, ⁷to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. ⁹The one who

is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. ¹¹He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹²But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

¹⁴So the ^bWord became ^chuman and made his home among us. He was full of un-failing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his ^dglory, the ^dglory of the Father's ^eone and only Son.

¹⁵John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.'"

¹⁶From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another.

1:1
 Gen 1:1
 Col 1:15
^alogos (3056)
^bJohn 1:14

1:3
 1 Cor 8:6
 Col 1:16-17
 Heb 1:2

1:4
 John 8:12; 11:25; 14:6
 1 Jn 5:12, 20

1:5
 John 3:19; 9:5

1:9
 1 Jn 2:8

1:12
 Rom 8:15-16, 29

1:14
 Rom 8:3
 Gal 4:4-7
 Phil 2:6-8
 1 Tim 3:16
 1 Jn 1:1; 4:2-3
^blogos (3056)
^cActs 6:2
^dsarx (4561)
^eJohn 3:6
^fdoxa (1391)
^gRom 3:23
^hmonogenēs (3439)
ⁱJohn 1:18

1:1-18 The beginning of this prologue (1:1-5) might be a poem or hymn sung by the earliest Christians. The prologue's themes—the coming of the light into the world, the rejection of the light, and its gift of new life to believers—prepares readers for the story that follows.

1:1 Echoing Gen 1:1, John's Gospel introduces Jesus Christ, through whom God created everything (1:3); Jesus also creates new life in those who believe (1:12-13). The Gospel opens with its central affirmation, that Jesus Christ, *the Word* (Greek *logos*), not only revealed God but *was God*. In Greek thought, the *logos* was the rational principle guiding the universe and making life coherent. For Jewish people, the *logos* was the word of the Lord, an expression of God's wisdom and creative power. By Jesus' time, the *logos* was viewed as coming from God and having his personality (see Ps 33:6, 9; Prov 8:22-31); John affirmed this understanding (1:14).

1:3-4 and *nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created: Or and nothing that was created was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything.* The Greek grammar allows either possibility.

1:3 God is the *logos* (1:1-2); all that God does, the *logos* likewise does. Throughout his Gospel, John rightly viewed Jesus' actions as divine activity.

1:4-5 God created *light* and dispelled the *darkness* (Gen 1:2-5). The darkness resists God (3:19-21; 12:35; Matt 6:23; Acts 26:17-18; Eph 4:17-19; 5:7-14; 2 Pet 1:19; 1 Jn 1:5-7; 2:9-11).

1:4 *The Word gave life:* Life was God's original gift to his creatures (Gen 1:20-28; 2:7). Now the *logos* would give these creatures the possibility of new life through rebirth (1:13). • As one of his first creative acts, God *brought light* (Gen 1:3). Now, in the re-creation of humanity through Jesus Christ, God offered light and life anew. Light is a key theme in John's Gospel.

1:5 *the darkness can never extinguish it: Or the darkness has not understood it; literally the darkness cannot grasp it.* The Greek word *katalambanō* ("grasp") can mean either "understand" or "be hostile"; in John's Gospel, it means hostility. The darkness would try to destroy Jesus (the light), but it would fail. The light would successfully bring salvation to the world.

1:6-9 *God sent a man, John the Baptist (literally a man named John) to herald Jesus' coming and to prepare God's people to receive Jesus as God's Son and Messiah (see 1:19-37; Luke 1:5-25, 57-80; 3:1-22; see also Isa 40:3; Mal 4:5-6).*

1:8 Some Jews speculated that John the Baptist was the Messiah; some of his followers were even reluctant to follow Jesus (3:22-30). However, John the Baptist *was not the light*; his role was to announce Jesus (1:19-34).

1:10 *The world cannot recognize the true light even when it encounters its Creator. The world lives in rebellion, loving darkness more than light (3:19; see "The World" at 17:5-26, p. 1807).*

1:12 Only through divine renewal can people follow the light and enter God's family (3:1-17). • Individuals must

believe in Christ *to become children of God* (12:35-36).

1:13 *a birth that comes from God:* People can escape the darkness only by God's grace (8:12; 12:35-36, 44-46).

1:14 The idea that *the Word became human (literally became flesh)* stunned both Greeks and Jews. Greeks separated the sphere of God from the mundane world of humanity, which they called *flesh* (Greek *sarx*). John wrote that God himself became *flesh* in Christ (cp. 1:1). Jesus' humanity and divinity were complete, not partial. The two ideas—Jesus as 100-percent divine and 100-percent human—form the bedrock of a Christian understanding of Christ. • *the Word . . . made his home* (Greek *skēnoō*, "pitched his tent") *among us:* This Greek word is related to the word used for the OT Tabernacle (Greek *skēnē*, "tent, tabernacle"), the tent in the wilderness where the Lord's glory resided and where Israel came to worship (Exod 25:8-9). The Father's glory in the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34-38) was now present in Jesus Christ (2:11; 12:23-28, 41; 17:1-5). • Jesus offered God's *unfailing love and faithfulness (or grace and truth)*. Despite the world's hostile darkness, Jesus entered the world to save it (3:15-17).

1:15 *he existed long before me:* In a society where age was respected and honored (Lev 19:32; contrast Isa 3:5), John the Baptist emphasized Jesus' honor by pointing to his existence even before creation (1:1-3).

1:16 *received one gracious blessing after another: Or received the grace of Christ rather than the grace of the law;* a literal translation is *received grace upon grace.*

1:17
Exod 31:18; 34:28
christos (5547)
• John 1:41

1:18
Col 1:15
monogenēs (3439)
• John 3:16

1:19-28
Matt 3:1-12
Mark 1:2-8
Luke 3:1-16

1:20
Luke 3:15
John 3:28

1:21
Deut 18:15
Mal 4:5
Matt 11:14

1:23
Isa 40:3
Mal 3:1

1:26
Matt 3:11
Mark 1:8
Luke 3:16

17For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus ¹Christ. 18No one has ever seen God. But the ⁸unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.

2. THE BOOK OF SIGNS: THE WORD DISPLAYS HIS GLORY (1:19–12:50) *Jesus and John the Baptist (1:19-51)*

The Testimony of John the Baptist

John 1:23 // Matt 3:1-3 // Mark 1:2-3 // Luke 3:2b-6

John 1:24-28 // Matt 3:11-12 // Mark 1:7-8 //

Luke 3:15-18

19This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who are you?" 20He came right out and said, "I am not the Messiah."

21"Well then, who are you?" they asked. "Are you Elijah?"

"No," he replied.

"Are you the Prophet we are expecting?"

"No."

22"Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

23John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

"I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Clear the way for the LORD's coming!'"

24Then the Pharisees who had been sent 25asked him, "If you aren't the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet, what right do you have to baptize?"

26John told them, "I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you

The Word (1:1-18)

John raises the curtain on his Gospel with a stunning description of Jesus Christ as "the Word" (Greek *logos*, 1:1). Both Greek and Jewish listeners in the first century would immediately recognize the profound meaning of this title. Greeks would have thought of the seminal forces that sustain the universe. Jewish minds would have thought back to God creating the world with his word (Gen 1:3-28). In Jesus' day, the word of God took on creative personal attributes (Ps 33:6, 9). Jews viewed God's word as personifying divine wisdom. Through Wisdom, God extended himself into the cosmos, creating the world (Prov 8:22-31).

In John's drama, Jesus shares the same essence as God; the Son existed before time, and he was the agent of all creation. John anchors the divinity of Jesus in this ancient Jewish concept of Wisdom. The divine Wisdom that has existed from before time with God can now be known in Jesus Christ. In perhaps the most outrageous verse penned by an apostle, John writes that this Logos, this Wisdom, became flesh and lived among us as a human (1:14). What God is, the Logos is. The Logos is Jesus Christ.

Gen 1:3-28
Ps 33:6, 9
Prov 8:22-31
Isa 40:8
1 Jn 1:1
Rev 19:13

1:17 the law: That is, the Torah, the first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy). • Although *God's unfailing love and faithfulness* (or *grace and truth*) are in the Torah, these qualities are fully revealed in Christ (3:16; 13:1).

1:18 Moses was denied his desire to see God directly (Exod 33:18-20). Only Jesus has seen the Father, so he alone completely knows him and can tell us about him (3:32-35; 14:9-10). • *But the unique One, who is himself God* (some manuscripts read *But the one and only Son*): The Son, who sees the Father, is *himself God*—not simply a messenger who knows something about God. John explicitly affirms Christ's deity. Jesus shares the substance of God's being.

1:19–12:50 Jesus reveals himself to the world through his miraculous signs and sermons. Audiences were divided: Some wanted to believe in him; others opposed him. This division intensifies as the book unfolds. Jesus ended his public ministry with a final appeal for

people to believe in him (12:44-50).

1:19-51 John's Gospel gives limited attention to John the Baptist compared to the synoptic Gospels (Matt 3:1-6; Mark 1:2-6; Luke 1:1-24, 57-80; 3:1-13). Yet the apostle John wants us to see that John the Baptist correctly identified and exalted Jesus. John the Baptist's disciples leave him and follow Jesus; Jesus took over the ministry John began, increasing as John decreased (3:30).

1:19 Jewish leaders: See "The Jewish Leaders" at 5:9-18, p. 1779. • *and Temple assistants:* Literally *and Levites*.

1:20 The Jews expected the *Messiah* (the Hebrew form of the Greek word *Christ*) to bring spiritual leadership and political redemption to Israel (see Deut 18:15; see also the Jewish intertestamental book *Psalms of Solomon*).

1:21 Elijah was to be the Messiah's forerunner (Mal 4:5). John the Baptist fulfilled the forerunner's role, though he denied being the prophet Elijah (see Matt 11:14; Luke 1:17). • *Are you the*

Prophet we are expecting? Literally *Are you the Prophet?* See Deut 18:15, 18; Mal 4:5-6; see also John 6:14; 7:40-41.

1:22-23 *Then who are you?* John the Baptist simply wanted to be known as *a voice shouting in the wilderness* (see Isa 40:3).

1:24 The *Pharisees* were deeply devoted to the Scriptures and earnestly desired a righteous life (see "Pharisees" at Matt 3:7, p. 1581). They also believed in the coming Messiah, which explains their inquiries here. Some Pharisees became believers in Jesus (Acts 15:5), including the apostle Paul (Acts 26:5; Phil 3:5).

1:25-26 Jewish baptisms were ritual washings for becoming ceremonially pure following contact with impurity (Lev 8:6; Num 19:7). • John's announcement of the Messiah's arrival required that participants confess their sins and be baptized (Matt 3:6). Baptism later became the symbol of membership in Jesus' kingdom (Acts 2:38; see also John 4:1-2). • *with:* Or *in*; also in 1:31, 33.

do not recognize. ²⁷Though his ministry follows mine, I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal."

²⁸This encounter took place in Bethany, an area east of the Jordan River, where John was baptizing.

Jesus, the Lamb of God

John 1:29-34 // Matt 3:13-17 // Mark 1:9-11 // Luke 3:21-22

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The ^hLamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' ³¹I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."

³²Then John testified, "I saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove from heaven and resting upon him. ³³I didn't know he was the one, but when God sent me to baptize with water, he told me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descend and rest is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴I saw this happen to Jesus, so I testify that he is the Chosen One of God."

The First Disciples

³⁵The following day John was again standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶As Jesus walked by, John looked at him and declared, "Look! There is the ⁱLamb of God!" ³⁷When John's two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus.

³⁸Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them.

They replied, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?"

³⁹"Come and see," he said. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

⁴⁰Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of these men who heard what John said and then followed Jesus. ⁴¹Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the ^hMessiah" (which means "Christ").

⁴²Then Andrew brought Simon to meet Jesus. Looking intently at Simon, Jesus said, "Your name is Simon, son of John—but you will be called Cephas" (which means "Peter").

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Come, follow me." ⁴⁴Philip was from Bethsaida, Andrew and Peter's hometown.

⁴⁵Philip went to look for Nathanael and told him, "We have found the very person Moses and the prophets wrote about! His name is Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth."

⁴⁶"Nazareth!" exclaimed Nathanael. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?"

"Come and see for yourself," Philip replied.

⁴⁷As they approached, Jesus said, "Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity."

⁴⁸"How do you know about me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus replied, "I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you."

1:27
Mark 1:7
John 1:15
Acts 13:25

1:28
John 3:26; 10:40

1:29
Isa 53:7
1 Cor 5:7
1 Pet 1:19
^hamos (0286)
• John 1:36

1:30
John 1:15, 27

1:32
Matt 3:16
Mark 1:10
Luke 3:22

1:33
Luke 3:16
Acts 1:5

1:34
John 1:49; 10:36;
11:27; 20:30-31

1:36
^hamos (0286)
• Acts 8:32

1:38
^hrabbi (4461)
• John 1:49

1:40
Matt 4:18-22
Mark 1:16
Luke 5:2-11

1:41
Ps 2:2
John 4:25
^hmessias (3323)
• John 4:25

1:42
Matt 16:18
1 Cor 15:5
1 Pet 2:5
^hpetros (4074)
• 1 Cor 10:4

1:43
John 6:5-6; 12:20-22

1:45
Luke 24:25-27

1:27 A menial task such as removing a *sandal* was reserved for a *slave*; these tasks were never performed by a disciple.

1:29 The phrase *Lamb of God* might refer to the Passover sacrifice of a lamb (see "The Cross and Passover" at 19:17-36, p. 1812) or to the daily sacrifice in the Temple (Exod 29:38-46; Heb 10). See also Rev 5.

1:32 John the Baptist's second testimony (see 1:19-23) told what happened when Jesus was baptized. • In the OT, kings and prophets were anointed with the *Holy Spirit*, but these anointings were temporary and tied to a particular office or occasion. By contrast, with the Spirit's *resting* on him, Jesus' anointing was permanent (see 3:34).

1:34 *the Chosen One of God*: Some manuscripts read *the Son of God*. See also Isa 42:1.

1:35-51 This section introduces the template for discipleship in John's Gospel. Disciples desired to *come and*

see Jesus (1:39), and when they encountered him, they *remained* with him (see "Disciples of Jesus" at 9:1-41, p. 1789).

1:40-42 Simon is well known in the Gospels, not for his courage and faith, but for his failings (see 18:15-18, 25-27). Jesus named him *Cephas* ("the rock"; see 1:42 and note), referring to the great church leader he would later become (see Acts 1-5, 8-12, 15).

1:41 *Messiah* (a Hebrew term) and *Christ* (a Greek term) both mean "the Anointed One."

1:42 The names *Cephas* (from Aramaic) and *Peter* (from Greek) both mean "rock."

1:43-44 *Galilee* was the region of northern Israel around the Sea of Galilee.

• *Bethsaida* ("house of fishing") was a village on Galilee's north shore and the home of Peter, Andrew, Nathanael, and Philip. Later, Peter and Andrew moved to Capernaum, a village west of Bethsaida (Mark 1:21, 29).

1:45 *Philip*, a Greek name, and

Nathanael, a Hebrew name, represent the mix of cultures in Galilee. Jesus' message there addressed both audiences. When Greeks wanted to see Jesus in Jerusalem, they approached Philip (12:20-22). • *Moses*: Literally *Moses in the law*. • Jesus grew up in *Nazareth*, a mountain village southwest of the Sea of Galilee.

1:46 *Can anything good come from Nazareth?* This village was not considered famous enough to be the hometown for a great leader (cp. Matt 13:53-58).

1:47 Jesus referred to Nathanael as *a man of complete integrity*, contrasting him with Jacob, the scheming, deceitful patriarch whom God renamed *Israel* (see Gen 25:27-34; 27:1-36; 32:22-32). It is as though Nathanael embodied God's ideal for Israel.

1:48-49 Jesus captured Nathanael's attention by knowing his character (1:47), then he captured his worship by supernaturally knowing his previous actions. Nathanael witnessed a miracle and took a remarkable step of faith.

1:49

2 Sam 7:14

Ps 2:2

John 1:34; 20:31

^b*rhabbi* (4461)

• John 3:2

1:51

Gen 28:12

⁴⁹Then Nathanael exclaimed, “^bRabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!”

⁵⁰Jesus asked him, “Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” ⁵¹Then he said, “I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.”

Jesus and Jewish Institutions (2:1–4:54)
The Wedding at Cana: Purification Water Turned to Wine

2The next day there was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, ²and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration. ³The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus’ mother told him, “They have no more wine.”

JOHN THE BAPTIST (1:19-37)

John 3:23-36; 4:1-3; 10:40-42
Matt 3:1-15; 4:12; 9:14; 11:2-19; 14:1-12; 16:14; 17:10-13; 21:24-27; 31-32
Mark 1:1-9; 14; 2:18; 6:14-29; 8:28; 9:11-13; 11:29-33
Luke 1:13-17, 36, 39-43; 57-66; 76-80; 3:1-21; 5:33; 7:18-35; 9:7-9; 19; 11:1; 16:16; 20:3-8
Acts 1:5; 10:37; 11:16; 18:25-26; 19:1-7

John the Baptist was a fiery open-air preacher who called people to repent and be baptized, to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. John acted in the role of Elijah, to prepare people for “the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Mal 4:4-5; see Matt 11:14; 17:12; Mark 9:13).

John’s birth, like that of Jesus, was miraculous. His parents had been unable to have children and were elderly (Luke 1:5-25). His mother, Elizabeth, was a relative of Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:36), so John was related to Jesus. The two miraculous births near the same time signaled the beginning of God’s redeeming work.

John was filled with the Holy Spirit from birth and devoted his life to preparing people for the coming of the Lord (Luke 1:15-17). Living in the desert (Luke 1:80), he began preaching when he was about thirty years old. Dressed like a prophet and subsisting on desert food (locusts and wild honey, Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6), he called everyone to repent and be baptized (Matt 3:1-2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:1-3). He even castigated the religious leaders who came to hear him (Matt 3:7).

Though John reluctantly baptized Jesus (Matt 3:13-17; Luke 3:21), he considered Jesus his superior, the one who would “baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (1:33; Matt 3:11; Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16; cp. 3:23-30). He encouraged his followers to become Jesus’ disciples—and many did, including Andrew and possibly John (1:35-40), as well as Apollos (Acts 18:24-26) and the twelve disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7).

Herod Antipas received harsh judgment from John because of Herod’s unlawful marriage to Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. To please Herodias, Herod imprisoned John and then beheaded him (Matt 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29; Luke 3:19-20). John’s imprisonment marked the beginning of Jesus’ public preaching (Matt 4:12; Mark 1:14).

Shortly before his death, John seemed to be confused about Jesus and sent messengers from prison to ask him if he really was the Messiah. Jesus did not do what most people anticipated the Messiah to do. Rather than bringing judgment and a visible kingdom, he brought forgiveness, healing, and a spiritual kingdom. To reassure John, Jesus spoke of the miraculous things God was doing through him (Luke 7:18-23).

John remained faithful to his calling throughout his life, consistently preaching repentance and the judgment of God, even to people who had no desire to hear it. Jesus referred to John as one of the greatest servants of God who had ever lived (Matt 11:2-19; Luke 7:18-35), the end of a long line of prophets anticipating the coming of the Kingdom of God (Luke 16:16). John stood on the threshold of the new age, proclaiming its coming to all who would hear.

1:51 *I tell you the truth* (Greek *amēn amēn*): Jesus often used this expression to emphasize what he was about to say. In John’s Gospel, the Greek word *amēn* is always doubled. • *you will all see heaven open*: Jesus made the comparison with Jacob explicit (see note on 1:47; see Gen 28:10-22). Like Jacob, Nathanael would see God at work. Jesus himself is the new Bethel (“house of God,” Gen 28:19), the place where God lives. • *going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth*: Literally *going up and down on the Son of Man*;

see Gen 28:10-17. “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself (see note on 9:35; see also Dan 7:13-14; Mark 8:31). • John the apostle used several names for Jesus (Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah). Knowing Jesus’ true identity is necessary to fully understand and following him.

2:1–10:42 Jesus illustrated his identity and work through the institutions and festivals of Judaism (see 2:1; 5:1).

2:1–25 Jesus appeared at two symbolic Jewish ceremonies. At a wedding in Cana (2:1-12), he replaced the ritual cleansing

water with his own superior wine. Later he cleansed the Temple (2:13-25).

2:1 *The next day*: Literally *On the third day*; see 1:35, 43. • The ceremonies surrounding a *wedding celebration* could last as long as a week; weddings often included dramatic processions in which the groom would bring the bride to his home for the festivities (Matt 25:1-13).

2:3 When *the wine supply ran out*, the host’s family would face embarrassment for failure to plan properly. Perhaps Jesus arrived unexpectedly (cp. Matt 25:1-13), bringing his circle of

“Dear woman, that’s not our problem,” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.”

⁵But his mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” When the jars had been filled, ⁸he said, “Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies.” So the servants followed his instructions.

⁹When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. ¹⁰“A host always serves the best wine first,” he said. “Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less

expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!”

¹¹This miraculous sign at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

¹²After the wedding he went to Capernaum for a few days with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples.

The Jerusalem Temple Is Cleansed

John 2:13-16; cp. Matt 21:12-13 // Mark 11:15-17 // Luke 19:45-46

¹³It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover celebration, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the Temple area he saw merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money. ¹⁵Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple. He drove out the sheep and cattle,

2:4
John 7:30; 8:20

2:6
Mark 7:3-4
John 3:25

2:9
John 4:46

2:11
John 2:23; 3:2; 4:54;
6:14; 11:47; 12:37

2:12
Matt 12:46-50

2:13-22
//Matt 21:12-17
//Mark 11:15-19
//Luke 19:45-48

2:13
Deut 16:1-6
John 6:4; 11:55

Miraculous Signs (2:1-11)

John 2:18, 23; 3:2; 4:48, 54; 6:2, 14, 26, 30; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18, 37; 15:24; 20:30
Exod 4:8-31; 7:3
Num 14:11, 22
Deut 4:34
Ps 74:9; 78:43
Matt 12:38-39
Acts 2:43; 4:16, 22, 30; 5:12; 8:6; 14:3; 15:12
Rom 15:19

The Gospels use three words to describe Jesus’ miraculous works. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Greek word *dunamis* (“power”) describes an act of raw force that amazes observers and leads to the inevitable conclusion that God must be at work in Jesus (see Mark 6:2).

In John, however, this response of amazement is absent. John does not use the popular term *dunamis*. Instead, he labels each of Jesus’ miracles as a “sign” (Greek *sēmeion*), an event that has a deeper meaning. John also describes Jesus’ miracles as “works” (Greek *erga*, see 10:25; see 7:3, “miracles”; 9:3, “power”). Christ’s miracles were part of the work that God gave him to do (17:4), revealing the Father to the world.

John selectively records seven miraculous signs that occurred during Jesus’ ministry: (1) changing water to wine (2:1-11); (2) healing the official’s son (4:46-54); (3) healing a paralyzed man (5:1-17); (4) feeding 5,000 (6:1-15); (5) walking on water (6:16-21); (6) healing a blind man (9:1-41); and (7) raising Lazarus from the dead (11:38-44). John also records the miraculous catch of fish after Jesus’ resurrection (21:4-14). Most of the seven signs were met with belief (2:11; 4:48, 53; 11:45-48). However, the sign itself was not Jesus’ purpose. Instead, the message behind the sign is always in view, so the signs are usually matched to a discourse by Jesus. Jesus fed the 5,000, for example, not just to meet their needs, but so that people would see him as the bread of life (6:35), given for them when he died on the cross (6:51).

disciples, which might explain why his *mother* brought the problem to him.

• A wedding banquet was a primary celebration in Jewish village life, and this episode also symbolized the joy of the Messiah’s arrival.

2:4 Jesus initially distanced himself from the *problem*. His mission and its timing could not be set by a human agenda. • Jesus’ *time* (literally *hour*) would come in the future when he was glorified as he was lifted up on the cross (12:23; 17:1).

2:6 Carved from solid rock, the *stone water jars* were used for religious washing ceremonies (see Mark 7:1-4). Jesus was about to fill Jewish ceremony with new content. • *twenty to thirty gallons*: Greek 2 or 3 *measures* [75 to 113 liters].

2:9-10 The *master of ceremonies* cited

a proverb. The *best wine* was always served *first* when palates were most sensitive; yet this miraculous wine, served last, was the very best imaginable. Good wine symbolized God’s blessing (Amos 9:13-14). The Messiah, God’s greatest blessing, had arrived at last.

2:11 Jesus had offered his first *miraculous sign* (see “Miraculous Signs” at 2:1-11, above). In it, he revealed the glory of God (see also 1:14; 11:4, 40).

2:13 *Passover*, an annual spring festival, commemorated Israel’s rescue from slavery in Egypt (Exod 12). Jews traveled to *Jerusalem* to participate in the festival (Deut 16:1-16). Because John refers to three Passover Festivals (2:13; 6:4; 11:55), many experts conclude that Jesus had a three-year public ministry.

2:14-17 Those who came for Passover needed to have approved sacrifices for worship. From this need grew a considerable industry for selling animals and exchanging money, but this business was being conducted in the Temple. Jesus, like a prophet, demanded that God’s house be returned to its intended uses—worship, prayer, instruction, and sacrifice. This put Jesus at odds with the Temple leadership. • The synoptic Gospels place the clearing of the Temple near the end of Jesus’ ministry (Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46). John might have placed his account of the event here to emphasize a connection with the miracle that transformed the water in purification jars into wine (2:1-11). The Temple and the stone jars were both instruments of purification in Judaism. Stone jars filled with water for ritual washing

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at oppo-

site ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts

and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and

stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, and an additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007. This printing of the New Living Translation reflects the updated 2007 text.

Written to Be Read Aloud

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew

Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for

example, "ephah" [a unit of dry volume] or "cubit" [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today's readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.

- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, "ten shekels of silver" becomes "ten pieces of silver" to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the "denarius" as "the normal daily wage" to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: "Greek a *denarius*, the payment for a full day's wage." In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: "the third day of the month Adar." This was during the sixth year of King Darius's reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.
- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the

modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.

- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’”

Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.

- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this,

we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.

- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.
- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a

footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the religious leaders,” where appropriate.

- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without

exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it

“Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names

All appearances of *’el*, *’elohim*, or *’eloah* have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name *’adonai*, which we render “Lord.” When *’adonai* and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” This also distinguishes *’adonai* YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with *’elohim*, which is rendered “LORD God.” When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When YHWH appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the New Testament, the Greek word *christos* has been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed, *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all included within the study notes in this edition:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “literally.” For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Literally *the breaking of bread*.”
- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”
- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament,

and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location.

This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Proverbs 3:12; Psalms 8:2; 53:3).

- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, "King Herod" is named in this translation as "King Herod Agrippa" and is identified in a footnote as being "the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great."
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name "Eve" at Genesis

3:20 reads: "Eve sounds like a Hebrew term that means 'to give life.' " This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve "would be the mother of all who live."

Cross-References

There are a number of different cross-referencing tools that appear in New Living Translation Bibles, and they offer different levels of help in this regard. All straight-text Bibles include the standard set of textual footnotes that include cross-references connecting New Testament texts to their related Old Testament sources. (See more on this above.)

Many NLT Bibles include an additional short cross-reference system that sets key cross-references at the end of paragraphs and then marks the associated verses with a cross symbol. This space-efficient system, while not being obtrusive, offers many important key connections between passages. Larger study editions include a full-column cross-reference system. This system allows space for a more comprehensive listing of cross-references.

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God's Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God's guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God's Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

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who gave us his word and Spirit so generously.*