

These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. This is how the author of the book of John describes his purpose in writing Jesus' story.

John doesn't write in his own name, but describes himself as *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. We can identify him, however, since the different occurrences of this phrase in the book show that this disciple was one of those closest to Jesus. We know it doesn't refer to Peter, since he is named separately. From the stories of Jesus that others have recorded, we can see that this could only have been John. He may have described himself in this way out of humility, to show that he had come to understand everything about himself in light of his relationship with Jesus.

In the beginning . . . By using the first words from the Bible to start his own prologue, John tells his readers that the story he is about to share regarding Jesus is a story of new creation. As at the first creation, a light shines in the darkness. This will be confirmed by many of the features we see John using throughout his book. The book of Genesis reveals that the first creation was completed in seven days, with the seventh day itself being a day of rest. For the Jews the number seven thus came to represent completeness and wholeness, a finished work of God revealing his purpose for the world. John uses the number seven in multiple ways to structure his book, showing that the finished work of Jesus reveals God's renewing and life-giving purpose.

After the prologue, John tells the story of Jesus in two main parts. The first describes his public ministry; the second records the private instructions he gave to those who believed in him, then depicts his death and resurrection. (The book ends with an epilogue that was likely composed to correct the misunderstanding that John wouldn't die until Jesus had returned.)

The action in the first part takes place in seven sections. Most of these sections describe trips that Jesus made to Judea and back, usually to attend one of the religious festivals that were celebrated in Jerusalem.

The first section places Jesus in Judea and provides a model of the structure of the rest of the book. It relates how John the Baptist testified on three successive days that Jesus was the Messiah, and then how, on the fourth day, Jesus called some of his first followers. Three days after this, on the seventh day, Jesus did his first miraculous sign, and his disciples believed in him. In the next section Jesus goes to Jerusalem for the Passover

Festival. This pattern of “seven, then the Passover” can be seen in the book as a whole. There are seven sections in the first part, then the entire second part is devoted to the Passover weekend on which Jesus gave his life for the world. Each of these seven sections closes with a report on how different groups of people respond to Jesus—either in faith or in unbelief.

In the first part of the book, a total of seven miraculous signs are also related. They don't correspond exactly with the section divisions, but they help mark them off. John then marvels at the end of the first part of the book that *Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, many still would not believe in him.* Near the conclusion of the whole book John invites the reader to respond differently: *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe . . .*

John also records seven instances in which Jesus revealed his identity by using the phrase *I am*, the name by which God had revealed himself to the people of Israel. These seven phrases run throughout the book, tying its parts together and connecting Jesus closely to Israel's history. Jesus explained that he is the bread of life; the light of the world; the gate for the sheep; the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth and the life and the true vine. These phrases are one of the means by which John demonstrates that Jesus embodies the deepest meaning and truest fulfillment of Israel's story.

As Jesus does miraculous signs and participates in religious festivals, his identity is disclosed symbolically, and then it is interpreted as he teaches and answers questions. He feeds five thousand people by multiplying several loaves of bread, for example, then explains to the crowd that he is the *true bread from heaven.* The Festival of Tabernacles recalled how the Jews had lived in the wilderness and how God had provided water for them in the desert and gone ahead of them as a pillar of fire to light the way. Jesus calls out at this feast, *Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink,* and declares, *I am the light of the world.*

The way John closes his book confirms that the power of a new creation has broken into the world. On the sixth day of the first creation God made the first man, Adam. On the sixth day of Jesus' last week, the Roman governor Pilate announces the entrance of Jesus with the words, *Here is the man!* The book of Genesis records that after creating the heavens and the earth, God rested on the seventh day. John records that Jesus is dead and resting in the grave on the Sabbath, the seventh day. Then in the story of Jesus' resurrection, John notes twice that this took place on *the first day of the week.* So John has taken us from *In the beginning* to a new beginning. Jesus the Messiah has defeated sin and death and been raised to a new life. John invites his readers to find this new resurrection life themselves by believing in Jesus.

| John |

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only *Ἰσὺς*, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only *Ἰσὺς*, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.”

They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

He answered, “No.”

Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’ ”

Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

“I baptize with^o water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”

This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with^o water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with^o water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with^o the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.

“Come and see,” said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

“How do you know me?” Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.”

Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.”

Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.”

“Woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.”

His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.”

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples put their faith in him.

After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. He did not need human testimony about them, for he knew what was in them.

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a

teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born again.”

“How can anyone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit^e gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You^e must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.^e Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,^e that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. All those who do evil hate the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But those who live by the truth come into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. (This was before John was put in prison.) An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.”

To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.”

The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. The person who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God^e gives the Spirit without limit. The Father

loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.