The Life of Christ
FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
BY FRANK HAMRICK
The Life of Christ

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Foreword

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

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

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

Then, as you enter the city of Jerusalem with Him, you will see people swarm around and block His way. The sick will throw themselves in His
path. They will grasp for His clothing, calling to Him for help: “Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!” Others will hide their faces. You will see His eyes glisten as a smile creases His strong, tanned face.

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

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

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

Features

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

Scripture Readings and Recommended Memorization

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

Introductory Readings

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

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

**Notes from the Teacher’s Lesson**

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

**Assignments and “Fill in the Blank” Sections**

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

**“Digging Deeper”**

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

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Unit 1

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

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

We are about to embark on a study of one of the most precious, most important, and most powerful books of the Bible. Although the vocabulary and style of writing used by its author are simple, leading some scholars to refer to it as the “simple Gospel,” his simple style and elementary vocabulary are a bit deceptive because the Gospel of John is the most profound of the four Gospels. Its message is so theologically deep in some places that Bible scholars have studied it for centuries in attempts to understand fully its meaning and implications, and they still don’t know it all.
Various scholars have referred to the Gospel of John as “the heart of Christ.” D. A. Hayes called it “the worthy and adequate picture of the life of Jesus among men.” A. T. Pierson said, “John leads us past the veil into the Holy of Holies.” Jerome said, “John excels in the depths of divine mysteries.”

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

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

• Surprisingly for a book with the deity of Christ as its theme, the name Jesus is used more often than the name Christ.
• The word Jew occurs more than sixty times in John.
The word \textit{believe} is used almost one hundred times in John, whereas it appears only about forty times in the other three Gospels.

The word \textit{faith} does not occur even once in John.

\textit{Eternal life} appears thirty-five times in John but only twelve times in the other Gospels.

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

\section*{The Date of Its Writing}

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

\section*{The Author}

Read John 21:20, 24. According to these verses, who clearly wrote this Gospel? __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

According to Luke 6:14–16, who were the disciples? _______________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

(Note that Bartholomew was probably the same person as the man called Nathanael in John 1:45.)
The author of this Gospel was one of those twelve men, but he never used his own name in his Gospel account. We can, however, by process of elimination, determine who the author was not.

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

- John 1:40—
- John 1:41—
- John 1:43—
- John 1:45—
- John 6:70–71—
- John 11:16—
- John 14:22—

Eliminating these men leaves only five possibilities. Who are they?

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

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

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

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

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

- John 1:37–41—

How We Got Our Bible

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

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

The number of copies of Scripture we have today is overwhelming compared to all the other pieces of literature written about the same time as the New Testament. Although none of these manuscripts match perfectly because of human copying errors, the level of agreement far exceeds other ancient writings. Almost all of these inconsistencies are obvious and easily corrected. These manuscripts prove that our Bible is a reliable record of the inspired Scriptures, preserved by God.
(In this passage, the author records the name of only one of the two disciples, the unnamed one being the author himself.)

- John 13:23—________________________________________________
- John 18:15–16—________________________________________________
- John 19:16–27—________________________________________________
- John 20:2–10—________________________________________________
- John 21:2, 7, 20, 24—________________________________________________

Predominant Thinking Patterns

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

Gnosticism

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

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

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

John’s Attack

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

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

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

How did John prove that the Mosaic system was replaced by Christ in John 1:1–18? __________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What did John write about the Jewish belief that Christ was to come for only the Jews? __________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Notes from the Teacher’s Lesson

An Introduction to the Gospel of John

The Place of John in the New Testament

• One of the four __________________________________________________________________________

• One of the ________________ books of the New Testament

• The________________________ book of the New Testament
**The Contents of John**

- Different from the __________________________
- Answers the questions posed by the ________________
  - Who is this great King? ________________________
  - Who is this great Servant? ____________________
  - Who is this great Man? ________________________

**The Unique Characteristics of John**

- John emphasizes ________________________________.
- John records only ______________________________ miracles.
- John focuses on Judea rather than on ________________.
- John emphasizes Jesus’ own ________________ concerning Himself.
  - John is not trying to prove Christ’s ________________ so much as he is letting Jesus Christ prove His own ________.

**The Application of the Gospel of John**

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

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Mark</th>
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<th>John</th>
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<td>Fulfilled</td>
<td>Straightway Immediately</td>
<td>Son of Man</td>
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<td>Spiritual</td>
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Digging Deeper

1. Conduct a study of the life of John the Apostle. Specifically, describe his position among the other eleven disciples and his relationship to Christ. Write a brief biography of John. Include in the biography information concerning other books of the New Testament he wrote and the circumstances surrounding them. (You might want to consult such resources as Herbert Lockyer’s book *All the Men of the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958], pp. 196–197.)

2. Select one major incident in the life and ministry of Christ, then consult a harmony of the Gospels (e.g., Benjamin Davies, ed., *Harmony of the Gospels* [Greenville, S.C.: BJU Press, 1976]), comparing and contrasting the four authors’ accounts of that event. Report your findings to the class.

3. Conduct a more detailed study of Gnosticism, describing its major points. Show on a two-column chart how each major teaching of that philosophy is unscriptural. (In the first column, write the belief of the Gnostics; in the second column, write out the verses of Scripture that refute that belief.)

4. Obtain a harmony of the Gospels, a book such as that suggested in item 2 of this list of activities which compares and contrasts the four Gospel accounts, for use during our study of John. You will find it helpful in putting together a complete picture of Christ’s ministry on earth.
The Purpose of John’s Gospel

In this lesson, we probe deeper into the reason why John wrote this Gospel and get an overview of the topics he emphasizes in the book. (You read a little about his reason in the introduction to the preceding lesson.)

The Gospel of John Proves the Deity of Christ

**Purpose**

John stated his reason for writing the book in John 20:30–31. Why did he record these events?

___________________________________________________

___________________________________________________

**Selective evidence**

John was selective in what he included in his book. According to John 20:30–31 and 21:25, did he record everything that Jesus did?

He chose only those signs that magnified adequately the deity of Christ (i.e., the fact that He was God).

John recorded seven key miracles by Christ. Read the following passages and write down beside the reference the miracle of Christ that John reported.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Miracle</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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Eleven times the Lord used the peculiar phrase *I AM* (the name of Jehovah and a claim to deity). These eleven uses of that phrase or name reveal fourteen different things the Christ claimed to be. Read the following passages and write down what each reveals.

- **John 2:1–11**—____________________________________
- **John 4:46–54**—____________________________________
- **John 5:1–27**—____________________________________
- **John 6:1–14**—____________________________________
- **John 6:15–21**—____________________________________
- **John 6:1–14**—____________________________________
- **John 6:1–27**—____________________________________
- **John 6:15–21**—____________________________________
- **John 9:1–41**—____________________________________
- **John 11:1–57**—____________________________________

John recorded the testimony of seven people who stated that Jesus was God. Look up each of the following verses. For each verse, name the person who stated Christ’s deity and summarize his or her testimony of Christ’s deity. (Note: Be sure to distinguish the difference between the person in “a” and the one in “g.”)
Reference | Person/Witness | Testimony Regarding Christ’s Deity
--- | --- | ---
a. John 1:34 |  |  
b. John 1:49 |  |  
c. John 6:69 |  |  
d. John 10:36 |  |  
e. John 11:27 |  |  
f. John 20:28 |  |  
g. John 20:31 |  |  

**John Wrote to Cause Men to Believe and Live**

According to John 20:31, what active response must men have to the doctrine of the deity of Jesus? ________________________________

What are the results of their taking this action? ________________

Forms of the word “believe” appear nearly one hundred times in the Gospel of John. The words *live* or *life* also occur fifty-two times in the book. Merely knowing about and being convinced of the deity of Christ is not enough; one must ________________ Him as his or her personal Lord and Savior (John 1:12), trusting Him for eternal life. This is the purpose for which John wrote his Gospel. Therefore, it is an excellent book to use in witnessing.

**John Also Wrote to Supplement the Other Three Gospels**

*The Synoptic Gospels*

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the “Synoptic Gospels.” The word *synoptic* means “to see together.” These three books contain much of the same material, even though each book was written for a different purpose.
(Refer to the chart used in Lesson 1 for a comparison/contrast of the various Gospels.) According to Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible, “All three agree extensively in the order of the events they describe” and “in the stories and traditions they share in common.” Also, all three of them focus on Christ’s Galilean ministry. The book of John, however, supplies information not given in the other three Gospels, thereby complementing, or completing, the biblical picture of Christ.

**John was written after the Synoptic Gospels**

John was written *after* the Synoptic Gospels. Even where John parallels the Synoptic Gospels, the author includes details not found in the other three Gospels. The majority of John deals with the Judean and Jerusalem ministry of Christ, which is not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels. (The Synoptic Gospels record only one visit of Jesus to Jerusalem, which is when the Jews crucified Him.) John, however, supplies the missing details, describing four additional visits of Christ to Jerusalem (spring, A.D. 29; spring, A.D. 30; fall, A.D. 31; and winter, A.D. 31) before His final visit there.

**John centers on major Jewish feasts**

The Gospel of John is built around the major feasts of the Jews. These feasts were the reasons why Christ was in Jerusalem on each of those occasions. These feasts, combined with John’s use of the phrase *the next day*, are also good reference points for understanding the order in which the events of the book occurred. John presents the events logically and chronologically and places great emphasis on geographic locations in which the events took place.

**John completes the Gospels’ scope of Christ’s ministry**

Taken together, the four Gospels present the entire scope of Christ’s earthly ministry in Judea, Jerusalem, and Galilee.

**John shows us the time of Christ’s ministry**

The primary month of Christ’s greatest ministry was the period that we call March–April, which the Jews called *Nisan*. Nisan was the first month of the Hebrew calendar (see Neh. 2:1; Esther 3:7).

**The Timeline of the Book of John**

A timeline and outline of the Gospel of John will help us understand the book. The timeline in the appendix will be helpful as you study through each lesson. Know the eight major divisions of the outline in the chart on the facing page.
The timelines

Found on pages 276–277.

The outline

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Notes from the Teacher’s Lesson

The Purpose of John’s Gospel

John’s Two-fold Purpose

- To cause us to believe that Jesus is the________________(20:31)
- To show us how to obtain life through His ________ (20:31)
The Four Passovers

- Passover one—A.D. 29: Jesus is Lord of the _________ (John 2:13–14)
- Passover two—A.D. 30: Jesus is Lord of the _________ (John 5:1)
- Passover three—A.D. 31: Jesus did not attend (John 6:4)
- Passover four—A.D. 32: Jesus is Lord of _________(John 18–19)

The Timeline of John’s Gospel

- The dates of Christ’s ministry
  - The first three months (fall of A.D. 28)
  - The first year (beginning with our January, A.D. 29)
  - The second year (A.D. 30)
  - The third year (A.D. 31)
  - The last months (January to March/April, A.D. 32)
- The dates of the events that John records
  - Gaps of ________ between chapters and verses
- The bulk of John’s Gospel
  - Deals mostly with the month ______________
  - Deals mostly with the year A.D. ______
  - Chapters 13-20 deal with the last ______ of Christ’s life

Lessons for Our Lives

- Christ is the central __________ in history.
- The cross and resurrection is the central __________ in history.
- Salvation by faith alone in Christ alone is the central __________ in history.
- Proclamation of the gospel is the central ______________ of believers.

Digging Deeper

1. Research and report on the Passover. What did it symbolize? When was it instituted? What did it foreshadow in the ministry of Christ?
In what ways is the Passover like the Lord’s Supper? (Consult Victor Buksbazen, “Passover and the Lord’s Supper,” in The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel for details on this topic.)

2. Select one of the miracles of Christ for closer study. Describe it and compare/contrast it with other miracles that He performed.

3. Compare and contrast the “I AM’s” of Christ.

4. Using the timeline as a basis, prepare a summary of other “secular” events that were occurring throughout the known world at the time of the life of Christ. As part of your summary, explain how the Scriptures (specifically Gal. 4:4) can truthfully say that Christ’s first coming to earth was “in the fullness of time.” What was going on in the world that made this the ideal time for the appearance of the Messiah?