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BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK

THE
GOSPEL OF JOHN, VOL. I

by
PAUL T. BUTLER

*A NEW
Commentary
Workbook
Teaching Manual*

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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

to

My Lord Jesus Christ Who bought me and
sought me,

to

My beloved Christian father and mother
Drew and Lois,

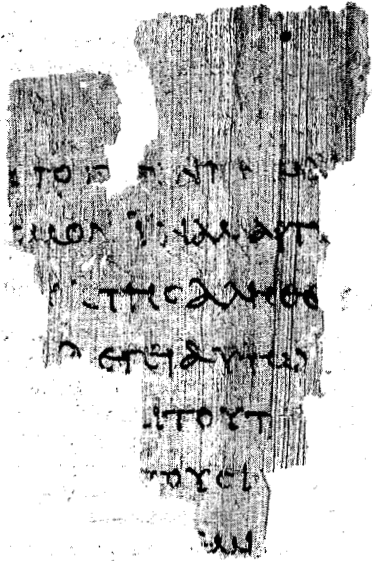
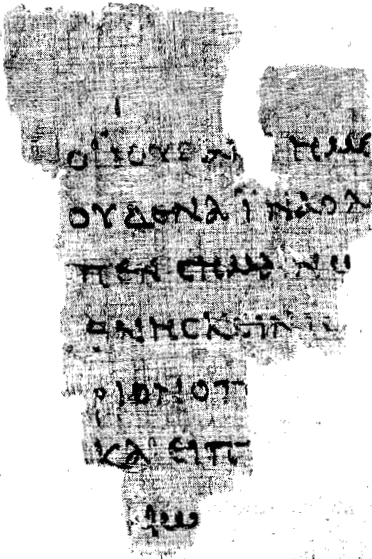
to

My devoted and cherished wife,
Gale Jynne,

and to

My loving children,
Sherry and Mark

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



Courtesy of the John Rylands Library,
Manchester, England

This is the Rylands Greek Papyrus 457. It is not two fragments but this picture shows both sides of one fragment. At the present time this is the oldest known manuscript fragment of John's Gospel and is dated about 100-150 A.D. The fragment shows portions of John 18:31-33 and 18:37-38.

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Preface

For nearly nineteen centuries the Gospel according to John has been a tremendous source of testimony for converting the world. This wonderful Gospel has also been a storehouse of strength for the church of Christ. For almost the same length of time innumerable commentaries, translations, and critiques have been written concerning the fourth Gospel.

We entered this work humbly, aware of the great responsibility incumbent upon any who propose to teach God's Word to others (Jas. 3:1ff). We are also humbled when we consider the illustrious and scholarly company with whom we presume to associate ourselves by producing this work on the Gospel of John. In the early years of the Church such distinguished men as Origen wrote commentaries on this particular book. Later scholars have since given equally reputable works on this Gospel. We herewith acknowledge especial indebtedness to B. F. Wescott (who spent 25-30 years in this field), A. T. Robertson, William Hendriksen, R. C. H. Lenski, R. C. Foster, and the many others listed in the Bibliography.

We have not endeavored in this commentary to give to the church another technical, linguistical, and highly critical work. Our aim is to present a book that can be used by Sunday school teacher, preacher, student and layman alike. For those who desire a more technical treatise of the subject, we suggest the works of the aforementioned commentators and those enumerated in the Bibliography.

As excellent as these great works are, however, there are yet new discoveries that need to be incorporated into new commentaries on John. Manuscript discoveries, papyri finds and the

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recent *Dead Sea Scrolls* have been made available to this generation and were not, of course, available when Wescott, Lenski and others published their works.

We have embodied special studies ("The Kingdom", "Jesus as a Controversialist," etc.), maps, diagrams, outlines and photographs which we hope will both inform and inspire the reader to further study concerning the fourth Gospel.

Grateful acknowledgement is made of the assistance and inspiration of Professors Don DeWelt, Seth Wilson, and Woodrow Phillips, of Ozark Bible College, as they have contributed toward making this commentary possible.

The author further acknowledges with gratitude, the indispensable technical assistance of Mrs. Woodrow (Marjorie) Phillips.

INTRODUCTION

John the Apostle, the writer of the fourth Gospel, has been called "the apostle of love." This is indeed an appropriate title, for John, in both his Gospel and his epistles, dwells extensively and almost exclusively on the love of God as revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ. Clement of Alexandria (190-200 A.D.) said John knew that the other Gospel writers had given the historical data of Christ's life and he (John) was "urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit" to "compose a *spiritual* gospel."

John's Gospel lends itself to both the profound and the plain. He expounds upon the deepest recesses of the infinite Mind in the simplest language. Although John omits even as much as almost a year's ministry at one place in his record (the period between John 5:47 and 6:1), his account is still the most successively chronological of the four gospels.

Form criticism will not be dealt with in this work. Separate volumes have been written on this subject alone. Neither shall we dwell at length with other introductory material. Our purpose would be defeated by an extended thesis on introductory problems. Furthermore, there are many excellent compositions now available on the precursory problems of John's gospel. A few are mentioned here for reference: *New Testament Commentary*, "the Gospel of John," pp. 3-66, by Wm. Hendriksen; *An Introduction to the Life of Christ* by R. C. Foster; *The Gospel According to John*, pp. 9-195, by B. F. Wescott; not to mention works by Godet, Dodd and Bernard.

WRITER: John, the apostle, the son of Zebedee, brother of James. Usually, two lines of evidence are presented to substantiate the authorship of John the apostle — internal and external.

a. *Internal evidence*:

1. The author of this Gospel was a Jew. This is evident by his familiarity with Jewish customs, i.e., weddings, funerals, etc., and with the feasts of the Jews (2:1-10; 11:38, 44; 19:40; 6:4; 13:1; 7:2; 10:22). He was a Jew of Palestine, for he knew the topography of Palestine as only

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one who had lived there all his life could know it (1:28, 3:23; 4:11; 5:2; 11:18, etc.)

2. The writer of the fourth Gospel was an eyewitness. He was very observant: he saw that Jesus was tired when He sat by the well in Sychar (4:6); he observed that it was even the *right* ear of Malchus which Peter slashed off (18:10). He was one of the Twelve. This is definitely shown by the fact that he was in the upper room at that last fateful Passover (13:23). His very intimate knowledge would indicate that the writer of this account was one of the "inner circle" three — James, Peter or John. Peter is distinguished by the author by name; James had suffered martyrdom long before the writing of this account; this leaves us unable to escape the conclusion that John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved, who also leaned on his breast at supper," was the writer of this fourth Gospel (cf. 21:20 and 21:4).

b. *External evidence:*

1. There are passages from the earliest writings of the Church Fathers which clearly indicate a knowledge of John's Gospel: Clement of Rome (96 A.D.), the Shepherd of Hermas (100 A.D.), the *Didache* (110 A.D.), *The Epistle of Barnabas* (130 A.D.), and a few others.

2. There is incontrovertible evidence from other writers closely connected with the apostolic age as to the authorship of John. Tatian (170 A.D.), a pupil of Justin Martyr, included John in his *Harmony* of the Gospels. Irenaeus (185 A.D.), who was a pupil of Polycarp — who was in turn a direct disciple of John — reports that John, the disciple who lay upon the Lord's breast, published the fourth Gospel while he was in Ephesus of Asia Minor.

3. Even the heretics and unbelievers attest to the authorship of John the Apostle. Tatian became a heretic after the death of his teacher Justin Martyr. Celsus (178 A.D.), the Clementine *Homilies* (160 A.D.), even Marcion, the Gnostic, quotes from it (130 A.D.) *If these heretics could have established that this Gospel was non-apostolic, they would certainly have done so!*

4. The Muratorian fragment, an incomplete list of New Testament books (180-200 A.D.) gives testimony to the fact that John, one of the disciples, was the author of the fourth Gospel.

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5. The ancient codices generally ascribe the fourth Gospel to John by prefaced inscription thusly, *kata Iuanon*, or, "according to John." Especially is this a mark of the *Codex Sinaiticus* (300-350 A.D.).

DATE: Most scholars assign a period between 80 and 100 A.D. John knew the other Gospels, it is plain, and they were finished before 70 A.D. Irenaeus writes, ". . . the church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles." Trajan began to reign about the year 98 A.D.

- a. *Rylands Papyrus:* In 1920, a man named Roberts found a fragment of papyrus while going through a collection of rubbish from Egypt. This fragment turned out to be portions of John 18:31-33 and 18:37-38. By paleographical investigation it has been established that this fragment is from codex written in the period 100-150 A.D. If a manuscript, written at such an early date, is found in Egypt we may assume that the original from the hand of John can be dated before 100 A.D.—the very date that the Church Fathers hold for John's Gospel!
- b. *The Bodmer Papyrus:* This is a codex containing practically every verse of John's Gospel from 1:1 through 14:26 (the missing verses being 6:12-34). It has been dated at approximately 200 A.D. It is a witness to the text of the Greek New Testament contemporary with Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria. The codex is more than one hundred years older than either the *Codex Vaticanus* (350 A.D.) or the *Codex Sinaiticus* (350 A.D.). This is a very important discovery because it reveals only a few variations between our present Greek texts of John's Gospel and itself. What few variations there are do not affect the basic tenets of the faith.

PURPOSE: John's supreme purpose is to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. This he states himself in 20:31. Some see John's purpose as a refutation of the Adoptionist heresy (that Jesus was not the Son until after His baptism and the Spirit descended upon Him) and the Gnostic heresy (that Divinity could not dwell in flesh since all flesh and matter were evil—therefore Jesus was not The Word). These heresies were beginning to infiltrate the church. This may be so, but such a design was

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secondary to the stated purpose of John, which was to generate a trust and obedience that would bring eternal life to the believer. Hendriksen notes that John selects in his account "exactly that additional material (material not found in the other three Gospels) which was best suited to bring into clear daylight His deity in the most exalted sense of the term." For example, the wedding feast at Cana, the discourse with Nicodemus, the woman at the well in Sychar, the great Sermon on His deity in the fifth chapter, the feeding of the five thousand and the Sermon on the Bread of Life, the cure of the man blind from birth, the resurrection of Lazarus, and other important incidents.

JOHN AND THE VIRGIN BIRTH: Hostile critics have assaulted the fourth Gospel from the days of its infancy because of its "silence" concerning the virgin birth of Christ. A moment's reflection upon the facts will show the real significance on the supposed "silence" of John. Is it reasonable to conclude that John, who was well aware of Matthew's and Luke's account, would have *remained silent* if these two had misrepresented the facts? It is true that John does not say unequivocally that "Jesus was born of a virgin." It is also a *fact* that John *nowhere contradicts* the statements of Matthew and Luke that Jesus was born of a virgin. John *does* refer to Jesus as God's only — unique — (*monogenes*) Son. John *does* record the stupendous claim Jesus made for Himself (8:58, etc.) that before Abraham was born He enjoyed timeless existence. John *does* present Christ as co-equal and co-eternal with God, yet Who became flesh and dwelt among us." We contend that John very definitely complements and substantiates the virgin birth.

COMMITTING JOHN'S GOSPEL TO MEMORY: Almost everyone has remembered the basic details of numerous incidents within the life of Jesus since childhood, e.g., turning water into wine, washing the disciples' feet, etc. We would like to suggest an easy way to memorize practically the entire Gospel of John. By memorizing at least one significant event or doctrine for each chapter, one can have the whole scope of John's Gospel within memory's grasp. John's Gospel incidentally and amazingly lends itself to memorization by association.

Chapter 1 — Prologue; John the Baptist points out Jesus, and his disciples follow Jesus.

Chapter 2 — Marriage at Cana; Cleansing the Temple

Chapter 3 — Nicodemus and the New Birth

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- Chapter 4 — Woman at the Well and Living Water
- Chapter 5 — Healing of Lame Man at Bethesda; and Jesus' Deity
- Chapter 6 — Feeding Five Thousand, and the Bread of Life
- Chapter 7 — Feast of Tabernacles and Living Water
- Chapter 8 — Sermon on Light of the World; Abraham's True Seed
- Chapter 9 — Healing of Man Born Blind
- Chapter 10 — The Door of the Sheep; The Good Shepherd
- Chapter 11 — Resurrection of Lazarus
- Chapter 12 — Mary Anoints Jesus; Triumphal Entry
- Chapter 13 — Jesus Washes Disciples' feet
- Chapter 14 — Many Mansions; The True Way
- Chapter 15 — The True Vine; True Friends of Jesus
- Chapter 16 — The Work of the Holy Spirit
- Chapter 17 — The High Priestly Prayer
- Chapter 18 — The Betrayal, Arrest and Trials
- Chapter 19 — The Crucifixion
- Chapter 20 — The Resurrection
- Chapter 21 — Disciples Go Fishing and See Jesus; Peter Strengthened; The Epilogue

BY WAY OF EXPLANATION: The peculiar form which this commentary takes needs a brief explanation. Since this book is designed for use in the home as well as in the classroom, certain features have been incorporated which are foreign to other commentaries.

- a. *Text:* The American Standard Version. This remains, in the opinion of most scholars, the best translation available today. We recommend, however, that the student not be enslaved by one translation. Compare as many versions as are available.
- b. *Queries:* Designed to excite the intellect of the reader to immediate curiosity. The mind must be actively interested as information is being received, else the mind will not retain or grow.
- c. *Paraphrase:* A rendering of the literal sense of the text. We have used the Greek text (Nestle) compared with numerous translations and versions at our disposal in an effort to translate the original text into the modern idiom.

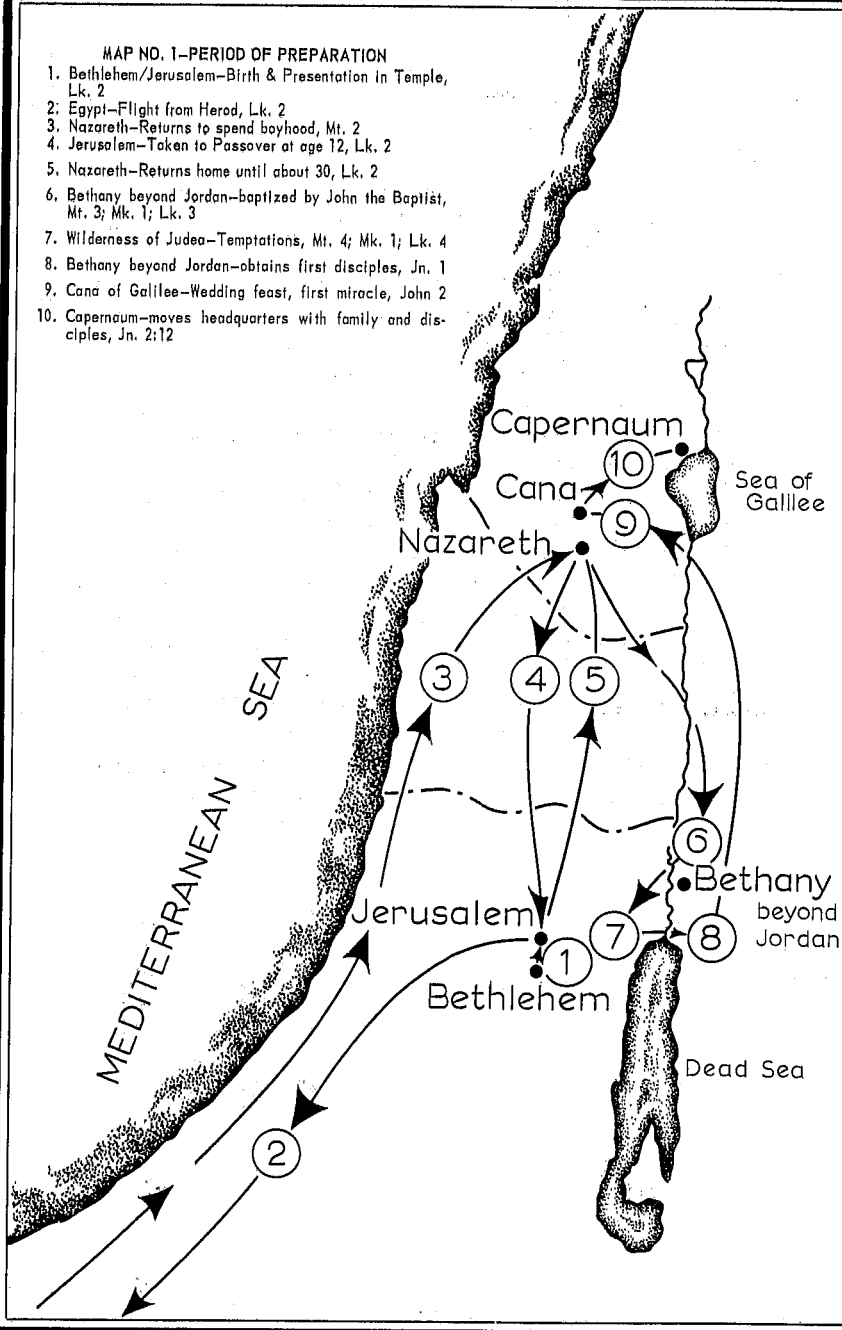
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- d. *Summary*: We have endeavored here to put before the reader the kernel, or the heart of the text. One of the basic rules for interpretation of any book, Bible or otherwise, is to seek to understand what the *author* intends to say.
- e. *Comment*: An amplification of the text. Our exegesis is aimed not only at understanding the text, but also toward application to life wherever possible.
- f. *Quiz*: Questions on the text as amplified by the Comments with a view toward letting the reader test himself as to knowledge of the text gained. These questions also serve as a future aid for one who desires to use this book to teach the fourth Gospel.
- g. *Additional features*: At the end of each chapter, one or more *expository sermon outlines* will be found for the chapter as a whole or parts of the chapter. The *maps* and outline of the life of Christ are included as one of the best means to memorize a chronological life of Christ. Of course, some of the places on this series of maps must remain arbitrary. In order to facilitate memorization, however, we have conjecturally located certain places incident to the travels of Jesus in Palestine. Included at appropriate intervals are *special studies* to aid the student's grasp of this wonderful Gospel "according to John."

We now commend you to a serious and prayerful study of the Word of Life as revealed in the fourth Gospel. Our prayer is that you may gain higher experiences in faith and eventually eternal life through your committment to Him.

MAP NO. 1—PERIOD OF PREPARATION

1. Bethlehem/Jerusalem—Birth & Presentation in Temple, Lk. 2
2. Egypt—Flight from Herod, Lk. 2
3. Nazareth—Returns to spend boyhood, Mt. 2
4. Jerusalem—Taken to Passover at age 12, Lk. 2
5. Nazareth—Returns home until about 30, Lk. 2
6. Bethany beyond Jordan—baptized by John the Baptist, Mt. 3; Mk. 1; Lk. 3
7. Wilderness of Judea—Temptations, Mt. 4; Mk. 1; Lk. 4
8. Bethany beyond Jordan—obtains first disciples, Jn. 1
9. Cana of Galilee—Wedding feast, first miracle, John 2
10. Capernaum—moves headquarters with family and disciples, Jn. 2:12



CHAPTER I

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

THE first discovery of America was made by Christopher Columbus in 1492.

He sailed from Spain in August and reached the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas in October.

His voyage was sponsored by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain.

Columbus's discovery opened the way for European exploration and settlement in the Americas.

His voyage was the first of many that would follow, leading to the discovery of the rest of the Americas.

The discovery of America was a turning point in world history.

It led to the development of the Americas as a major world power.

The discovery of America was a great achievement of the human spirit.

It was a testament to the courage and determination of the explorers.

The discovery of America was a great triumph for the human race.

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