

Maranatha Bible Church 2019

Equipping Hour: NT Gospels and Acts Introduction

Week 4: The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John:

Author¹

Although the author's name does not appear in the gospel, early church tradition strongly and consistently identified him as the Apostle John. *The early church father Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 130–200) was a disciple of Polycarp (ca. A.D. 70–160), who was a disciple of the Apostle John, and he testified on Polycarp's authority that John wrote the gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia Minor when he was advanced in age (Against Heresies 2.22.5; 3.1.1).* Subsequent to Irenaeus, all the church fathers assumed John to be the gospel's author. Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 150–215) wrote that John, aware of the facts set forth in the other gospels and being moved by the Holy Spirit, composed a "spiritual gospel" (see Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History 6.14.7).

Reinforcing early church tradition are significant internal characteristics of the gospel. While the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) identify the Apostle John by name approximately 20 times (including parallels), he is not directly mentioned by name in the Gospel of John. Instead, the author prefers to identify himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). The absence of any mention of John's name directly is remarkable when one considers the important part played by other named disciples in this gospel. Yet, the recurring designation of himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved," a deliberate avoidance by John of his personal name, reflects his humility and celebrates his relation to his Lord Jesus. No mention of his name was necessary since his original readers clearly understood that he was the gospel's author. Also, through a process of elimination based primarily on analyzing the material in chaps. 20, 21, this disciple "whom Jesus loved" narrows down to the Apostle John (e.g., 21:24; cf. 21:2). Since the gospel's author is exacting in mentioning the names of other characters in the book, if the author had been someone other than John the apostle, he would not have omitted John's name.

The gospel's concealment strongly reinforces the arguments favoring John's authorship, for only someone of his well-known and preeminent authority as an apostle would be able to write a gospel that differed so markedly in form and substance from the other gospels and have it receive unanimous acceptance in the early church. In contrast, apocryphal gospels produced from the mid-second century onward were falsely ascribed to apostles or other famous persons closely associated with Jesus, yet universally rejected by the church.

¹ <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB43/john>

Who was the Apostle John?

John and James, his older brother (Acts 12:2), were known as “the sons of Zebedee” (Matt. 10:2–4), and Jesus gave them the name “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). John was an apostle (Luke 6:12–16) and one of the 3 most intimate associates of Jesus (along with Peter and James—cf. Matt. 17:1; 26:37), being an eyewitness to and participant in Jesus’ earthly ministry (1 John 1:1–4). After Christ’s ascension, John became a “pillar” in the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9). He ministered with Peter (Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14) until he went to Ephesus (*tradition says before the destruction of Jerusalem*), from where he wrote this gospel and from where the Romans exiled him to Patmos (Rev. 1:9). Besides the gospel that bears his name, John also authored 1–3 John and the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:1).

Date of Writing

Because the writings of some church fathers indicate that John was actively writing in his old age and that he was already aware of the synoptic gospels, many date the gospel sometime after their composition, but prior to John’s writing of 1–3 John or Revelation. John wrote his gospel ca. A.D. 80–90, about 50 years after he witnessed Jesus’ earthly ministry.

He has no reference to the Temple falling in 70 AD, this would mean that there was enough time which passed that his readers would have already known. Furthermore, because his readers were well outside of Jerusalem, they may not have even really cared.

Readers: Diaspora Jews

- Jewish customs are explained; this would not be necessary if they were Jews from Palestine.
 - Diaspora literally means dispersion. Biblically, it refers to the dispersion of the Jews outside of Israel from the time of the Babylonian Captivity until now.
 - It has also been applied to the dispersion of Christians after A.D. 70 when Rome sacked Jerusalem and thousands of Christians fled and dispersed throughout the Mediterranean area.

The Purpose

- John is very intentional in letting us know why he wrote this gospel. We read in **John 20:30-31** “**And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**”
- You can say that John is written as a sort of tract for the Jews who were no longer in Israel.

Characteristics and themes of John’s Gospel:

1. Differences with Synoptics

- John differs from them in content and style.
- Justifiable to conclude that John knew about and interacted with the other gospels before writing his gospel (at least the gospel of Luke...Paul refers to it in the mid-60’s)
- Did not want to tell the overall story of Christ (as the other gospels), but to make unique theological observations

- No parables...no short pithy sayings...no exorcisms
 - long discourses...very few references to the Kingdom of God (heaven)...only three references, but not about the kingdom language...no eschatological discourses
 - there are no list of the 12 apostles, no record of Jesus' birth, baptism, transfiguration, temptation or ascension
- 2. Jesus, the Son of God** (1:34, 49; 3:16, 17, 18, 35, 36; *5:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26; 6:40; 8:36; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 14:13; 17:1; 19:7; 20:31)
- Most frequently uses this term for Jesus
- 3. Jesus the Christ [Messiah]** – (1:17, 20, 25, 41; 3:28; 4:25, 29; 7:25, 27, 31, 41, 42; 9:22; 10:24; 11:27; 12:34; 17:3; 20:31)
- 4. The Book of Signs** (miracles)
- key verse (John 20:30-31) which encapsulates the gospel: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”
 - another key verse (John 12:37) – “Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him”
 - Seven signs are listed
 - John explains the signs in an exegetical way
 - You are either in a miracle or in a speech throughout the book of John.

SEVEN SIGNS		SPEECH	
2:1-11	Water to Wine	New Birth	3:1-15
4:46-54	Royal Official Son Healed	Living Water	4:5-42
5:1-18	Impotent Man Healed	Witnesses to Jesus	5:19-47
6:1-4	5,000 Fed	Bread from Heaven	6:22-59
6:16-21	Walking on Water		
9:1-41	Blind Man Healed	Light of the World	8:12-59
11:1-16, 38-44	Lazarus Raised	The Good Shepherd; The Resurrection & Life	10:1-21; 11:17-29

5. Unique Vocabulary

- **Believe [98x]**
 - i. “Believe that” (with ὅτι) – emphasizes the content of faith (20:31; 6:66; 11:27; 14:10; 16:23, 30; 17:8)
 - ii. “Believe” (with the simple dative) – emphasizes giving credence to someone/something, accepting someone/something as true (2:22; 4:21; 6:30; 8:46)
 - iii. “Believe in or on” (with εἰς) – emphasizes trust directed to/toward someone/something (2:11, 23; 3:16; 7:31, 39; 8:30; 10:42; 12:11; 16:9)
 - iv. “Believe,” (absolute use) – emphasizes the act of faith (1:50; 3:12; 6:47; 11:14-15, 40; 14:29; 20:29)

- Life [vb., 17x; n., 36x; -17x (3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3) as life eternal] / Death (5:24)
- Light [23x] / Darkness [9x] (1:4-5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35)
- Love – [57x] far more than any other synoptics 3
- Truth, True [48x] (1:14; 14:6)
- Glory, glorify [40x] (1:14; 17:1, 4-5)
- Father – [137x]
- World [78x] (1:9-10, 29; 3:16-19; 4:42; 8:12, 23; 10:36; 12:25, 31, 46-47; 13:1)
- “To send” words – [60x]
- Hour [26x] (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1)
- Jew, Jewish [71x] (5:16, 18; 6:41, 52; 7:1; 8:31, 48; 9:22; 10:31; 11:45-46; 12:9-11; 19:7)
- Witness, Bear Witness [47x] (3:11, 32; 18:37)
- Remain, Abide, Stay [40x] (1:32-33; 8:31; 15:4-10)

6. Election

- More sovereign language than any other of the gospels.
- John 1:12-13 “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
- John 6:37-39 “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.”
- John 10:3-4 “To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.”
- John 15:16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”
- John 10:16 “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”
- John 10:26-27 “But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”
- John uses drawing one to Christ as the sense of dragging because there is resistance.
- John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws**² him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”
- John 12:32 “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw** all men to Myself.”

² The word translated “draw” carries with it the idea of dragging. Compare Acts 16:19 as Paul and Silas were *dragged* into the market place.

7. Unique Christology

- No other gospel reveals so clearly the deity of Christ.
- His titles for Christ are often unique
 - i. The Word (logos): John 1:1-18
 - ii. The Lamb of God: 1:29, 36
 - iii. The prophet: John 1:21, 25-27; 4:19; 6:14; 7:40
 - iv. The Light: John 1:7-9; 8:12; 9:5
 - v. The Bridegroom: John 3:25-30
 - vi. The Savior of the World: John 4:42
 - vii. The Way, the Truth, the Life (John 14:6).
 - viii. The Resurrection and the Life: John 11:25
 - ix. The Good shepherd: John 10:14
 - x. The Door: John 10:7, 9
 - xi. The Living Bread: John 6:35-58, 61
 - xii. The Living Water: John 4
- The “I am” Sayings of Jesus [*Cradle, Cross, Crown*, 306]

Statement	Reference	Significance
“I am the Bread of Life”	6:35, 48, 51	Spoken after feeding the multitude; in analogy with God’s provision of manna for wilderness Israel, Jesus is the true bread of heaven able to satisfy people’s spiritual hunger
“I am the Light of the World”	8:12; 9:5	Jesus as fulfillment of Feast of Tabernacles; Jesus is the salvation foreshadowed by the lamps of the Feast; “light” and “life” are related in John’s Gospel, so Jesus is the “light of life” (8:12)
“before Abraham was, I am”	8:59	
“I am the Door”	10:7, 9	Jesus is the exclusive way to salvation – all must be saved through him; spoken in context of Good Shepherd Discourse
“I am the Good Shepherd”	10:11, 14	In contrast to the Pharisees as worthless shepherds (see Zech 11:17), Jesus is the shepherd-king in the tradition of David; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (substitutionary atonement)
“I am the Resurrection and the Life”	11:25	Jesus is the resurrection that Mary and Martha (and most of Israel) are waiting for in the last day; spoken prior to the raising of Lazarus
“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”	14:6	Jesus asserts that he himself is the exclusive way to the Father; Jesus’ use of articles (<i>the way, the truth, the life</i>) further reiterates Jesus’ status as the exclusive way to salvation
“I am the true Vine”	15:1	The OT used vine imagery to describe Israel (Isa 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jer 2:21 Ezek 15; 19:10-14; Hos 10:1 Ps 80:9-16); Jesus is therefore the new Israel (as well as the replacement of the temple and Jewish festivals)

8. The Holy Spirit

- Very prominent throughout the book; but more in the second half of the book
- Jesus (chs. 13-16) talks about the coming of the Holy Spirit's coming after His departure

9. Prologue

- Not historical, but theologically oriented (first 18 verses)

10. Upper Room

- Jesus never gives us the *actual* communion command, but the context of those statements

The Literary Structure and Some Interpretive Issues

The Literary Structure: How did John organize it?

1. The Prologue: Jesus was the Incarnate Word (1:1-18)

- The Word in Creation (1:1-5)
- The Word in History (1:6-13)
- The Word among Believers (1:14-18)

2. The Body: The Record of the Signs that should Lead to the Belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God [The Deeds and Discourses of Jesus] (1:19-20:31)

- The book of signs (1:19-12:50)
 - i. The Beginning of the Signs and the Response of Belief (1:19-4:54)
 - ii. The Growing Hostility toward Jesus by the Jews (5:1-12:50)
 - 1. The Beginning of Hostility in Jerusalem at a Feast (5:1-47)
 - 2. The Conflict in Galilee at the Time of Passover (6:1-71)
 - 3. The Conflict in Jerusalem at the Feasts [of Tabernacles and Dedication] (7:1-10:42)
 - 4. The Culmination of Hostility: The Decision to Kill Jesus (11:1-54)
 - 5. The Impending Death of Jesus: The Hour Had Come (11:55-12:36)
 - 6. The Explanation of Jewish Hostility and Unbelief (12:37-50)
- The Book of Exaltation (13:1-20:31)
 - i. The Communication of Jesus to His Own in the World (13:1-17:26)
 - 1. The Introduction: The Love and Betrayal of Jesus (13:1-30)
 - 2. The Discourse: The Preparation of his Disciples by Jesus for His Departure (13:31-16:33)
 - 3. The Conclusion: The Prayer of Jesus (17:1-26)
 - ii. The Glorification of Jesus (18:1-20:29)
 - 1. The Death of Jesus (18:1-19:42)
 - 2. The Resurrection of Jesus (20:1-29)
 - iii. The Purpose of the Gospel (20:30-31)

3. The Epilogue: The Commission to the Disciples from the Resurrected Jesus (21:1-25)

Interpretive Issues

- Jehovah Witnesses and John 1:1
- John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
 - ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν **καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος**
 - If there is only one definite article ("ο"="the") in a clause where two nouns are in the nominative ("subject") form ("θεός" and "λόγος"), then the noun with the definite article ("ο"="the") is the subject.
 - John 1:6 “There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.”
 - ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ ὄνομα αὐτῷ Ἰωάννης
- New World Order (JW Translation)
 - John 1:1 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.”
 - John 1:6 “There came a man who was sent as a representative of God; his name was John.”
- In both translations (NASB and NWO), there is no definite article (ο) in 1:1 or 1:6. But, JW will add it to 1:1 and not to 1:6.
 - **Why?** They do not believe that Jesus is God so when it is to their advantage, they add something that will fit their theological belief.
 - This is a perfect example of our theology driving our actions.
- **Standing in stark contradiction to their “rule.”**
 - John 20:28 “Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (NASB)
 - John 20:28 “In answer Thomas said to him: ‘My Lord and my God!’” (NWO)
 - ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ κύριός μου καὶ **ὁ θεός** μου (Greek is the same)
 - If there was a place to make a case for *a god* theology, this would be the one, yet they simply ignore it because it does not fit their narrative.
- Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (NASB)
- Matthew 5:9 “Happy are the peacemakers, since they will be called sons of God.” (NWO)
 - μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοὶ ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ **θεοῦ** κληθήσονται (Greek is the same).
- **Water** in John 3:5 “Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”
 - (v. 3) – born from above = see the Kingdom of God
 - (v. 5) born of water and Spirit = enter the Kingdom of God
 - An exclamation
 - Procreation / Physical Birth
 - John’s Baptism (Repentance)
 - Christian Baptism
 - Both/Either John’s or Christian Baptism
 - The Word of God (cf. Eph 5:26)
 - The Holy Spirit (water refers to the Spirit throughout John cf. 4:7)
 - *Purification and cleansing (refers to OT, specifically Ez. 36; cf. Jn 3:10 – Nicodemus should have already known this)*
 - Nicodemus would not have known about Christian baptism as it did not exist yet. We must keep authorial intent and to whom He is speaking in mind.

- “Receive the Holy Spirit” in John 20:22 “And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
 - Myth (John’s Pentecost is put on Easter Sunday Evening)
 - Full Bestowal of the Holy Spirit (**Charismatic View**)
 - This is where the disciples were **born again and indwelt with** the Holy Spirit. Though filled, they were not yet empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 - They would say that there is nothing in Scripture which permits the disciples from actually receiving the Holy Spirit at that time.
 - The Charismatic view believes there are those who are baptized into the Holy Spirit like John 20:22 and then there is a **subsequent baptism** which you will **then be empowered** by the Holy Spirit for service found in Acts 1:8.
 - They hold to the fact that not every believer has the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - Partial Bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Majority Position) – (some say temporary / interim filling)
 - *Anticipation of Future Bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Köstenberger)*
 - *John speaks of future theology (present imperative) to speak of things which will come to pass later. (John 7, Jesus says ‘come and drink’ but it is in the future)*
 - Ezekiel 37:9-14
 - John 16:7 “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”
 - If Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would not come until He went away, and He was still there, then the Holy Spirit could not have come yet (Jhn. 7:39)

Commentaries:

Exegetical:

- C.K. Barrett (NICNT)
- Craig Keener

English Interpretation:

- D.A. Carson (PNTC) the finest John commentary
- Leon Morris (NICNT) *New series
- Kostenberger (BECNT) (not that different than D.A. Carson)

Expositional:

- Milne (Bible Speaks Today)

Next Two Weeks:

- Luke/Acts
- Acts