

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN INTRO

I. OUTLINE

- A. Introduction – 1:1-18
- B. The ministry of John the Baptist – 1:19-34
- C. Jesus calls his disciples – 1:35-51
- D. Jesus's public ministry – 2:1-10:42
 - i. His ministry begins – 2:1-4:45
 - ii. Jesus the miracle worker – 4:46-6:71
 - iii. Jesus faces off with the Jews – 7:1-10:42
- E. Jesus's last days – 11:1-19:42
 - i. His hour has come – 11:1-12:50
 - ii. The last supper – 13:1-17:26
 - iii. Jesus is arrested and crucified – 18:1-19:42
- F. The resurrection – 20:1-31
- G. Prologue – 21:1-21:25

II. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Anonymous
 - i. There likely was an editor or group of editors
 - ii. They ascribed authorship to “the disciple whom Jesus loved”
 - a. John 21:20-24 *Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?” This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.*
 - i. These editors claim one of the 12 was the author
 - ii. They vouch for the accuracy of the account
 - iii. Only gospel that claims to be an eyewitness account

- a. John 21:24 ***This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.***
- B. Church tradition attributes the gospel to the apostle John
 - i. Irenaeus was a 2nd century bishop in France
 - a. He claimed John was the author of the book
 - b. He claimed to have been taught by Polycarp who was taught by John¹
 - ii. Eusebius, Polycrates, Clement of Alexandria all confirm John as the author²
- C. Additional evidence that John is the author
 - i. The author is very exact with the other disciples' names except his own
 - a. John is never mentioned by name
 - i. He is mentioned by name in the other three gospels
 - ii. An anonymous gospel likely wouldn't have been accepted by the church
 - a. Unless the author was known
 - b. Especially considering the significant differences from the other three gospels³
 - c. Other gospels claiming to be written by apostles were rejected
 - iii. John was one of Jesus's closest friends
 - a. Matthew 17:1 ***And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.***
 - b. Matthew 26:36-38 ***Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”***
 - c. Supports the idea that John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved”
 - iv. The author was close with Peter
 - a. Indicates one of Peter, James, or John
 - b. James was killed early in church history

¹ Burge, G. (2018, March 23). Who Wrote the Gospel of John? Zondervan Academic. Retrieved April 11, 2024, from <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-the-gospel-of-john>

² Burge

³ MacArthur, J. (2007). *Bible Introductions - John*. Blue Letter Bible. Retrieved April 12, 2024, from https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/macarthur_john/bible-introductions/john-intro.cfm

- i. Acts 12:1-3 **About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword, and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread.**

D. Other possible authors⁴

- i. Lazarus
 - a. He is the only named individual who is called “loved” by Jesus
 - i. John 11:1-3 **Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.”**
 - ii. John 11:36 **So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”**
 - b. The references to the beloved disciple only exists after the story of Lazarus
 - i. Unclear why the author would stop using Lazarus’s name
- ii. John Mark
 - a. He was a cousin of Barnabas
 - i. Colossians 4:10 **Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, and Mark the cousin of Barnabas (concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him)...**
 - ii. Barnabas was a Levite
 - a. Acts 4:36 **Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus...**
 - iii. Would explain the author’s connection to the high priest
 - a. John 18:15 **Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest...**
 - b. Known associate of Peter
 - i. Thought to have written the gospel of Mark as told by Peter
 - c. He was not one of the twelve disciples
 - i. The author of John most likely was one of the twelve

⁴ Burge

- a. John 13:21-24 **After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus’ side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.**
- iii. Thomas
 - a. He wouldn’t believe in the resurrection unless he saw the wound in Jesus’s side
 - i. John 20:24-25 **Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”**
 - ii. The beloved disciple was the only one who saw this happen
 - a. John 19:34-35 **But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.**
 - b. Thomas seemed to have influenced a school of disciples
 - i. They wrote several pieces of literature
 - ii. Much was centered around the Gospel of John
 - iv. Another disciple or group of disciples
 - a. Significant parallels between John and the writings of the Qumran community
 - i. Could indicate a Qumran authorship⁵
- E. Disputes regarding the authorship of John
 - i. Scholarly consensus rejects the traditional belief that John wrote the book
 - a. Commonly thought to be too “Greek” for the author to be a first century Jew⁶
 - b. This ignores evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls
 - i. The duality of light and dark matches similar themes in these scrolls

⁵ Charlesworth, J. H. (1993, February). *Reinterpreting John: How the Dead Sea Scrolls Have Revolutionized Our Understanding of the Gospel of John*. Biblical Archaeology Society Library. Retrieved April 13, 2024, from <https://library.biblicalarchaeology.org/article/reinterpreting-john/>

⁶ Long, K. (2023, July 11). *Unmasking Who Wrote The Gospel Of John*. Bartehrman.com. Retrieved April 13, 2024, from <https://www.bartehrman.com/who-wrote-the-gospel-of-john/>

- a. John 12:35 **So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.”**
- b. “He has created the human for the dominion of the world, designing for him two spirits in which to walk until the appointed time for his visitation, namely, the spirits of truth and deceit. In a spring of light emanate the nature of truth and from a well of darkness emerge the nature of deceit. In the hand of the Prince of Lights (is) the dominion of all the Sons of Righteousness, in the ways of light they walk. But in the hand of the Angel of Darkness (is) the dominion of the Sons of Deceit, and in the ways of darkness they walk” (Rule of the Community, 1QS 3.17–21).⁷
- ii. John is now thought to be one of the most Jewish of the gospels
 - a. And contain some of the oldest sections⁸
- c. Ignores the details that an eyewitness would be able to provide⁹
 - i. The number of jars containing water at the wedding in Cana
 - a. John 2:6 **Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.**
 - ii. The length of time the crippled man was at the pool at Bethesda
 - a. John 5:2-5 **Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.**
 - iii. The name of the soldier whose ear was cut off by Peter
 - a. John 18:10 **Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)**
 - iv. The number of fish caught when Jesus said to cast the net on the other side
 - a. John 21:11 **So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn.**

⁷ Charlesworth

⁸ Charlesworth

⁹ Strauss, M. (2017, September 20). Who Wrote the Gospels, and How Do We Know for Sure? Zondervan Academic. Retrieved April 13, 2024, from <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-gospels>

- ii. John was likely illiterate and would have been unable to write in Greek¹⁰
 - a. But many biblical authors used scribes to write for them
 - i. Jeremiah, Peter
- iii. The book is missing information that John likely would have included¹¹
 - a. Transfiguration
 - b. Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane
- iv. The Beloved Disciple isn't mentioned until the Last Supper
 - a. Even though he followed Jesus from the beginning¹²
 - i. **Mark 1:19-20 *And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.***

III. DATE WRITTEN

- A. Traditionally considered the last of the four gospels to be written
- B. Previously thought to be written in the 2nd century
 - i. Until Papyrus 52 was discovered in 1920
 - a. Dated at no later than 125 A.D. and probably a couple decades earlier
 - b. Contained fragments of John 18
 - c. Meaning John would have been completed by the end of the first century¹³
- C. Now typically dated to the last two decades of the first century
 - i. Dating is difficult because it doesn't rely on the synoptic gospels
- D. Two factors could indicate an earlier date
 - i. There is no mention of the destruction of the temple or Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
 - ii. Evidence Peter had been martyred before the gospel was written
 - a. **John 21:17-23 *He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will***

¹⁰ Long

¹¹ Strauss

¹² Strauss

¹³ Charlesworth

stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”

- iii. May have been written between Peter’s death in 64 A.D. and 70 A.D.

IV. LOCATION

- A. Church tradition points to the book being written in Ephesus
- B. Other possibilities include Syria or Lebanon¹⁴

V. AUDIENCE

- A. Audience is unclear
- B. If it was written in Ephesus then likely it was for Christians in Asia Minor
 - i. A later writing would suggest less need to establish Jesus as the Messiah
 - ii. But to address false teaching and unbelieving Jews¹⁵

VI. PURPOSE

- A. The author himself provides the purpose
 - i. John 20:30-31 *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.*
 - ii. The tense of the last phrase is difficult to translate in English
 - a. More accurately, “that by continuing to believe”¹⁶
 - i. This mistranslation has caused many to mistake John as purely evangelistic
 - ii. And recommend it first to new believers and unbelievers

¹⁴ Mellowes, M. (1998, April). *The Gospel of John*. PBS. Retrieved April 15, 2024, from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/mmjohn.html>

¹⁵ Strauss, M. L. (2017, September 23). *John: The Gospel of the Eternal Son Who Reveals the Father*. Bible Project. Retrieved April 15, 2024, from <https://bibleproject.com/articles/john-gospel-eternal-son-reveals-father/>

¹⁶ Strauss

- iii. But the themes of the book are highly complex
- iii. Suggests the purpose is to encourage believers in their faith
- B. John is highly Jewish in nature
 - i. Suggests at least part of his audience was Jewish unbelievers or Jewish Christians
 - ii. This would be the evangelistic portion
 - a. Effective for evangelizing a Jew

VII. STRUCTURE

- A. Essentially two parts with a prologue and epilogue
- B. Prologue – 1:1-18
 - i. Contains some of the highest and most beloved Christology in all of scripture
 - ii. He is called the Word or *logos*
 - a. Has major implications in both Greek and Hebrew
 - i. Greek – divine reason
 - ii. Judaism – God's power to carry out his will¹⁷
 - iii. He reveals God to the human race
 - a. John 1:18 **No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**
- C. The Book of Signs – 1:19-12:50
 - i. Jesus gave seven signs that pointed to his purpose
 - a. Often associated with a teaching
 - i. The water turned to wine – 2:1-11
 - ii. The official's son healed – 4:46-54
 - iii. The sick man at Bethesda healed – 5:1-15
 - iv. The 5,000 fed – 6:1-14
 - v. Walking on the water – 6:16-21
 - vi. The blind man healed – 9:1-12
 - vii. Lazarus raised from the dead – 11:1-43
 - ii. Seven “I am” statements
 - a. I am the bread of life

¹⁷ Strauss

- i. John 6:35 **Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”**
- b. I am the light of the world
 - i. John 8:12 **Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”**
 - ii. John 9:5 **“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”**
- c. I am the door of the sheep
 - i. John 10:7-10 **So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.**
- d. I am the good shepherd
 - i. John 10:11-15 **I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.**
- e. I am the resurrection and the life
 - i. John 11:23-26 **Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”**
- f. I am the way, the truth, the life
 - i. John 14:1-6 **“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not**

know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

- g. I am the vine
 - i. John 15:5 "***I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.***"
- D. The Book of Glory – 13:1-20:31
 - i. Glory and glorification is a significant theme in this section
 - ii. Five main parts
 - a. The Last Supper – 13:1-38
 - b. Jesus's last words to the disciples – 14:1-16:33
 - c. Jesus's prayer for himself and for his disciples – 17:1-26
 - d. The trial and crucifixion of Jesus – 18:1-19:42
 - e. The resurrection of Jesus – 20:1-31
- E. Epilogue – 21:1-25
 - i. Probably added later by an editor¹⁸
 - ii. Includes Peter's restoration and the identification of the Beloved Disciple as the author

VIII. SIMILARITIES TO THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

- A. John the Baptist
- B. Jesus calling the disciples
- C. Jesus feeding the five thousand
- D. The disciples taking a boat across the Sea of Galilee
- E. Peter confessing Jesus as the Christ
- F. The triumphal entry
- G. The last supper
- H. Jesus's arrest, trial and crucifixion
- I. The resurrection and Jesus appearing to the disciples¹⁹

IX. DIFFERENCES FROM THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

- A. Portions omitted

¹⁸ Strauss

¹⁹ Ritsman, D. F. (n.d.). *The Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels*. Biblestudycourses.org. Retrieved April 20, 2024, from <https://biblestudycourses.org/john-bible-study-courses-section-1/john-and-the-synoptic-gospels/>

- i. Parables
 - a. The Vine and the Branches in chapter 15 is not typically considered a parable²⁰
 - ii. Jesus's transfiguration
 - iii. Sermon on the Mount
 - iv. Jesus's temptation
 - v. The Lord's prayer
 - vi. The establishment of the Eucharist
 - vii. Casting out of demons
- B. New material
 - i. Jesus's early ministry
 - ii. Additional trips to Jerusalem
 - iii. Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead
 - iv. Jesus's teaching and prayer in chapters 13-17
- C. The length of Jesus' ministry
 - i. John implies a ministry lasting at least three years
 - a. Based on how many times he went to Jerusalem for feasts
 - ii. The synoptics appear to portray only a year long ministry
- D. Higher Christology
 - i. The synoptics begin with Jesus's birth or baptism
 - a. Highlights his humanity
 - ii. John highlights Jesus's divinity
 - a. At the beginning and end of the book
 - i. John 1:1 ***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***
 - ii. John 20:26-28 ***Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”***
 - b. Seven “I am” statements

²⁰ Harris, W. H., III (2004, June 24). Major Differences Between John and the Synoptic Gospels. Bible.org. Retrieved April 20, 2024, from <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-major-differences-between-john-and-synoptic-gospels>

i. Refers to God's name

a. Exodus 3:14 **God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”**

E. Point of view

i. Synoptics described the events as they happened

ii. John reflects on the events as if some time has passed²¹

a. He provides lots of commentary

iii. Examples of John's reflective point of view

a. John 2:13-17 **The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”**

b. John 2:18-22 **So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.**

c. John 12:12-16 **The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!” His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.**

²¹ Harris

d. John 20:3-9 *So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.*

F. Jesus's speech

- i. The synoptics present Jesus as speaking in parables and short teachings and sayings
- ii. John presents longer dialogue and discourse

G. Literary techniques

- i. Symbolism
 - a. John 2:19-21 *Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body.*
 - b. John 7:37-39 *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*
- ii. Dualism²²
 - a. Light and dark
 - i. John 3:19 *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*
 - b. Truth and lies
 - i. John 8:44 *“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth,*

²² Harris

because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

- c. Life and death
 - i. John 5:24 **“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”**
- d. Above and below
 - i. John 8:23 **He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”**
- e. Freedom and slavery
 - i. John 8:36 **They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”**

H. Eternal emphasis

- i. The synoptics emphasize the Kingdom of God
 - a. Along with a future establishment of the kingdom
- ii. John removes this emphasis and refers to “eternal life” instead
 - a. Along with a present realization of eternal life