



Today we are introduced to a study of ***The Gospel According to John***, as we explore the author & his purpose for writing this important gospel.

## AUTHOR

The oldest handwritten copies we have (called *manuscripts* - *p66* and *p75* - both from around A.D. 200) start with "The Gospel According to John". Many still say this gospel was originally anonymous and the author's name was added later, but the evidence for this is scarce. *So how do we come up with which "John" this is and why does it matter?*

## INTERNAL EVIDENCE

What claims are actually IN the text?

1. **The writer is assumed to be the unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved"** (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Here are a couple of examples seen in this gospel.

**John 13:23** (ESV) One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side,

**John 19:26-27** (ESV) <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

If this is the author of the letter, then this is one of the closest apostles of Jesus.

2. **This unnamed disciple is often in the presence of Simon Peter** (18:15-16; 20:1-10; 21:4-8). The Synoptics (referring to Matt, Mark, Luke, *seeing together*) and Acts point to the apostle whom is most often with Simon Peter as John (Luke 22:8; Acts 4).

3. **Although all the apostles are mentioned by name in the Synoptics, only 2 are not named in the Gospel of John** - 2 brothers - **James and John**. This strange, unless the author chose to purposefully veil the name of his brother and himself. The writer features "the disciple whom Jesus loves" while the other gospel writers do not.

## EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

Outside of the writing itself, what did early Christians say about this gospel?

- **Irenaeus** (125-202), disciple of **Polycarp** (70-156) - a disciple of the apostle John, wrote: "*John the disciple of the Lord, who leaned back on his breast, published the Gospel while he was resident at Ephesus in Asia*" (Against Heresies iii. 1. 2).
- Early church leaders after Irenaeus consistently cite the apostle John as the author of this gospel (including the Muratorian Canon [a second-century list of New Testament books], Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Eusebius).<sup>1</sup>

## YOUR NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *John 1-11, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006), 4.

## AUDIENCE & PURPOSE

While no specific audience is mentioned, it seems that John expects his readers to understand the Jewish customs, culture, and land of first-century Palestine. His purpose is clearly stated at the end of the writing.

**John 20:30-31** (ESV) <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other **signs** in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> 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.**

Important terms in this Gospel:

- ➡ **Signs.** John gives **7 signs** to demonstrate Jesus is the Messiah to the Jewish people. John also points to 7 "I AM" claims that set Jesus apart from any prophet of all time.
- ➡ **Believe.** "Believe" is **used 90 times in John's Gospel** (compared to 241 times in the entire New Testament). The term for **believe** (Greek *pisteuō*) = TOTAL TRUST. \* Read John 3:16-18 and substitute "trust" for "believe".
- ➡ **Christ/Son of God.** **Christ** is the Greek for the Hebrew *Messiah*. He is also referred to as **the Son of God**. As we will discover throughout this study, these titles can only be fulfilled in ONE PERSON, and it's by **believing** (trusting) Him that we may **have life in his name**.

This kind of belief WILL COST you something (e.g. friendships or some fun times). But by believing/trusting in JESUS, you will find **LIFE!**

🔥 That is the story of **Micah Wilder**, now a former Mormon missionary. Look him up on **YouTube.com**.

**Join us on our journey through The Gospel According to John.**

- ➡ Read it over and over, memorize it, marinate in it during the day, and share what you are reading & learning with others.

\* *Want to talk further? Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), or another follower of Jesus soon!*

## YOUR NOTES

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What challenged or encouraged you from today's teachings?
2. Go to the notes page 1 and look up the passages and arguments that offer INTERNAL EVIDENCE of John's authorship. Do you find these to be compelling arguments or not? Explain your reasons.
3. **Read John 3:16-18** and substitute "trust" where you see "believe" (as the Greek word means *trust*). How does this deepen your understanding of what Jesus is calling people to and warning people of?
4. As noted, to TRUST Jesus with your life will likely cost you something. Share how following Jesus has cost you, as well as what you have gained from following Jesus.
5. Consider reading through John 1 this week. Then share what you are learning and questions you have.
6. Share prayer needs and pray for one another. Pray for your church leaders as well.