

1/5/25

## **Introduction To John**

We begin our study of the gospel of John in our usual manner with an introduction in order that we may understand it as a whole by first examining the parts, for the peculiarities and the obvious material chosen was by design to serve the purpose of the author John.  
\* Last time we studied the gospel of John was 1995-96, it has been 29-30 years!

The gospel of John has been looked at from the beginning of its composition as a distinct and invaluable document.

1. The gospel of John is not a synoptic as Matthew, Mark and Luke, but gives certain signs for the purpose that sinners may believe and be saved.  
\* “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.” Jn. 20:30-31
2. John presents a pattern of eight things, eight miracles, interviews, etc.

Some of the comments that have been made by individuals regarding John’s gospel will help us to appreciate its beauty and priceless content.

1. Origen the biblical scholar of the Third Century said, “The Gospels are the first fruits of all the Scriptures, but of the Gospels John is the first fruit.”
2. Luther judged that the Gospel of John “is unique in loveliness, and of a truth the principal gospel, far, far superior to the other three, and much to be preferred.”
3. Alfred Plummer, a British scholar of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, asserts that this gospel is “a book which stands alone in Christian literature, as its author stands alone among Christian teachers.”
4. Hendrikson, a contemporary scholar, asserts, “The gospel according to John is the most amazing book that was ever written, because its author wholeheartedly believed the amazing claims of the One whose story he records.”

### **I. The authorship.**

- A. The traditional acceptance has been that the apostle John is the author of the fourth Gospel.
  1. John identifies himself as a disciple and eyewitness of the things he recorded. Jn. 21:24a-b  
\* “This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things.”
  2. John affirms with others that the facts are true. Jn. 21:4c  
\* “and we know that his testimony is true.”
  3. Some say that this is part of the epilogue and that John did not write this last chapter.

- a. If so it adds more credibility by their witness to its validity.
- b. If John did write it, the statement is to an extent a seal of authenticity.
- 4. The Gospel has been attacked by some.
  - a. Renan in 117, 138 A.D.
  - b. Keim in 138 A.D.
  - c. The Tübingen German school.
  - d. Professor Bretschneider in 1820.
  - e. An Englishman named Evanson in 1792.
- B. The external evidence of the gospel.
  - 1. The principle witness is Irenaeus in his work *Against Heresies*, written in 185 A.D., where he names the John as the author.
    - a. He declares, “Afterwards after the synoptics were written, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His chest, did himself publish a gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.”
    - b. Irenaeus as a youth lived in Asia Minor, where according to his own testimony, he knew Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who had been a personal disciple of the apostle John.
    - c. In a letter to his Florinus, a boyhood friend, Irenaeus reminded him of their early mutual acquaintance with Polycarp and of Polycarp's reminiscences of his conversations with John and others who had seen the Lord.

- d. Polycarp was martyred in A.D. 155, when he had been a Christian for 86 years.
- 2. The supporting testimony of Irenaeus is two fold.
  - a. The church Fathers.
    - 1) Theophilus of Antioch quoted Jn. 1:1 and ascribed it to the apostle John. 181 A.D.
    - 2) Tertullian specifically ascribes the gospel to the apostle John. 150-222 A.D.
    - 3) Clement of Alexandria in his *Hypotyposes*, where he gives “the tradition of the earliest presbyters”, places the gospel as the last of the four. 155-216A.D.
    - 4) Origen the pupil of Clement, indicates in his commentary on the fourth gospel that its author was John “who lay on Jesus' breast.” 185-254A.D.
  - b. The enemies of the gospel.
    - 1) Porphyry and Julian, enemies of Christianity attested to the authorship of John.
    - 2) The earliest known commentary on the fourth gospel was written by Ptolemaeus, a follower of the heretical Gnostic school of Valentinus, in which he refers to “John the disciple of the Lord” in support of his views.

\* Irenaeus makes it clear that the Valentinian heretics used John's gospel, which they accepted as authoritative.

3) Heracleon, a Gnostic commentator on John, who flourished during the middle of the Second Century quoted from Jn. 1:18 and attributed it to the disciple John, not John the Baptist.

4) Basilides, a Gnostic teacher in Alexandria quoted verbally Jn. 1:9, 117-138 A.D.

5) Tatian who became a heretic after the death of his teacher Justin Martyr, accepted the fourth gospel and used it in composing his harmony of the gospels called the "Diatessaron. 170 A.D.

3. Eusebius in his noted encyclopedial History records the results of his investigations concerning the four gospels. In relation to John's gospel he says, "His Gospel, which is known to all the churches under heaven, must be acknowledged as genuine." He declared in the same chapter that not only the gospel, but all of his writings have been accepted without dispute both now and in ancient times. 324 or 325 A.D.
4. Henry Thiessen states that the evidence for the apostles authorship is as great as that for any other in the New Testament.

### C. The internal evidence of the Gospel.

1. John identifies himself throughout the gospel indirectly. Jn. 18:15-16; 19:35; 21:20-24

\* Westcott points out that the tense is the perfect tense "he that has seen has born witness", indicating that the witness was still alive at the time. Jn. 19:35

2. John identifies himself by the phrase the disciple whom Jesus loved. Jn. 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20
3. John reveals a familiar knowledge of Jerusalem.
- 4 John distinguishes the two Bethany's, the one in the suburbs of Jerusalem and the one on the other side of Jordan. Jn. 1:28
5. John identifies sights and places describing them with personal knowledge.
  - a. John mentions Anon and Ephraim that are mentioned nowhere else. Jn. 3:23; 11:54
  - b. John gives the Temple details of business, the sheeps Gate, the Pool of Siloam and the pavement of judgment. Jn. 2:14-16; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13
6. John gives personal knowledge of Jesus and the conversations and detail with His disciples.
  - a. In the feeding of the 5,000. Jn. 6:5-7;
  - b. "Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked

him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”  
Jn. 12:21

- c. “Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.” Jn. 13:36
  - d. Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Jn. 14:5
  - e. “Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” Jn. 14:8
  - f. Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jn. 14:22
7. John is unique in his use of the title “Logos” for Jesus is found in his other epistles. Jn. 1;1, 14; 1Jn. 1;1; Rev. 19:13

***This is the authorship of the gospel of John!***

## **II. The intended audience and date.**

- A. The majority of those in the past and the present think it was written to the church.
  - 1. The audience is a second and third generation of believers, assuming that the accepted date around 95 A.D.

- 2. The text which declares the purpose of the gospel can be good proof for it being written to the church. Jn. 20:31
  - a. Some point out that some manuscripts have it in the present tense which would indicate that it was written in order that the Christian continue to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the church being a 2nd to 3rd generation.
  - b. But the majority of the manuscripts have the aorist tense that would indicate it was written in order to produce belief in Jesus and have eternal life.
    - \* I believe this is the correct purpose!
- 3. John interprets for his audience Hebrew names and titles and translates them to gentile meanings.
  - a. Messiah to Christ.
  - b. Rabbi to teacher etc.

## **B. The date of the Gospel.**

- 1. The dates given to the gospel has varied from 45 A.D. to 150 A.D., but the late dates have been silenced since the discovery of the papyrus in Egypt
- 2. The Rylands fragments and the Egerton papyrus dated 135 A.D.
- 3. That means that the Gospel of John had to have been written sometime between 85-98 A.D.
- 4. The accepted date is 90 A.D.

5. The gospel is in the Moratorian Canon of the 2nd Century also.

***This is the intended audience and date!***

### **III. The unique characteristics of the Gospel.**

#### **A. The simplicity and profundity of the Gospel.**

1. The gospel of John has been said to be, “a pool in which a child can wade and an elephant can swim.”
2. The gospel of John is monosyllabic in its simplicity as it is composed of one syllable words and it’s sentences are not long and complicated as Paul’s
3. John uses fewer words than any of the Synoptics, but they are profound in meaning. “Scroggie”
4. The gospel of John is declared by Philip Schaff to be, “Simple as a child, deep as the sea and high as the heavens.”

#### **B. The key words, verses phrases.**

1. Some key words.
  - a. Believe, 98 times.
  - b. Life and live, 52 times.
  - c. I am, 23 times.
  - d. Witness, 47 times.
  - e. Love, abide, truth, receive and send etc.
  - f. Sent “pempo” 37 times and “apostello” 28 times a total of 65 times.

#### **2. Key verses.**

- a. “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, 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.” Jn. 1:11-13
- b. “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Jn. 3:5
- c. “Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.” Jn. 4:42
- d. “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Jn. 14:5
- e. “And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” Jn. 20:22-23
- f. “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 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.” Jn. 20:30-31

**3. Key phrases.**

- a. “My time is not yet come”, the hour Jesus came for, to die for the sins of the world. Jn. 2:4; 7:6; 8
- b. “Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world”, this focuses on the atoning work of Christ. Jn. 1:29
- c. The Lamb of God”, this focuses on the person of Christ. Jn. 1:36
- d. The fulfillment of the Passover at the Exodus, the Lamb, blood on the door post and the Angel of death. Ex. 12:7-13
- e. Five times in Rev. 5 and 21 more times, a total of 26 times in the book of Revelation. Rev. 5:1, 6, 8, 12, 13

**C. The contrasts are obvious and also key words.**

1. Light 21 times and darkness 6 times.
2. Truth and cognate forms 49 times and witness 42 times.
3. Life 36 times and death.
4. Forgiveness and judgment 26 times.

**D. The uniqueness of the prologue.**

1. It is the nucleus of the entire gospel in proclaiming what is to follow. Jn. 1:1-18

2. It does not begin with the earthly ministry of Jesus or His birth, but His heavenly pre-existence.
3. It clearly establishes who the “Logos” is the Eternal God of all the ages.
4. It begins with the place of Jesus with the Father and it closes with Jesus in the bosom of the Father. Jn. 1:1, 18

**E. The commentary of John on the gospel is unique.**

1. John explains the proclamation of Jesus on the last day of the great feast regarding the Holy Spirit. Jn. 7:39
2. John explains the Jewish customs. Jn. 2:6; 4:9; 7:2; 10:22; 18:28; 19:31, 41, 42
3. John explains places. Jn. 4:5; 5:2; 6:1; 1:1, 18; 12:1, 21

**F. The comparisons with the Synoptics.**

1. The first three gospels are called synoptic for “syn” meaning together and “optic” meaning to see and present Jesus with a specific perspective and audience.
  - a. Matthew presents Jesus as the King of the Jews, written to the Jews.
  - b. Mark presents Jesus as the Servant of man, written to the Romans.
  - c. Luke presents Jesus as the Son of man, written to the Greeks.
  - d. John presents Jesus as the Son of God.

2. The first three gospels are a presentation of Jesus, while the fourth is an interpretation, written about 90 A.D.
3. The first three deal with the public ministry of Jesus, John deals with the private conversations.
4. The first three focus more on the Galilian ministry, John on the Judean.
5. The first three on facts, John on doctrine.
6. The first three begin with the human origin of Jesus, John with His divine origin.
7. John does not present the birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration of Jesus, the last supper, Gathsemane, or ascension for John present Jesus as God, the Son of God.  
\* Matthew present Jesus as the King of the Jews, Mark as the servant of man, Luke as the son of man and John as the Son of God.
8. John presents eight miracles in contrast to 20 in Matthew, 18 in Marks and 20 in Luke.
9. John presents no parables, in contrast to Matthew 16, Mark 5 and Luke 20.  
\* Though some say the discourtst of the Good Shrpherd is a parable, but it is really and allegory “paroimia”, the word for Parable “parabolle”. Jn. 10:6
10. John quotes the Old Testament only 14 times directly. Jn. 1:23; 2:17; 6:31, 45; 7:38, 42; 10:34; 12:13-15, 38-40; 13:18; 15:25; 19:24, 28, 36-37

11. John has purposely chosen his material as we have stated already. Jn. 20:30-31
12. John provides for us blocks of material omitted by the others such as when Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow Him and John tells us they had already met and even traveled with Jesus to Judea and Galilee. Jn. 1:40; 4:2-3  
\* The synoptics record the late call to full time ministry.
13. John tells us that Jesus began doing miracles in Jerusalem and this news traveled to Galilee. Jn. 2:23; 3:2; 4:45
14. John is interested in the chronological order unlike the synoptics, “the next day, again the next day, the following day, on the htird day”, Jn. 1:20, 35, 43; 2:1
15. John helps us to know the length of the ministry of Jesus, there are three Passovers mentioned. Jn. 2:13; 6:4; 11:55

### ***The unique characteristics of the Gospel of John!***

#### **IV. The apostle John.**

##### **A. The family of John.**

1. John is the brother of James, Sons of Thunder. Matt. 4:21; Mk.1:19; Lk. 5:10; Jn. 21:2,;Lk. 9:54
2. John is called the son of Zebedee. Matt. 27:56; Mk. 15:40, 16:1

3. John's mother is Solome. Mk. 15:41; 16:1
4. John's family had means, they had servants. Mk. 1:20

**B. The person of John.**

1. John was a fisherman, partner with Peter. Lk. 5:7-10
2. John was a disciple of John the Baptist first then of Jesus. Matt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:19-20; Lk. 5:1-11; Jn. 1:29, 46
3. John was one of the inner circle, Peter, James and John. Matt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-8, 49; 22:8
4. John asked the Lord if it was him who would betray Him. Jn. 13:22-25

**C. The character of John.**

1. John was the only one who followed Jesus with Peter to the judgment. Jn. 18:15-16
2. John was the only one at the cross. Jn. 19:26
3. John was to care for Mary the Mother of Jesus, as his own mother. Jn. 19:27
4. John ran to the tomb with Peter. Jn. 20:3-4

**D. The life of John after Pentecost.**

1. John is mentioned in the book of Acts 9 times in association with Peter. Jn. 1:13; 3:1; 4:1-13; 8:14
2. John was banished to the island of Patmos according to tradition after being boiled in

oil by Domitian. Rev. 1:9 (Eusebius, The Ecclesias)

3. John would be carried in his old age at Ephesus towards the end of his life according to Jerome and he would simple say, "Little children love one another", when asked why he always repeated the same thing, he said, "It is the Lord's commandment and if this alone is done, it is enough."

***This is the apostle John!***

**V. The interesting pattern of eight in John. (J. Sidlow Baxter)**

**A. John presents eight miracles.**

1. The water into wine. Jn. 2
2. The healing of the nobleman's son. Jn. 4
3. The curing of the paralytic. Jn. 5
4. The feeding of the 5,000. Jn. 6
5. The walking on the Sea of Galilee. Jn. 6
6. The restoring of the sight of the blind. Jn. 9
7. The raising of Lazarus. Jn. 11
8. The catching of the fish. Jn. 21

**B. John gives the eight "I AM's"**

1. "I am the bread of life." Jn. 6:35
2. "I am the light of the world." Jn. 8:12a
3. "I am the door of the sheep." Jn. 10:9a
4. "I am the good shepherd." Jn. 10:11a



5. "I am the resurrection and the life." Jn. 11:25b
6. "I am the way, the truth and the life." Jn. 14:6b-d
7. "I am the true vine. Jn. 15:1a
8. "Jesus gives us the eighth, as He said to Jews, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.", the Divine name of God. Jn. 8:58

**C** The number eight is symbolic of new beginnings.

1. There are seven notes on the musical scale, the 8th is a new beginning.
2. The first miracle was to manifest His glory and His disciple to believe and the 8th comes full circle and they believe in Him. Jn. 2:11; 21:12
3. There are 4,000 years from Adam to John the Baptists, 2,000 years from Jesus to the present and 1,000 years in the Millennial reign, the 8,000 year is the New Creation.
4. The miracles are sequential, the first two are numbered to have taken place in Cana at the wedding at Cana, turning the water into wine, and Jesus having returned to Cana a nobleman asked Jesus to heal his son that was near death and Jesus declared the healing of his and returning to Capernaum found his son healed. Jn. 2:11; 4:54

5. The miracles are selected with a purpose in mind. Jn. 20:31
6. The miracles communicate transformation of divine power.

**D.** John presents eight private interviews.

1. Peter and Nathaniel. Jn. 1:35-51
2. Nicodemus. Jn. 3:1-21
3. The woman of Samaria. Jn. 4:6-26
4. The man born blind. Jn. 9:35
5. The sisters Mary and Martha. Jn. 11
6. The eleven apostles. Jn. 13-16
7. Mary Magdalene. Jn. 20:1-18
8. Peter. Jn. 21:15-23

**E.** The eight signs or miracles John chose.

1. The changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana. Jn. 2:1-12
2. The healing of the Ruler's Son at Capernaum. Jn. 4:43-54
3. The healing of the lame Man at the Pool of Bethesda. Jn. 5:1-18
4. The feeding of the 5,000. Jn. 6:1-15
5. The walking on the Sea of Galilee by Jesus. Jn. 6:16-24
6. The healing the man born blind at the Pool of Siloam. Jn. 9
7. The raising of Lazarus from the dead. Jn. 11
8. The Miraculous catch of fish. Jn. 21:1-14

- F. The series of eights affirm the theme of power. Jn. 1:12
1. As many as received Him.
  2. To them He gave the authority to become children of God.
  3. Even to those who believe in His name.
  4. All eight individuals in the private interview were made new in the power of Jesus.

2. The restoration of Peter. Jn. 21:15-19
3. The reliable word of John. Jn. 21:20-25

*These are the interesting pattern of eight in John!*

## VI. The outline of the book.

- A. The prologue. Jn. 1:1-18
1. The Word from eternity. Jn. 1:1-5
  2. The witness of John of Jesus. Jn. 1:6-12
  3. The Word Incarnate. Jn. 1:13-18
- B. The body. Jn. 1:19-20:31
1. The public ministry of Jesus to the Jews. Jn. 1:19-12:50  
\* The seven sign miracles.
  2. The private ministry of Jesus to His own. Jn. 13-17  
\* The last week.
  3. The Passover lamb slain and power over death. Jn. 18-20  
\* Death and resurrection.
- C. The Epilogue. Jn. 21
1. The reunion at Galilee. Jn. 21:1-14