

What is a “Gospel” in the Bible?

- What makes them gospels?
- What makes them different from other books in the bible?

Introduction:

1. Uniqueness of John

- Different from the Synoptic Gospels
 - Does not talk about Jesus’ exorcisms
 - His temptation narrative
 - The transfiguration
 - The Lord’s Supper
- Distinctives
 - Jesus as the Logos.
 - The Father as Spirit.
 - The focus of the Holy Spirit.
 - Focus on eternal life and resurrection.

2. Genre

- What is a genre?
 - Why would it matter to know what the “genre” is in the Bible?
- The Genre of John
 - It is a biography, similar, in broad perspective, to a Greco-Roman biography of “Famous People” back in the day.

3. Date and place of writing

- Ephesus in Asia Minor.
- Around AD 85-95.
 - He also wrote 1, 2, 3 John and Revelation.

4. Authorship

- Does authorship matter?
- Who do we traditionally say wrote the gospel?
 - Most critical scholars always try to dismiss authorship.
 - They say that our burden of proof is too heavy and that we cannot know exactly who wrote the gospel.
- **Looking to the Evidence:**
 - **External**
 - **Early Church Fathers:**
 - **Papius (AD 60-140)** said to have been a disciple of John, who he knew personally, and attributes the gospel to John.
 - **Clement of Alexandria (Ad 150-215)** states that he was aware of the fact that John had returned to Ephesus after his time on the Isle of Patmos, and was aware of the other three Gospels

(Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and decided to compose a Spiritual Gospel to compliment the facts of the others.

- **Polycrate** - a Bishop of Ephesus wrote a letter around AD 190 to another church father known as Eusebius talking about the burial ground of John the Apostle. This is important because Eusebius confirms the burial ground, which strengthens, historically, the other claims previously made.

- **Muratorian Fragment/Cannon (AD 170 - AD 200)** is a writing that is said to possibly be part of the New Testament, though, this is hotly debated. It does, nonetheless, aid us a bit—it claims that John is the author of his Gospel.

- **Irenaeus (AD 130-202)** said to have known Polycarp who knew John when he was residing in Ephesus around AD 98 or so. This is important because Irenaeus, from closest eye witness accounts can confirm that John wrote the gospel.

- Internal Evidence:

- John 21:24.

- The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved—John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7.

- This is John writing of himself. If it were some other author, so the argument goes, he would have just said “John.”

- This shows the personal nature of John the Apostle and his relationship with Jesus.

- John 6:67 and many others.

- Refers to the “Twelve” as if it is personal.

- John was one of the twelve disciples (Matthew 4:21).

5. Purpose and Audience

- To all!

- Matthew seems to have been written for a Jewish audience, Luke for a Gentile audience, Mark from Peter’s perspective (to some degree), but John is universal en Toto.

- John 20:30.

6. Historical Reliability

- Dissenting View:

- Content.

- Jesus’ traveling.

- What Jesus did.

- Certain stories are placed at the beginning rather than the end.

- High view of Jesus.

- Certain stories are unique to John like John 3 via the story of Nicodemus.

- Hellenistic.

- Basically, too heavy of a Greek influence and is not entirely genuine in Christian concepts of Jesus.
- That this letter was actually the product of Greek communities upon Christianity.

- Affirming View:

- Jewish Scholars agree that the document is Jewish in nature, not Greek.
- The Dead Sea Scrolls (1940's) affirms the language used by John as authentic to his time and not later.
- What is described in the Gospel is historically affirmed even from Palestinian perspectives.
 - that is, archeology affirms the claims from John like the Pool of Bethesda in John 5:2.