

New Testament Survey

The Gospel of John

I. Attestation and Authorship

A. External Evidence¹

1. From the earliest recorded time John was accepted as the author.
 - a. The *Epistle to Barnabas* (chapter vi) seems to quote John 1:14. It also uses the uplifted serpent but it is uncertain whether the writer is referring to John 3:14-18 or to Numbers 12.
 - b. Ignatius is thought to have made allusion to John 4:10-11 in his *Epistle to the Romans* (chapter 7), and to John 3:8 in his *Epistle to the Philippians* (chapter 7).
 - c. Tatian not only refers to John in his *Diatesseron*, but quotes John 1:3 and 1:5.
 - d. Theophilus of Antioch writes, "John says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word as with God.'"
 - e. The Muratorian Canon says, "John, one of the disciples, wrote a fourth book of the Gospels."
 - f. Ireneus quotes frequently and heavily from John. He wrote, "Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia."
 - g. Clement of Alexandria, quoted by Eusebius, writes, "John, the last of all, seeing that what was corporal was set forth in the Gospels, on the entreaty of his intimate friends and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel."
 - h. The only group which seemed to deny the authority of John was the *Alogoi*, a cultic group which denied the bodily incarnation of Christ.
2. The Question of "John the Elder"
 - a. Eusebius seems to have believed that there were two Johns in Ephesus during Papias' day, John the Elder and John the Apostle.²

¹ Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 162-164.

² The actual quote of Papias from Eusebius is as follows: "But I shall not hesitate also to put down for you along with my interpretation whatsoever things I have at any time learned carefully from the elders and carefully remembered, guaranteeing their truth. For I do not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those that speak much, but in those that teach the truth; not in those that relate strange commandments, but in those that deliver the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and springing from the truth itself. If, then, any one came, who had been a follower of the elders, I questioned him in regard to the words of the elders, – what Andrew or what Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the disciples of the Lord, and what things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciple of the Lord, say. For I do not think that what was gotten from the books

Most modern scholars have taken this and jumped to the conclusion that it was John the Elder, not John the Apostle, that wrote the fourth Gospel.

- b. Note the following arguments against this theory:
 - 1). John is known both as a presbyter (elder) and a disciple. Note Peter's comment in 1 Peter 5:4.
 - 2). In 2 John 1 and 3 John 1, John refers to himself as an elder.
 - 3). The quote by Eusebius is best understood when one realizes that at the time it was written John was the only apostle still alive. Thus, by grouping him with Aristion, Papius is merely indicating that the latter two are still alive while the former apostles have all died.

B. Internal Evidence³

1. We know the following facts about the writer of this Gospel:
 - a. He was a Jew. This is seen in his intimate knowledge of the Jewish feasts, customs, social life, and Old Testament Scriptures.
 - b. He was from Palestine. He knows many geographical facts about the region that would not be true of someone unfamiliar with Israel.
 - c. He was a contemporary of the events and persons narrated in the Gospel. He know many intimate details regarding the trials of Christ, crucifixion, and resurrection that would not have been known by someone who was not an eyewitness to those same events.
2. From the above, and the facts that he quotes many of the other disciples except John, that the writer is most likely John.

C. A Brief Biography of the Author

1. He is one of five Johns mentioned in the Gospels, the others being John the Baptist, John the Father of Peter (John 1:42), John Mark (Acts 12:12,35), and John who was part of the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-6).
2. His father was known as Zebedee, his mother Salome (a sister to Mary, the mother of Christ), and his brother James the Apostle.
 - a. Matthew 28:56 says that three significant women witnessed the crucifixion, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children, i.e. James and John.
 - b. Mark 15:40 refers to these same three women as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the less and Joses, and Salome.
 - c. John 19:25 refers to these same three women as Mary Magdalene, the wife of Cleopas, and "his mother's sister."

would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice."

³Thiessen, pp. 167-169.

- d. Thus, we conclude that Salome, the wife of Zebedee and James and John's mother, is also the sister of Mary, the mother of Christ.
3. He was a fisherman by trade (Matthew 4:21-22, Mark 1:19-20).
4. Christ nicknamed them Boanerges (Mark 3:17), possibly because of their intense zeal.
5. Both went to their mother to ask Christ to name them to places of honor in the kingdom (Matthew 20:20-24, Mark 10:35-41).
6. John was one of the three disciples in the inner circle, the other two being James and Peter (Mark 5:37, 14:33).
7. John followed Christ into the high priest's palace (John 18:15), and to the place of crucifixion. Christ asked John to watch out for his mother at the cross (John 19:26-27).
8. After Pentecost he was a companion to Peter on several occasions (Acts 3:1, 4:19, 8:14).
9. Tradition says John spent his last years in Ephesus. Domitian banished John to Patmos, but upon the succession of Nerva to the throne he was allowed to return to Ephesus.
10. It is most likely that John died of old age sometime during the last few years of the first century.

II. Occasion and Date

- A. John wrote the gospel in response to the need for a "spiritual gospel."
- B. Irenaus writes that the Gospel was written from Ephesus. That would place its composition during the last few years of John's life.
- C. Most likely written A.D. 85-90.

III. Purpose and Plan

- A. Written to prove that Christ was the Son of God - John 20:30-31.
- B. Written to supplement the other gospels. John repeats very little material mentioned in the other three gospels. In fact, nearly 92% of John differs from the other three gospels.

IV. General Outline⁴

- A. The Essential Glory of the Son of God - John 1:1-5.
- B. The Incarnation and General Reception of the Son of God - John 1:6-18.
- C. The Revelation of the Son of God to Israel - John 1:19-12:50.
- D. The Revelation of the Son of God to the Disciples - John 13-17
- E. The Glorification of the Son of God in His Passion - John 18-19

⁴Theissen, p. 175.

F. The Manifestation of the Son of God in Resurrection, Power, and Glory - John 20-21

V. Chapters to Remember

John 1	The Word Made Flesh
John 2	The First Miracle
John 3	Nicodemus
John 4	The Woman at the Well
John 6	The Bread of Life
John 8	Before Abraham Was, "I AM"
John 9	The Man Born Blind
John 10	The Good Shepherd
John 11	The Resurrection of Lazarus
John 13-16	The Upper Room Discourse
John 17	Christ's High Priestly Prayer

VI. Points and Peculiarities

1. John 20:30-31 is the key verse and gives the reason for its writing.
2. Omits birth and boyhood narrative. Jesus, as the eternal Son of God, had no beginning.
3. Only gospel which reports the "early Judean" ministry. In fact, most of John's gospel concerns itself with the Judean ministry of Christ. Note Hendricksen's chronology (accepting John's date of the beginning of Christ ministry as A.D. 26 as opposed to Luke's date of A.D. 29)⁵
 - a. December 5 B.C. to December A.D. 26 - Christ's birth and preparation for ministry.
 - b. December A.D. 26 to April A.D. 27 - Inauguration - John 1:19-2:12.
 - c. April A.D. 27 to December A.D. 27 - Early Judean Ministry - John 2:13-4:42
 - d. December A.D. 27 to April A.D. 29 - Great Galilean Ministry - John 4:43-6:71.
 - e. April A.D. 29 to December A.D. 29 - Retirement and Latter Judean Ministry - John 7:1-10:39.
 - f. December A.D. 29 to April A.D. 30 - Perea Ministry - John 10:40-12:11.

⁵ William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary, John*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 36.

- g. April A.D. 30 to May A.D. 30 - Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension - John 12:12-21:25.
- 4. John has no parables.
- 5. Eight recorded miracles, 6 unique to John.
- 6. Covers only 20 days of Christ's ministry (out of 3-1/2 years).
- 7. Characteristic words are "belief", "father", and "verily, verily."
- 8. 60 separate titles for God are found in John.

VII. A Closer Look

A. Chapter 1

- 1. The Word Made Flesh - 1:1-18
- 2. The Ministry of John the Baptist - 1:19-34
- 3. The First Calling of the some of the Disciples - 1:35-51

B. Chapter 2

- 1. The First Miracle - 2:1-12
- 2. The First Cleansing of the Temple - 2:13-25

- C. Chapter 3
 - 1. Nicodemus at Night - 3:1-21
 - 2. John the Baptists's witness of Christ - 3:22-36
- D. Chapter 4
 - 1. The Woman at the Well - 4:1-42
- E. Chapter 5
 - 1. The Healing of the Paralyzed Man - 5:1-16
 - 2. Discourse on Christ's Diety - 5:17-47
- F. Chapter 6
 - 1. Jesus Feeds the 5,000 - 6:1-14
 - 2. Christ walks on Water - 6:15-21
 - 3. The Bread of Life - 6:31-65
- G. Chapter 8
 - 1. The Woman Taken in Adultery - 8:1-11
 - 2. The Light of the World - 8:12-30
 - 3. True Abrahamic Descendents - 8:31-59
- H. Chapter 9
 - 1. The Man Born Blind - 9:1-41
- I. Chapter 10
 - 1. Christ the Good Shepherd - 10:1-30
- J. Chapter 11
 - 1. Lazarus Raised from the Dead - 11:1-46
- K. Chapter 12-16
 - 1. The Anointing of Christ - 12:1-11
 - 2. Christ washes the Disciple's Feet - 13:1-20
 - 3. "I am the Way" - 14:1-6
 - 4. The Vine and the Branches - 15:1-8
 - 5. The World's Rejection - 15:18-27
 - 6. The Comforter Promised - 16:3-15

L. Chapter 17

1. Christ's High Priestly Prayer - 17:1-26

M. Chapter 18-22

1. Betrayal - 18:1-14
2. Denial - 18:15-27
3. Condemnation - 18:28-40
4. Crucifixion - 19:1-37
5. Burial - 19:38-42
6. Resurrection - 20:1-10
7. Appearances - 20:11-29
8. "Many more things" - 20:30-31
9. More Appearances - 21:1-25