



Overview of the Gospel of John

Lesson 1

THE AUTHOR OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John the Apostle

- A. The author is not named in the Gospel
- B. Irenaeus identifies John as the author in his book *Against Heresies* in approximately A.D. 180
- C. Though some have argued against Johannine authorship, here are five solid reasons to believe that John the apostle is the author (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Well Hall Harris III):
 - 1. The author of the Fourth Gospel was a Jew.
 - a. He is familiar with current Jewish opinions.
 - i. Messianic Expectations - 1:21, 4:25, 6:14 ff, 7:40 ff, 12:34 ff
 - ii. Attitude toward women - 4:27
 - iii. Importance of religious schools - 7:15
 - iv. Disparagement of Jews of the Diaspora (Hellenistic Jews) - 7:35
 - v. Hostility of Jews and Samaritans - 4:9
 - b. He is familiar with Jewish observances and customs.
 - i. Ceremonial pollution of entering a Gentile court - 18:28
 - ii. Feast of Tabernacles (hinted at) by symbolism of “living water” and the “light of the world” - 7:38, 8:12
 - iii. The last day of the feast was the “great day” - 7:37
 - iv. Customs at marriage feast - 2:1-10
 - v. Customs of burial - 11:17-44
 - c. Vocabulary, sentence structure, symmetry and numerical symbolism, expression and arrangement of thoughts are essentially Hebrew. “The source of the imagery of the narrative...is the Old Testament. The words are Greek words, but the spirit by which they live is Hebrew.” (Westcott, Introduction, vii)
 - d. The Old Testament is the source of the religious life of the author.
 - i. Judea was the “home” of the Word become flesh; these people were “his own people” - 1:11
 - ii. Judaism is constantly taken as the starting-point for Christianity.
 - a) The writer assumed as axiomatic that Scripture cannot be broken - 10:35
 - b) That which is written in the prophets is assumed to be true - 6:45
 - c) Old Testament types are mentioned as Christ applied them to himself:
 - 1) Serpent - 3:14
 - 2) Manna - 6:32
 - 3) Water from the Rock - 7:37 ff., etc.

2. The author of the Fourth Gospel was *a Jew of Palestine*.

- a. A. His local knowledge is precise.
 - i. Bethabara beyond the Jordan (1:28), a place forgotten by the time of Origen, is distinguished from Bethany near Jerusalem (11:18). The location of the latter is given as 15 furlongs away.
 - ii. Aenon near Salim (3:23) is not mentioned anywhere else - indicating direct acquaintance of the writer.
 - iii. Topography, especially of Jerusalem, is precise.
 - a) The pool at Bethesda - 5:2
 - b) The pool of Siloam - 9:7
 - c) The Pavement (*Gabbatha*) with its raised judgment-seat - 19:13
 - d) Allusions to the Temple
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3. The author of the Fourth Gospel was an *eyewitness* of the events he describes.

- a. Descriptions of persons in minute detail (Nicodemus - 3:1 ff; Lazarus - 9:1 ff, 12:1 ff; Simon, father of Judas Iscariot - 6:71, 12:4, 13:2, 26)
 - b. Details of time:
 - i. Number of days before the raising of Lazarus - 11:6, 17, 39
 - ii. Duration of Jesus' stay in Samaria - 4:40, 43
 - iii. Specific mention of the hour at which events occurred ("*the tenth*" - 1:39, "*the sixth*" - 4:6, 19:14, etc.)
 - iv. Details of number (two disciples of John the Baptist - 1:35; six water pots - 2:6; five loaves and two fishes - 6:9)
 - v. Details of manner or circumstance (The boy had barley loaves - 6:9; when Mary poured the ointment, the house was filled with the fragrance - 12:3, etc.)
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4. The author of the Fourth Gospel was *an Apostle*.

- a. The scope of his descriptions of Jesus' ministry from the call of the first disciple to the appearances after the resurrection.
 - b. He is acquainted with the thoughts and feelings of the disciples at critical moments.
 - c. He recalls words spoken amongst themselves.
 - d. He is familiar with the places to which they withdrew for time alone.
 - e. He knew the Lord's emotions.
 - f. He knew the grounds of the Lord's actions.
 - g. He knew the mind of the Lord in many cases.
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5. The author of the Fourth Gospel was *the Apostle John*.

- a. John 21:24 assigns authorship to "the apostle whom Jesus loved."
- b. This disciple is mentioned by this title twice in the passion narrative (13:23, 19:26) and twice afterwards (21:7, 21:20).
- c. He is known to the high-priest - 18:15

- d. He stands in close relationship with Peter - **13:24, 20:2, 21:7**
- e. From the list in **21:2** of those present, this disciple must have been one of the sons of Zebedee, *or* one of the two other unnamed disciples present.
- f. The synoptics present Peter, James and John as standing in a special relationship to Jesus. Peter is eliminated (see **20:21**), James was martyred very early (**Acts 12:2**); *this leaves John*.

THE TIME OF THE GOSPEL

Though there is some contention over the date of the gospel, most scholars agree that it was written before A.D. 70 because no mention is made of the fall of Jerusalem. At worst, some think it was written before the end of the first century, placing the Gospel within sixty years or so after the death of Christ.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

A. Key verse: **John 20:30-31**

20:30 “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: **31** But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

B. Three-fold purpose for writing the Gospel of John

1. To convince the reader that Jesus is the Christ
2. To convince the reader that Jesus is the Son of God
3. So the reader might have eternal life because of belief in the person of Christ

THE EIGHT KEY WORDS

- A. Believe (used 98 times)
- B. Life (used 36 times)
- C. Sign

The Nine Signs of the Gospel of John

Sign	Demonstration
Turning the water into wine - 2:1-11	Power over creation
Healing of a nobleman’s son - 4:46-54	Power over space
Healing of a lame man - 5:1-9	Power over time
Feeding of the 5,000 - 6:1-14	Power over food
Jesus walking on the water - 6:15-21	Power over natural laws
Healing of a blind man - 9:1-12	Power over physical laws
Raising Lazarus from the dead - 11:1-44	Power over death
Miraculous catch of fish - 21:1-11	Power over all of the above
Resurrection - 20-21	Power over all

Signs were one way that Jesus “*manifested forth his glory*” - **2:11**

D. I Am

1. I am the bread of life - 6:35
2. I am the light of the world - 8:12, 9:5
3. I am the door - 10:9
4. I am the good shepherd - 10:11
5. I am the resurrection and the life - 11:25
6. I am the way, the truth, and the life - 14:6
7. I am the vine - 15:5
8. I am...I am - 4:26; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:13, 19; 18:5-6, 8

E. Truth

1. Jesus is the giver, source, and personification of truth - 1:14, 17, 14:6
2. Truth, then, is the highest revelation of God, for it is God Himself.

F. Knowing

G. Witness

1. Witness of the Father - 5:32, 34, 37; 8:18
2. Witness of the Son - 3:11; 8:14, 18; 18:37
3. Witness of the Holy Spirit - 15:26; 16:13-14
4. Witness of the Scriptures - 1:45; 5:39-46
5. Witness of the works of Jesus - 5:17, 36; 10:25; 14:11; 15:24
6. Witness of the Baptist - 1:7-8; 5:33-35
7. Witness of the disciples - 15:27; 19:35; 21:24
8. Witness of changed lives - 4:39; 9:25, 38; 12:17

H. Father

I. The uniqueness of John

1. High Christology (field of study within Christian theology which is concerned with the nature of Jesus the Christ)
 - a. Describes him as the Logos (Word) which existed from the beginning with God
 - b. Teaches at length about His identity as the only Savior
 - c. Writes about His redemptive mission (arguing that Jesus is the Messiah)
2. Considerable amount of content given to Jesus talking about Himself
3. Considerable amount of "private" conversations between Jesus and his disciples are recorded
4. Selective style - 21:24-25
5. Extended narrative style (gives more details)
6. Style that features people (Nathaniel, Andrew, doubting Thomas)
7. Precise style (details, details, details)
8. Jerusalem setting

J. The audience of John - the Jews