

The Gospel of John

PROLOGUE 1:1-18	Book of Signs 1:19 – 12:50	Book of Glory 13:1 – 20:31		EPILOGUE 21:1-25
	7 Great Miracles	Upper Room Discourse 13:1 – 17:26	Passion and Resurrection 18:1 – 20:31	
	Public Teaching: 3 Years	Private Teaching: A Few Days		
	“His Great Acts”	“His Personal Instruction”		
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Water into Wine (2) 2) Heals a Son (4) 3) Heals a Lame Man (5) 4) Feeds the 5,000 Men (6) 5) Walks on Water (6) 6) Heals a Blind Man (9) 7) Raises Lazarus from the Dead (11) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) On Servanthood (13) 2) On Salvation (14) 3) On the Spirit (14 – 16) 4) On Abiding in Him (15) 5) On Prayer (17) 6) On the Kingdom (18 – 19) 7) On Faith (20 – 21) 		
<p>“And truly Jesus did many other signs . . . 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” (20:30-31).</p>				

Purpose Statement for the Gospel of John:

The Apostle John selected a number of signs (miracles) and sayings of Jesus to demonstrate to the world that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, the eternal Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, so that persons would believe in Him and have eternal life.

An Introduction to the Gospel of John

I. The Author

- A. Although this Gospel, like the others, is anonymous, the author is identified as the beloved disciple (21:20, 23-24) and a close companion of Peter. Church tradition unanimously affirmed this to be the Apostle John, the brother of James. Five men with the same name of John are mentioned in the New Testament:
1. John the Baptist (Jn. 1:6, 15, 19, 26, and 29). He is eliminated because he was beheaded by Herod long before the events of the Gospel of John were completed (Mk. 6:24-29), and no writings are ever ascribed to him.
 2. John the father of Peter (1:42, though numerous texts read "Jonah") is not mentioned in any significant connection that might suggest that he was the author.
 3. John Mark (Acts 12:12). It has been concluded that he is the author of the second Gospel. The fact that the Gospel of John must have been written by an eyewitness eliminates John Mark as a possibility.
 4. John of the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-6). The only reference in Scripture to this man presents him as an enemy of Christianity, and the presentation of John is anything but hostile to the cause of Christ.
 5. John, the Beloved Apostle (Matt. 4:21; Jn. 21:20-25). Although disputed by more liberal scholarship, he is the most likely candidate for authorship.
- B. External evidence shows tradition was universal in confirming the authorship by the Apostle John. Irenaeus is the chief witness. His testimony is most important as he was a pupil of Polycarp, and Polycarp was a friend of the Apostle John. To this may be added the support of other Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen.

- C. Internally, the book reveals the author to be a Jew as evidenced by his use of the Old Testament (12:40; 13:18; 19:37), and with people, time, and numbers. His observation of minute details of events show evidence of an eyewitness. Finally, the statement of the author, “we beheld His glory” (1:14) must have been the report of one who was at the transfiguration (and also saw the resurrected Jesus). Peter is mentioned by name (1:41) and James was martyred by the time of composition. By the way John introduces himself (13:23 and 19:26) and in mentioning John the Baptist as simply “John,” the internal evidence strongly supports the authorship of the Apostle John.

Conclusion: Both external and internal evidence lead to the position that the apostle John authored the fourth Gospel.

II. Date of Writing

- A. The discovery in Egypt of a fragment of the Gospel of John (the John Ryland Fragment), which has been dated early in the second century, requires the writing of the book within the time of the first century.
- B. According to Christian tradition, John spent the latter years of his life at Ephesus, where he carried on a ministry of preaching and teaching, as well as writing. During the reign of the Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96), he was exiled to the Isle of Patmos where he penned the Revelation.
- C. His account of the life of Christ seems to presuppose a knowledge of the Synoptics and supports the proposition that John wrote to complement the other Gospels.
- D. Irenaeus says John wrote the Gospel from Ephesus during his residence there (c. A.D. 70–98). Most likely, the book was written c. A.D. 80–95.

III. Historical Background

- A. The origination of the book was probably Ephesus, although no definite reference is given. If John came to Ephesus around A.D. 70, then he would have ministered there for about 20 years before he wrote this Gospel.

- B. As to the destination of the book, almost twenty years has passed since the home-going of Peter and Paul (c. A.D. 64–66) and the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). It is quite probable that the elders of the Asian churches had requested that John write down the things he had been teaching before he died. He wrote to convince all that Jesus is the Son of God.
- C. The circumstances of the book relate, in part, to doctrinal heresies prevalent at the time. Gnosticism, with its dualism, dilemma of the origin of evil, and its mysticism, was in the incipient stage. The heresy seriously afflicted the church in the second century. Allusions to an early form of Gnosticism or docetism are evident in the writings of John. A growing John the Baptist cult (cf. Acts 19) may also have needed correcting.
- D. With the evidence of the Synoptic Gospels and with the eyewitness testimony of Jesus, no one was more qualified to present the divine picture of Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

IV. Reason for Writing

John states his purpose for writing in 20:30-31. He wrote in order to confirm that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God and to persuade persons to believe so that they might have life in His Name. Subordinate purposes include a polemic against docetism or incipient Gnosticism, a growing John the Baptist cult, and the exposure of Judaism as an inadequate system of religion that rejected its promised Messiah (1:11).

V. Characteristics

- A. The Gospel of John is both simple and profound in its presentation of Jesus Christ. It is amazingly clear and attractive to the beginning student and awesomely deep to the veteran scholar.
- B. The Father-Son relationship dominates the book as one of its most significant themes.
- C. The style and vocabulary of the book is simply and generally uncomplicated.

- D. The book records seven major miracles and seven major discourses or statements but no parables. Personal interviews are highlighted throughout.
- E. Eschatology focuses on judgment, resurrection, and eternal life.
- F. A prominent feature of the Gospel is the editorial comments of the author. Twenty-two such comments are found. Among them is revealed the national blindness of Israel as the major cause and result of the rejection of the Messiah.
- G. The prologue (1:1-18) of John is unique as the Son (the Word or *Logos*) is related to God and eternity as opposed to His earthly advent as presented in the Synoptics. In other words, John begins with a Christology “from above” (His deity), whereas the Synoptics start with a Christology “from below” (His humanity).
- H. John provides the most extensive treatment of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Trinity of any of the Gospels (chs 14-16).
- I. There are key differences between the Synoptic Gospels and John’s Gospel:
 - 1. John’s content is 92% unique; therefore, there is a material difference. John has more discourse than narrative, and is more philosophical/theological in tone than the Synoptics.
 - 2. John has few parables and nothing about the demonic. He speaks much on eternal life, the Holy Spirit, and the deity of Jesus. Therefore, there is a theological difference in emphasis.
 - 3. John majors on events in Judea (south), while the Synoptics focus on what happens in Galilee (north). Therefore, there is a geographical difference. John emphasizes Jesus’ ministry in the city to religious intellectuals, while the Synoptics emphasize His country ministry to the common people.
 - 4. John alone records for us three or four Passovers. He is our only information concerning the approximate length of

Christ's public ministry (two–five years, probably 3 ½ years). Therefore, there is a chronological difference.

5. John builds his Gospel on seven key miracles and is more thematic in arrangement than are the Synoptics. Therefore, there is a structural difference.

THE “I AM” STATEMENTS OF JOHN’S GOSPEL

Twenty-three total times we find our Lord’s meaningful “I am” (Gk. *ego eimi*) in this Gospel (4:26; 6:20, 35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1, 5; 18:5, 6, 8). In seven of these He joins His “I am” with seven tremendous metaphors that are expressive of His saving relationship toward the world.

1. “I AM the Bread of Life” (6:35, 41, 48, 51)
2. “I AM the Light of the World” (8:12)
3. “I AM the Door of the Sheep” (10:7, 9)
4. “I AM the Good Shepherd” (10:11, 14)
5. “I AM the Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. “I AM the Way, the Truth, the Life (14:6)
7. “I AM the True Vine” (15:1, 5)

In John 8:58 there is something of a climax as His “I AM” declaration echoes Exodus 3:14 and is a clear and overt declaration of His deity.

THE GREATEST VERSE IN THE BIBLE (JOHN 3:16)

- I. **God** is the greatest provider (Rom. 5:8)
- II. **So loved** is the greatest passion (I John 4:10)
- III. **The world** is the greatest possibility (I John 2:2)
- IV. **That He gave** is the greatest proof (Rom. 8:32)
- V. **His only begotten Son** is the greatest present (Gal. 4:4-6)
- VI. **That whosoever** is the greatest privilege (Rom. 10:13)
- VII. **Believes** is the greatest path (Rom. 10:9-10)
- VIII. **In Him** is the greatest Person (II Cor. 5:21)
- IX. **Should not perish** is the greatest promise (Rom. 6:23)
- X. **But** is the greatest parting (Eph. 2:4-7)
- XI. **Have** is the greatest peace (Rom. 5:1)
- XII. **Everlasting Life** is the greatest possession (I John 5:13)