

INTRO TO JOHN

- Author
- Date, Place of Writing
- Purpose for Writing
- Differences from Synoptic Gospels
- Themes, Recurring Words/Phrases

Author:

- Not identified by name, but references point to John (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20)
 - “The disciple whom Jesus loved”
- Identified as one of the apostles closest to Jesus:
 - Eyewitness of the life/ministry of Jesus (13:23-24; 18:15-16; 19:25-27; 20:2-8; 21:7)
 - Peter, James or John likeliest candidates
 - Peter is ruled out in 21:20
 - James was killed before the book was written
 - John apparently sat closest to Jesus at meals
- Seems to have insightful knowledge of Jesus’ thoughts throughout the gospel
- Author is familiar with Jesus’ followers and associates and knows the background of casual contacts like Nicodemus (3:1) or Annas.
- Author is familiar with small details of the narrative:
 - Type of bread at feeding of 5000
 - Fragrance of the ointment Mary used
 - Specific time Judas left the Last Supper
- John’s authorship supported by Polycarp, one of his followers
- Possibility of John being a cousin to Jesus
 - Salome, wife of Zebedee, and Mary believed in some circles to be sisters
 - John designated as caretaker for Mary at crucifixion
- John lived longest among the disciples
- His early character could be described as zealous, however this zeal is often misguided:
 - One of the “Sons of Thunder” (Mk. 3:17)
 - Forbade the unknown exorcist (Lk. 9:49)
 - Called for fire on the Samaritans (Lk. 9:54)
 - Ambitious for position (Mk. 10:35; Mt. 20:20)
- His later character shows a much wiser, steadier individual:
 - Endured suffering with Peter in Jerusalem (Acts 3-4)
 - “Pillar” of the church in Jerusalem (Gal 2:9)
 - Wrote Revelation from Patmos (Rev. 1:9)

Date/Place of Writing:

- Scholars/critics estimate any time between 45 AD and middle of 2nd century
 - Later dates posed by scholars who say that the type of theological thinking present in the account didn’t arise until late in the 1st century and wasn’t put into writing until approx. 150 AD
 - No mention of the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) in the gospel
 - General speculation seems to place writing around 80-90
- Rylands papyrus (P-52) dates back to 125 AD in Egypt.
 - Allowing time for travel/transcription, date most likely earlier.
- Tradition holds that John writes from Ephesus.
- Although he was exiled to Patmos (where he wrote Revelation), John later took up residence in Ephesus.
 - *Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who*

also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia. – Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1

- If this timeline is the case, it is interesting to note that John's gospel account was written after Revelation. Imagine his frame of reference at that point!

Purpose for Writing:

- The book of John is the only gospel account that directly states the reason it is being written:
 - 20:30-31 – “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”
- “John believes that the Jesus you read about in this book is alive and real and that He can change your life forever.”
 - Through “signs” – Revelation of God through teaching/miracles. Each is chosen to prove the deity of Jesus.
 - For belief – Reaction that the signs are designed to evoke. Present continuous tense – “that you may go on believing”
 - Resulting in life – The desired outcome of belief. The “abundant life” of a Christian and “eternal life” in heaven.
- In the immediate sense, the gospel may have been written to meet the spiritual needs of a church that had little background in the OT and that may have been challenged by false doctrine and secular philosophy.
 - Certain doctrines came about during the early days of the church that taught that Jesus didn't come in the flesh and/or that He was not fully God.
 - Docetism – The idea that Jesus was a spirit that merely looked like a man
 - Cerinthianism – The idea that the man, Jesus, was possessed by the spirit, Christ, at the point of baptism. This spirit then departed prior to Jesus' death on the cross.

Differences from Synoptic Gospels:

- “Synoptic”- *syn*, “same”, *optic*, “sight”
 - Although Matthew, Mark and Luke all have different points of emphasis, each of the three is similar to one another in terms of the events portrayed and the style used to carry out the narrative.
- Differences in emphasis:
 - Matthew is written to Jewish audience. Genealogy begins with Abraham. Lots of OT quotes. Emphasis on the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - Mark is written to Roman audience. Action filled. Emphasis on power & authority.
 - Luke is written to Greek audience. Historical and academic in nature. Genealogy begins with Adam. Emphasis on Jesus' humanity and interaction with common folks.
 - The specific audience for John is unclear. John's purpose seems to be to focus less on what Jesus did, and more on who/what He was and what our reaction to Him is based on our belief/unbelief.
 - As a result, some speculate that John wrote for us all and that his account is a universal gospel.
 - Since John wrote much later than the other gospel writers, it's possible that he writes to a later generation of Christians who are far removed from the events he describes.
- John, omits certain events:
 - Birth, Baptism, Temptation, Casting Out Demons, Parables, Transfiguration, Last Supper, Gethsemane, Ascension
- And adds certain events:
 - Simultaneous ministry with John the Baptist
 - Information on the duration of Jesus' ministry, based on feast days
 - Additional miracles (signs, as they are known here)
 - Additional events (washing Peter's feet)
 - Additional people (Nicodemus, Thomas)

- Additional discourses (instead of parables)
- Teaching about the role of the Apostles
- While the synoptics place much emphasis on Jesus' Galilean ministry, John spends most of his time focusing on events in the south, around Jerusalem/Judea
 - John focuses on the events surrounding the feast days for which the Jews (and thus, Jesus) would have traveled to Jerusalem

Themes, Points of Emphasis, Recurring Ideas

- The deity of Jesus (Jesus is God)
 - The gospel is tailored to highlight the various ways that Jesus' ministry points to this fact.
 - "Logos" (will, word) of God
 - 1:1, 14 – "In the beginning was the Word"
 - 17:6, 14, 17 – "I have given them Your word... Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth"
 - "Logos" is used in many places to convey speech, communication. John applies the word to Jesus to connect Him with the will/person of God.
 - God in the Flesh
 - 1:14, 18 – "The word became flesh and dwelt among us"
 - 6:38 – "I have come down from heaven..."
 - 20:27 – "Put your finger here and observe My hands..."
 - Jesus is fully God and fully man. He was not a spirit or apparition. He dwelled among His creation as a part of His creation so that He could give Himself for His creation.
 - Son of the Father
 - 1:18 – "The One and Only Son... He has revealed [the Father]"
 - 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son."
 - 5:37 – "The Father who sent Me has testified about Me"
 - 6:32-46; 8:16-41; 10:29-38; 12:27-32, 44-50; 14:7-14; 15:23-24; 16:32; 17:1-26; 20:17, 21
 - Jesus, the Son, came to do the will of the Father, perfectly exemplifying man's creation "in the image of God."
 - Witnesses to the deity of Jesus:
 - Himself ("I AM")
 - 23 "I am" statements throughout the gospel
 - 7 are paired with metaphors that underline who Jesus is:
 - Bread of life (6:35)
 - Light of the world (8:12)
 - Door of the sheep (10: 7, 9)
 - Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
 - Resurrection and Life (11:25)
 - The Way, the Truth and the Life (14:6)
 - True Vine (15:1, 5)
 - Witnesses/Disciples
 - John himself (John 19:35; 20:31; 21:24)
 - John the Baptizer (John 1:6-27, 29-36)
 - Andrew (John 1:40-42)
 - Philip (John 1:43-45)
 - Nathanael (John 1:46-51)
 - Nicodemus (John 3:2)
 - Woman of Samaria (John 4:28-29)
 - The Samaritans (John 4:39-42)
 - The man healed from 38-year infirmity (John 5:5-16)
 - Peter (John 6:66-69)

- The Officers sent from the Sanhedrin (John 7:32, 45-47)
- The man healed who had been born blind (9:1-41)
- Martha (11:27)
- Pilate (John 18:38; 19:4, 6)
- Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38-42)
- Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18)
- The disciples (John 20:19-25)
- Thomas (John 20:26-29)
- Divine Beings
 - The Holy Spirit in OT prophecy (12:37-41)
 - God Himself (9:30-33)
 - Angels (20:11-13)
- OT Types/Antitypes
 - Serpent in the wilderness (3:14-15 → Num 21:5-9)
 - Manna in the wilderness (6:32-35 → Exod. 16:14-15)
 - Jacob's ladder (1:51 → Gen. 28:10-17)
- Miracles
 - Referred to as "signs"
 - Signs are referenced throughout the book...
 - 2:23; 6:2; 11:47; 12:37; 20:30
 - ...but seven are specifically mentioned (five of which are not in the Synoptics)
 - Water to Wine (2:1-11)
 - Healing Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)
 - Healing Lame Man at Pool (5:1-13)
 - Feeding 5,000 (6:1-14)
 - Walking on Water (6:16-21)
 - Healing Man Born Blind (9:1-12)
 - Raising of Lazarus (11:1-46)
- Images of Jesus
 - Bread, Light, Life, Lamb, Water, Shepherd, King
- Personal relationships of Jesus to individuals
 - John highlights 27 personal interviews/conversations of Jesus with individuals
 - Main focus is not on preaching/teaching crowds, but relating to individuals
- Repeated words/phrases
 - Father (100+)
 - Believe (98)
 - Love (46)
 - Over 1/3 of the use of the word "love" in the NT is by John throughout his writings.
 - "My hour has not yet come" (6)
 - "The hour has come" (3)
 - Others:
 - Life, light, darkness, work, world, flesh, hour, truth, true, hate, receive, take away, send, beginning, know, glory, glorify, witness, abide