

The Gospel of John

Author

Internal evidence indicates that John the Apostle wrote the Gospel that bears his name. In John 21:20-27 the writer identifies himself as the “one who Jesus loved.” This person is readily accepted as John the Apostle. As an Apostle, John was one of the disciples in the inner circle (4:33; 9:2; 16:17). He was originally a fisherman (Matthew 4:21) and the first follower of John the Baptist (1:35,40). He was one of the two titled the “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). He was also the writer of the Book of Revelation.

The anti-Marcionite Prologue designates John as the writer. “John the apostle, whom the Lord Jesus loved very much, last of all wrote this gospel...” Irenaeus in 3.1 of his book *“Against Heresies”* stated that “John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, had himself published a Gospel during his residence in Ephesus in Asia.”

Recipients

Evidence indicates that the book was written to a gentile audience. John explained feast and customs that would have been unfamiliar to a gentile audience (2:13;4:9; 19:31). Worldwide verses such as 3:16, 10:16 and 12:32 suggest that John had a larger audience in mind than Judea. John’s heavy emphasis on the fleshly appearance and bodily resurrection of the Messiah (John 1:1-18; 20:27; 21:13) possibly indicates his attempt to address early stages of Gnosticism.

Place and Date

There have been several suggestions concerning the dating of John. Some argue for a dating of John around 85-95 AD. This comes from a suggestion by Eusebius (Ecclesiastical History, 3.24; 6.14.7)¹ that John wrote after the other three Gospel writers. Some hold this later date for John because of what they consider a more highly developed theology.

Some scholars suggest a date before 70AD. Their suggestion is due to the fact that John fails to mention the predicted fall of Jerusalem prevalent in the other gospels. However, this need not be conclusive as the 85-95 date has separation from the fall of Jerusalem. Since we have little evidence to isolate a date for John’s gospel it would be wise to refrain from any dogmatic statements concerning the timing of the gospel writing.

¹ “But, last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel. This is the account of Clement” (3.24)... “And when Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John, who had employed all his time in proclaiming the Gospel orally, finally proceeded to write for the following reason. The three Gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his own too, they say that he accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but that there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry. And this indeed is true.” (6.14.7)

Purpose

John clearly stated his purpose in John 20:31. *“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.”* First, John wrote in order that people may believe on the Lord Jesus for salvation. The verb tense for believe can be understood as not only beginning to believe but also that one may continue to believe. John wrote that his hearers may place a persistent faith in Christ whether they are beginning to believe or being challenged to continue.

This purpose may be expanded to other areas of purpose as well. John’s strong defense of the deity of Christ indicates purposeful writing to that end. His opening statements in 1:1,14 are supported by other passages such as Thomas’ confession in 20:28. This purposeful focus to demonstrate the deity of Christ is further supported by external evidence in the anti-marcionite prologue... *“the bishops of Asia having entreated him, against Cerinthus and other heretics, and especially standing against the dogma of the Ebionites there who asserted by the depravity of their stupidity, for thus they have the appellation Ebionites, that Christ, before he was born from Mary, neither existed nor was born before the ages from God the father.”*

Message

Jesus Christ is our Creator God in the flesh who empowers those that believe in him to become sons of God.

Theme

The Son of God

Outline of John

- I. Author's Initial Comments Concerning Jesus 1:1-18**
- II. Jesus' Ministry to the Public 1:19-12:50**
 - A. The Opening of Jesus' Ministry 1:19-2:11
 - 1. The Mission of John the Baptist 1:19-28
 - 2. John Identifies Jesus 1:29-34
 - 3. Andrew and Peter Follow Jesus 1:35-42
 - 4. Philip and Nathanael Follow Jesus 1:43-51
 - B. Jesus' Turns Water to Wine in Galilee 2:1-11
 - C. Jesus Ministry in Judea
 - 1. Jesus' Confrontation in the Temple 2:12-22
 - 2. Jesus Avoids Committing Himself to Jerusalem Believers 2:23-25
 - 3. Jesus' Conversation with Nicodemus 3:1-21
 - 4. John the Baptist's Testimony to His disciples 3:22-36
 - D. Jesus Ministry Tour Through Samaria into Galilee 4:1-44
 - 1. Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well 4:1-30
 - 2. The Harvest in Samaria 4:31-44
 - 3. Jesus Heals Royal Official's Son 4:45-54
 - E. Jesus' Second Visit to Jerusalem 5:1-47
 - 1. Jesus Heals Lame on Sabbath 5:1-9a
 - 2. Jesus' Confrontation With Jews over Healing 5:9b-47
 - F. Jesus' Third Ministry Tour in Galilee
 - 1. The Feeding of 5000 in Tiberias 6:1-15
 - 2. Jesus Walks on Water 6:16-21
 - 3. Jesus' Capernaum Message 6:22-71
 - a) Jesus' claim as the Bread of Life 6:22-40
 - b) The Jews Complaint of Jesus Claim 6:41-59
 - c) The Disciple's Departure over Jesus' Claim 6:60-71
 - G. Jesus' Third Visit to Jerusalem 7:1-10:42
 - 1. Jesus Attends the Feasts of Booths 7:1-53
 - a) Jesus' Private Attendance 7:1-13
 - b) Jesus' Midfeast Confrontation 7:14-36
 - c) Jesus' End of Feast Proclamation 7:37-39
 - d) The Public Response 7:40-8:1
 - 2. Jesus' Confrontation with the Temple Leaders 8:2-59
 - a) The Woman Caught in Adultery 8:2-11
 - b) Jesus Claim as Light of the World 8:12-59.
 - 3. Jesus Heals the Blind Man in the Temple
 - a) The Healing of the Blind Man 9:1-12
 - b) The Questioning of the Pharisees 9:13-34
 - c) The Healed Man's Faith 9:35-41
 - d) The Pharisee's Unbelief 9:39-41
 - 4. Jesus as the Good Shepherd 10:1-21
 - 5. Jesus Accused of Blasphemy 10:22-39

6. Belief Beyond the Jordan 10:40-42
- H. Jesus Ministry Surrounding Jerusalem 11-12
 1. Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead 11:1-54
 - a) Jesus' Delay to heal Lazarus 11:1-16
 - b) The Raising of Lazarus from the Dead 11:17-44
 - c) The Pharisee's Reaction 11:45-54
 2. The Plot to Seize Jesus 11:55-57
 3. Mary Anoints Jesus Feet 12:1-8
 4. Jews Continue Plot to Destroy Jesus 12:9-11
 5. The Open Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem 12:12-18
 6. Jews continue Plot to Destroy Jesus 12:19-22
 7. Jesus Anticipates Death 12:23-50

III. Jesus' Private Ministry to His Disciples 13:1-17:26

- A. The Last Supper 13:1-17:26
 1. Jesus' Lesson on Service through Foot-washing 13:1-17
 2. Jesus Reveals coming Betrayal 13:18-30
 3. Jesus Reveals His Departure 13:31-38
 4. Jesus Promises Continue Fellowship and Power 14:1-31.
 5. The Lord's Encouragement for Continued Faith and Love 15:1-17
 6. Jesus' Warning of Persecution upon His Departure 15:18-16:11
 7. Jesus Promises the Comforter 16:12-15
 8. The Effects of Jesus Departure 16:16-33
- B. Jesus' Prayer For His Disciples 17:1-26

IV. The Passion of Christ 18:1-21:23

- A. The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus 18:1-12
- B. The Trials 18:13-19:16
 1. Jesus Brought to Annas 18:13-15
 2. Peter's 1st Denial of Jesus 18:16-18
 3. Jesus Questioned by Annas and Caiaphas 18:19-24
 4. Peter's 2nd and 3rd Denial 18:25-27
 5. Pilate Questions and Pronounces Jesus Innocent 18:28-19:6
 6. Jews demand Jesus death 19:7-16
- C. The Crucifixion of Jesus 19:17-37
- D. The Burial of Jesus 19:38-42
- E. The Resurrection of Christ 20:10-31
 1. The Empty Tomb 20:1-10
 2. Jesus Appears to Mary 20:11-18
 3. Jesus Appears to the Ten 20:19-25
 4. Jesus Appears to Eleven 20:26-31
 5. Jesus' Invitation to Breakfast 21:1-14
 6. Jesus' Charge to Peter 21:15-23

V. Author's Final Comments Concerning Jesus 21:24-25.