

John 1:1-18

January 4, 2009 - Skip MacMillan

"In it the risen Christ still speaks. John is not so much The Gospel according to St. John; it is rather The Gospel according to the Holy Spirit. It is not John of Ephesus who wrote the Fourth Gospel; it was the Holy Spirit who wrote it through John" -Barclay.

1. Refresh

"**John**" means "the favor of God," "loved by God" or "YHWH is a gracious giver".

"**The disciple whom Jesus loved**".

Four times mentioned; never mentioning his own name. Arrogant or something else?

John was showing humility, deflecting all attention away from himself and onto Christ. In a sense he is saying, "it doesn't matter who I am; what matters is who He is."

He spent a lifetime grasping the eternal truth: "I am that disciple whom Jesus loves".

John said, that "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life" (1 John 1:1). John even heard the Savior's heartbeat as he leaned into Him at the Lord's Supper.

2. Uniqueness of the Gospel of John compared to the other three Gospels

Matthew has 42% unique material to its gospel.

Mark has 7% unique material.

Luke has 59% unique material.

John has 92% unique material.

Omits

Lineage as in Matthew.

Virgin birth narrative but begins from the eternal past, "In the beginning was the Word"

Jesus' baptism, temptations, transfiguration, Last Supper, Gethsemane and ascension.

Healing of people possessed by evil spirits and limited parables.

Includes

John's introduction of Jesus Christ as the Word; more philosophical.

Water turned into wine at the Marriage feast, Cana of Galilee (2:1-11); but similar to the multiplication of the bread and fish by the Sea of Galilee.

Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus (3:1-15).

The Samaritan woman and Jesus (4).

Raising of Lazarus (11).

Jesus washing the disciples' feet (13:1-17).

John tells us more about the Holy Spirit than the other Gospels (14-17).

The disciples come alive: Thomas speaks (11:16, 14:5, 20:14-29); Andrew speaks (1:40-41, 6:8-9, 12:22); Philip speaks (6:5-7, 14:8-9).

Jesus' prayer, "High Priestly Prayer;" John 17.

Less narrative and more discourse.

John focuses more on what Jesus says and the person, as opposed to what He did and events.

In the Gospel of John we learn that the ministry of Jesus was three years. Three Passovers are mentioned (2:13, 6:4, and the final Passover).

John has Jesus cleansing the Temple in chapter two as the beginning of His ministry. The other Gospels have this scene toward the end of his ministry (Jn. 2:13, Matt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:5-17; Lk. 19:45-46).

Jerusalem: the other Gospels focus on Jesus' ministry outside Jerusalem, mainly in Galilee. John's focus is on Jesus' ministry inside Jerusalem, making repeated visits (2:13, 5:1, 7:2, 10:22) and after chapter 10, Jesus doesn't leave Jerusalem.

High Christological doctrine.

The other three Gospels show Jesus' ministry after John the Baptist was arrested. John gives us a look into the life and ministry of Jesus prior to John's arrest.

"Mark, he says, suits the missionary with his clear-cut account of the facts of Jesus' life; Matthew suits the teacher with his systematic account of the teaching of Jesus; Luke suits the parish minister or priest with his wide sympathy and his picture of Jesus as the friend of all; but John is the gospel of the contemplative" -Barclay.

Why the difference?

1. The synoptic (view of seen together) Gospels were already written. John knew them and so did the church.
John moved beyond what was commonly known to what was not known.
Sharing his "insider view" making clear what Jesus meant by his words.
John supplements or complements the other Gospels.
2. The synoptic gospels present more of the human side of Jesus, John presents His divinity.
Matthew written to the Jews: Jesus as King.
Mark to the Romans: Jesus as Suffering Servant.
Luke to the Greeks: Jesus as the Son of Man.

John to the world: Jesus as the Son of God.
3. The synoptic gospels take a more historical view; John takes a more theological view of Christ (emphasis on eternal life, few parables and emphasis on vertical relationship).
4. Possibly a different audience, a more educated audience; one familiar with Christianity.

The Validity of the Gospel of John

Internal Evidence

1. "Witness"

John 19:35 - "the man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true."

John 21:24 - "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down."

1 John 1:1-3 - "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life".

2. The great details in the Gospel of John:

The loaves the boy brings for the feeding of thousands were "small barley loaves" (6:9).

The disciples "rowed three or three and a half miles" across the lake before seeing Jesus (6:19).

John knows there were four soldiers who gambled for the seamless robe (19:23).

John knows the weight of the myrrh and aloes used for Jesus' burial "about 75lbs" (19:39).

John smelled the perfume Mary poured on Jesus - "the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume" (12:3).

He knows Jerusalem: The sheepgate and pool near it (5:2), the pool of Siloam (9:7), Solomon's Porch (10:23), the brook of Kidron (18:1), the pavement called "Gabbatha" (19:13), and Golgotha (19:17).

Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. John writes as one who was there, who knew, who walked these streets. There is too much detail for John to have written long after AD 70.

External Evidence (Dating)

People

Irenaeus, Polycarp, Tertullian, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria all state John as the author; dating from AD 69 to 254.

Irenaeus (AD 130-200) was a disciple of Polycarp (AD 69-155) who was a disciple of John. Origen (AD 185-254), Tertullian (AD 160-225) and Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) all say John wrote the Gospel.

Muratorian Canon

The oldest extant list of New Testament writings, dating from the later 2nd century, includes John. It mentions all the NT books except Hebrews, James and 1 and 2 Peter (from The Concise Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church).

The John Ryland Papyrus

A fragment (2 ½ by 3 ½ inches) includes John 18:31-33, 37-38 (P52) dated AD 117-138.

Belongs to the John Ryland Library at Manchester, England.

Earliest-known fragment of any portion of the New Testament.

Found in Egypt, which is far from Ephesus (Asia Minor) where John wrote.

J.A.T. Robinson and L.L. Morris believe John was written AD 65.

Jesus Christ's resurrection estimated AD 33.

1. Compared to other ancient manuscripts

Plato who wrote in 400 BC but our earliest copy is AD 900 and with only seven copies.

Pliny, Aristotle, and Homer have 400 to 800 years between when they originally wrote and our first copy. Having anywhere from 2 to 643 copies.

New Testament, written AD 50-100, earliest fragment +/- 50 years; with 5,366 copies of Greek manuscripts (partial or complete) from early AD 100 to 1400's.

2. Dates Matthew, Mark and Luke even earlier than AD 65.

Most scholars believe John was written after the synoptic gospels.

If John was written around AD 65 then the other gospels were written even earlier.

Point: we have a faithful text.

Purpose of John

1. John 20:31 - "These are written that you (the beloved disciple of Christ) may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

2. John's goal as he grew old was that Christ would be elevated to his right place, Son of God.

Clement of Alexandria: "He became man in order to give a supreme revelation, and that through Him men might partake of immortality."