

A BRIEF
REVIEW
OF THE
GOSPEL
OF JOHN

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Published by Thusia Seventh Day Adventist Church

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1. Authorship. Who wrote this Gospel? The apostle John. Internal evidence for authorship of John.
 - a. The writer is a Jew who is familiar with Aramaic words. Jn. 1:38, 42; Jn. 19:13, 17; Jn. 5:2. [John follows this pattern elsewhere. Rev. 1:1, 2; Rev. 9:11; Rev. 16:16]. Jn. 9:7.
 - b. The writer was not a Jew of the Diaspora, but a Palestinian Jew who lived in that land and was quite familiar with Palestinian topography. Jn. 1:28; [Jn. 2:1, 12; Capernaum is down (slanting slope) from Cana]. Jn. 3:23; Jn. 11:54; [Even places in Jerusalem. Jn. 5:2; Jn. 11:18; Jn. 18:1; Jn. 8:2, 20; Jn. 10:22, 23].
 - c. The writer was an eyewitness who remembered when the events occurred, sometimes the exact hour. Jn. 1:29,35,39; Jn. 2:1; Jn. 4:6,40; Jn. 6:22; Jn. 7:2,14; Jn. 11:6; Jn. 12:1; Jn. 13:1,2.
 - d. The writer was a partaker of the events that occurred in the Gospel. [Jn. 18:15; Jn. 19:25-27; Jn. 20:1-10; Jn. 21:20-24].
 - e. The writer was one of the twelve apostles. [Jn. 13:21-26; Jn. 21:20, 24].
 - f. Two of John the Baptist disciples were told to follow Jesus, who were they? One was the writer of the fourth Gospel. Jn. 1:35-37.
 - g. It could not be Matthew, he wrote the first Gospel.
 - h. It could not be Judas he hanged himself.
 - i. It could not be obscure disciples like James the Less (son of Alphaeus), Simon the Zealot, Judas Thaddaeus. [See: Jn. 14:22].
 - j. It could not be Thomas (Didymus) whose name is also mentioned. [Jn. 20:26].
 - k. It could not be Nathanael (Bartholomew). Jn. 1:47-50.
 - l. It could not be Phillip who is also named. [Jn. 1:43, 45].
 - m. It could not be Andrew; he was one of the two of John the Baptist disciples. Jn. 1:37-40.
 - n. It could not be Simon Peter because Andrew his brother brought him to Jesus. Jn. 1:40-42.

- o. This leaves James and John the sons of Zebedee [Mk. 10:35]. But it could not be James, because he died quickly before a Gospel was written, and that leaves only one that survived him into old age – **JOHN**. Thus John wrote this Gospel. Jn. 21:20-25.

2. External evidences for the authorship of John.

- a. Early Christian witnesses, some of whom knew John, ascribed the Gospel to John the apostle as the writer.
 - i. “Before him Origen (fl. 210-250) stated that John, the beloved disciple, wrote both the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse. Origen wrote a Commentary on the former, in which he states:

“The Gospels then being four, I deem the first fruits of the Gospels to be that which you (Ambrosius) have commanded me to search into, according to my powers, the Gospel of John...” (*Commentary on John I, VI*). In the same paragraph he indicates that the author of the Fourth Gospel is that John “who lay on Jesus’ breast.”

From Origen we can go back still farther, to his teacher, Clement of Alexandria (fl. 190-200). He knows only one John; namely, the apostle. He definitely ascribes the Fourth Gospel to him, stating:

Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospels, being urged by his friends and inspired by the spirit, composed a spiritual gospel” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History VI, xiv, 7*). Clement has preserved a beautiful story about the aged apostle John; for reference see p. 31. Born in the middle of the second century, Clement stood close to the successors of the apostles. He was a person of considerable learning and had traveled widely.

About this same time Tertullian ascribes the Fourth Gospel to the apostle John (*Against Marcion IV, v*).

Now, Irenaeus, who had traveled from Asia Minor to Gaul and had frequent contacts with the church in Rome, not only was acquainted with the Fourth Gospel but definitely ascribed it to the apostle John. This testimony, coming from one who had been a pupil of a pupil of the apostle John cannot be robbed of its force. Moreover, because of his many travels and intimate acquaintance with almost the entire church of his day, what Irenaeus says about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel must be considered of great significance. His voice in a matter as important as this may be considered the voice of the church. His words, as reported by Eusebius, are: “Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even rested on his breast, himself also gave forth the gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia” (*Ecclesiastical History V, viii, 4*.)” **William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Gospel According to John, pg. 21-**

22.

Writing probably a few years earlier, Theophilus, who according to Eusebius was the sixth bishop of Antioch in Syria from the apostles, names John expressly as the inspired writer of the Fourth Gospel. His statement is:

“And hence the holy writings teach us, and all the inspired men, one of whom, John, says: ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God,’ showing that at first God was alone, and the Word in him” (*To Autolytus* II, xxii).

From the preceding a few facts become clear:

(1) Within the Orthodox Church there is a uniform tradition regarding the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. This tradition can be traced back from Eusebius at the beginning of the fourth century to Theophilus who flourished about 170-180.

(2) According to this uniform tradition the Fourth Gospel was written by John. Generally it is even made clear that this John was the apostle, the beloved disciple who reclined on Christ’s bosom. The major witnesses are Eusebius, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Ireneus, the writer of the Muratorian Canon, and Theophilus.

(3) Ireneus, one of the earliest of these witnesses, was a disciple of Polycarp, who, in turn, had been a disciple of the apostle John. The inference would seem to be legitimate that the tradition of apostolic authorship can thus be traced back to the disciple whom Jesus loved.

(4) Because of his wide travels and intimate acquaintance with the convictions of the entire Church Ireneus may be called a representative witness. He represents the faith of the whole Christian community. Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Ireneus, and Theophilus show us that in the last quarter of the second century the Fourth Gospel was known and read throughout Christendom: in Africa, Asia Minor, Italy Gaul, and Syria, and that it was ascribed to the well-known John.

(5) The external evidence derived from this uniform and very early tradition is in harmony with the internal evidence derived from the Fourth Gospel itself.” ***Ibid***, **pg. 24-25.**

3. **DATE**: When was the Gospel of John written?

- a. “The date for the Gospel of John was probably between A.D. 85 and A.D. 95.” **J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, pg. 267.**
- b. Additional claim of the late date.

- i. “For several years John lived in Ephesus. But sometime during the reign of Domitian, who ruled from 81-96, he was banished to the island of Patmos. With the accession of Nerva he was allowed to return to Ephesus, where he died at the beginning of Trajan’s reign; i.e., about the year 98.
- ii. Now tradition is well-nigh unanimous in maintaining that the place where the apostle wrote his Gospel was Ephesus (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III, xxiii, I, 6; V, viii, 4; xxiv, 4; Clement of Alexandria, *Who is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* XLII, ii). Repeated attempts also in recent literature, to discredit this strong tradition have not been successful.

The question, however, is this: Was the Fourth Gospel written before or after John’s banishment to Patmos? Was it composed earlier or later than the book of Revelation?

It would seem that *the earliest date* for its composition would be about the year 80. We base this upon the following considerations: Peter had received his inheritance, as 21:19 seems to imply; Paul, his crown. The latter nowhere mentions the work of the apostle John in Asia Minor. It is considered probable that the Synoptics had been written and that the author of the Fourth Gospel had read them. The Jews had become the confirmed enemies of the Church. The fall of Jerusalem is no longer mentioned, probably because several years had elapsed since it occurred.

On the other hand, *the latest possible date* for the composition of the Gospel is the year 98, if the testimony of Ireneus and Jerome is trustworthy.

The former states:

Then again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles (*Against Heresies* III, iii, 4).

The date, therefore, must lie between 80 and 98. Is it possible to be more definite and to determine the date more precisely? According to Epiphanius (fourth century) John did not write his Gospel until after his return from Patmos when he was more than ninety years of age.” **W. Hendriksen, N. T. C. Exposition of the Gospel According to John, pg. 29-30.**

4. Why was the Gospel of John written? What was his intention?

- a. He intended that we would receive Life through receiving evidence that Jesus was the Son of God. Jn. 20:30, 31; [See also 1 Jn. 5:5, 9-13, 20].
- b. John wrote his Gospel to expose the unbelief of the Jews. Jn. 1:11; Jn. 2:23-25; Jn. 4:39-44; Jn. 5:36-47; Jn. 6:64-68; Jn. 7:25-27, 44-53; Jn. 8:33-44, 48-59; Jn. 10:29-

39; Jn. 11:47-54; Jn. 19:4-8, 14-18.

- c. John wrote his Gospel to also deal with Gnosticism in its early form.
- i. “John also had other purposes in mind, subordinate but related to those mentioned above. One was to refute the heresy of Docetism, which denied the true humanity of Jesus (observe John’s “answer” in 1:14). Another was to expose the unbelief of Judaism (e.g., “He came to His own country, but His own people did not receive Him,” 1:11, TEV).” **Irving L. Jensen. Jensen’s Survey of the New Testament, pg. 180.**
 - ii. “Is it true that John wrote this Gospel in order to refute the errors of Cerinthus?

This heretic taught that Jesus was merely human, the son of Joseph and Mary by natural generation; that he was, however, more just and wise than anyone else; that at baptism the Christ in the form of a dove had descended upon him, but had left him again on the eve of his suffering so that it was not Christ who suffered, died, and rose again but Jesus (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I, xxvi, 1; Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies* VII, xxi).

Now Cerinthus lived in the days of the apostle. Irenaeus relates that there were those who had heard from Polycarp that John, the beloved disciple, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming: ‘Let us flee, lest even the bath-house fall down because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within’ (*Against Heresies* III, iii, 4,).

Irenaeus also definitely states that John seeks by the proclamation of the Gospel to remove the error which by Cerinthus had been disseminated among men. (*Against Heresies* III, xi, I).

It is entirely probable that the apostle in writing the Gospel had the error of Cerinthus in mind. Thus we can explain why he places such emphasis on the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that this Christ did not merely hover above Jesus without having ever entered into actual and abiding union with him, but actually assumed the human nature and never laid it aside again.” **W. Hendriksen, N. T. C. Exposition of the Gospel According to John, pg. 33, 34.**

5. The relationship of John’s Gospel to the Synoptics (Matt-hew, Mark and Luke).

“Was his purpose to *supplement* the Synoptics? This would seem to be implied in the statement of Clement of Alexandria, quoted earlier: the Gospel dealing with external matters had been written; now the deeper, spiritual background must be shown. Eusebius also defends this view, though in a somewhat different sense: John furnishes the record of the Early Judean Ministry, which the others do not give.

This theory presupposes that the apostle had read the Synoptics; at least, that he was

acquainted with their contents, which is probably correct. Thus one can explain why so much of the material that is found in the other three Gospels is omitted here. There is here no story of the childhood of Jesus, no genealogy, no lengthy account of the preaching of John the Baptist, no record of Christ's temptations in the desert, no Sermon on the Mount, no story of John's doubt, no parables, no discourse commissioning the twelve or the seventy, no narrative with respect to the casting out of demons or the healing of lepers, no Retirement Ministry (April-October of the year 29 A. D.), which according to the Synoptics included such events as the healing of the daughter of the Syro-phoenician woman, the healing of the deaf stammerer and of the blind man who saw men as trees walking, the feeding of the four thousand, Peter's confession, the transfiguration, and the healing of the epileptic boy; further, there is here no eschatological address, no discourse of woes addressed to the religious leaders, and no account of the institution of the Lord's Supper." **Ibid, pg. 31-32.**

- a. Thus John used the Synoptics to produce his Gospel, being careful not to follow them, but he put in details not recorded in the other Gospels.
- b. Proof that John expected his readers to be familiar with the other Gospels. He took for granted they must have known:
- c. About John the Baptist. [Jn. 3:24] See: Mk. 6:16.
- d. About Mary. [Jn. 11:2] See: Mk. 14:3-9.
- e. About Annas first. [Jn. 18:13] See: Matt. 26:57.

6. The proper divisions of John's Gospel.

- a. Jn. 1:1-18.
- b. Jn. 1:19-51.
- c. Jn. 2-12.
- d. Jn. 13-17.
- e. Jn. 18-20.
- f. Jn. 21.

7. Structural/topical divisions of John's Gospel.

- a. Jn. 1:1-18. Theological Introduction.
- b. Jn. 1:19-51. Historical Introduction.
- c. Jn. 2-12. The Book of Signs.

- d. Jn. 13-17. The Book of Discourses.
 - e. Jn. 18-20. The Death and Resurrection.
 - f. Jn. 21. Additional Epilogue.
8. The Gospel of John gives Jesus three and a half years [3 ½] of public ministry. Thus we see in four Passovers.
- a. Jn. 2:13.
 - b. Jn. 5:1.
 - c. Jn. 6:4.
 - d. Jn. 11:55.
9. The time covered by the chapters of the Gospel of John.
- a. Chapters 1-11 covers almost three and a half years. (See: Jn. 11:55 for the fourth Passover).
 - b. Chapter 12 covers six days before the final Passover and death of Jesus. Jn. 12:1.
 - c. Chapter 13-17 covers a few hours into Thursday night (probably from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.). See: Jn. 13:1-4; Jn. 18:1-6.
 - d. Chapter 18-19 covers from Thursday night to sunset Friday. Jn. 18:1-6; Jn. 19:40-42.
 - e. Chapter 20 covers a little over eight days. Jn. 20:1, 19, 26.
 - f. Chapter 21 covers an unknown period of time.
10. The Key verse in John's Gospel is. Jn. 20:28; (See: vs. 29-31 as they relate to vs. 28). See: also Jn. 1:1.
11. The Gospel of John presents three ministries of Jesus at different localities.
- a. The Samaritan Ministry. Jn. 4:4, 40.
 - b. The Galilean Ministry. Jn. 2:1, 12; Jn. 4:45, 46, 54; Jn. 6: 1, 24; Jn. 7:1, 9.
 - c. The Judean Ministry. Jn. 2:13,23; Jn. 5:1; Jn. 7:2,3,14; Jn. 8:1; Jn. 10:22,23; Jn. 11:7; Jn. 12:1,12.

12. John has certain Key and numerous theological words.
- a. They are: Believe, Know, Glorify, Light, Darkness, Love, Truth, Abide, Life, Witness, Testify, Word, Judgment, and Name.
 - b. The most frequent word is “Believe” used 98 times.
 - c. Example of the use of the word “Believe” Jn. 1:12; Jn. 11:25-27; Jn. 20:24-31. (Believe means, “put Faith in”).
 - d. The next most frequent theological word is “Know” which is used 55 times.
 - e. Example of the use of the word “Know”. Jn. 1:10; Jn. 21:24.
13. The Book of Signs in John’s Gospel has seven signs that proves Jesus to be the Son of God. They are:
- a. Changing water into wine. Jn. 2:1-11.
 - b. Healing an official’s son in Capernaum. Jn. 4:46-54.
 - c. Healing an invalid at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. Jn. 5:1-18.
 - d. Feeding the 5,000 near the Sea of Galilee. Jn. 6:5-14.
 - e. Walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee. Jn. 6:16-21.
 - f. Healing a blind man in Jerusalem. Jn. 9:1-7.
 - g. Raising dead Lazarus in Bethany. Jn. 11:38-54.
14. The seven “signs” which is John’s selection of Jesus’ many miracles were used to show Jesus manifesting His glory. Jn. 2:11; Jn. 11:3, 4, 39, 40; Jn. 20:30, 31.
15. By manifesting His glory, Jesus is claiming the glory of God in the Gospel of John. To claim such Glory Jesus has to be God, thus the Miracles are meant to be proof that Jesus is God, or “signs” of His glory or deity. [Jn. 2:11; Jn. 11:4, 40; Jn. 1:14; Jn. 5:22, 23; Jn. 17:5; Ex. 33:18, 19].
16. After His resurrection Jesus gave one more recorded “sign” of His deity to settle His disciples trust in Him. Jn. 21:1-7.
17. The Gospel of John has seven “I am’s”, and these are used by John to prove the deity of Jesus according to its usage in the First Witness. [Ex. 3:14; Jn. 8:58].
- a. I am the Bread of Life. Jn. 6:35.

- b. I am the Light of the world. Jn. 8:12.
- c. I am the Door for the sheep. Jn. 10:7, 9.
- d. I am the Good Shepherd. Jn. 10:11, 14.
- e. I am the Resurrection and the Life. Jn. 11:25.
- f. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jn. 14:6.
- g. I am the true Vine. Jn. 15:1, 5.

18. John's Gospel is a theologically emphatic book, much of the chapters are long theological discourses by Jesus Himself, and many are comments on certain events in His Life.

- a. Jn. 3:1-21.
- b. Jn. 4:1-26, 34-38.
- c. Jn. 5:17-47.
- d. Jn. 6:26-65.
- e. Jn. 8:12-58.
- f. Jn. 10:1-18.
- g. Jn. 10:25-38.
- h. Jn. 12:44-50.
- i. Jn. 14.
- j. Jn. 15.
- k. Jn. 16.

19. Even John the Baptist has theological commentary.

- a. Jn. 1:29-34.
- b. Jn. 3:25-36.

20. Jesus also had a long discourse with God in prayer. Jn. 17.

- a. He prays for Himself.
 - b. He prays for His disciples.
 - c. He prays for the church.
21. John's Gospel presents opposition to Jesus' person and work that increases into a plot to kill Him, and the achievement of that plot.
- a. Jn. 5:8-18.
 - b. Jn. 6:60-66.
 - c. Jn. 7:25, 26, 32, 40-44.
 - d. Jn. 8:39, 40, 58, 59.
 - e. Jn. 10:19, 20, 30-33, 39.
 - f. Jn. 11:43-54.
 - g. Jn. 18:3-5, 12.
 - h. Jn. 19:16, 17.
22. Why did the Jews seek to kill Jesus? John shows us that it was because He claimed to be Son of God, which is God. Jn. 5:18; Jn. 8:58, 59; Jn. 10:30-33, 38, 39; Jn. 19:6, 7.
23. The Gospel of John has numerical relationship to certain First Witness (O.T.) symbols.
- a. Seven times light is used to relate to the seven lampstands. (Jn. 1:4-9; Ex. 37:23).
 - b. Twelve times bread is used to relate to the twelve bread of presence, (shew bread). (Jn. 6:32, 33, 35, 41, 48, 50, 51, 58; Lev. 24:5).

THE END

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