

Gospel of John: *The Son of God*

A Gospel for Everyone.

John has been called "the single most influential book of the New Testament." "For many Christian people the Gospel according to St. John is the most precious book in the New Testament. It is the book on which above all they feed their minds and nourish their hearts, and in which they rest their souls"

This Gospel has the most "penetrating gaze" of all the New Testament writers. A. T. Robertson says it is "the Holy of Holies of the New Testament."

AUTHOR: The human author was a Jew of Palestine, and an eyewitness of what he describes. The author claims to be "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (21:20, 24). The book consists largely of personal experiences of the author with Christ. "One may note all through the book evidences of an eye-witness in the vivid details." The internal evidence of the Gospel points directly to the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee and Salome, as the author (Matt. 19:20; Lk. 19:54; Mk. 3:17; Jn. 13:25; 18:16; 19:26; 20:2; Acts 3:4; 4:7; Rev. 1:9). He was the younger brother of James, and came from a fairly well-to-do family (Mark 15:40-41). He was a leader in the early church (Acts 3:1; 8:14; Gal. 2:9). All of the external evidence from the first centuries support John, the son of Zebedee, as the author. No other New Testament book has stronger external evidence since there were no real questions of authorship of John in the early church. He also wrote the three Epistles of John and Revelation.

DATE: The majority of scholars date the Gospel of John in the last decade of the first century. Church tradition says John lived to an old age and to have died a natural death at Ephesus about A. D. 100. He was the last survivor of the apostolic group. The Gospel was probably written later than the three Synoptic Gospels, about A. D. 85-90. Three possible locations are suggested —Ephesus, Antioch, and Alexandria.

PURPOSE: The author clearly states his purpose of writing in John 20:30-31. He writes to win others to like faith in Christ. John's thesis is given in 1:1-18. This Gospel was written for everyone.

THEME: The deity of Jesus Christ is the theme of the book. The Divine Sonship of Jesus is set forth in John more than in anywhere else in the New Testament. Jesus is none other than "the only begotten of the Father" (1:14, 18). All of John's evidence points to this conclusion.

KEY VERSES: 20:30-31

KEY WORD: The key word is "believe" which is found 98 times in this Gospel.

STYLE: John writes for the thinking man. It is full of double meanings given in key words. He employs the language of the intellectuals of his time. The plan of this gospel is argumentative and not primarily biographical. A. T. Robertson wrote: "The language of the Fourth Gospel has the clarity of a spring, but we are not able to sound the bottom of the depths. Lucidity and profundity challenge and charm us as we linger over it." John uses quotes and allusions from the Old Testament. This Gospel contains more of Jesus' actual

over it." John uses quotes and allusions from the Old Testament. This Gospel contains more of Jesus' actual words than any of the other three gospels. John uses long discourses. He is a Jew who wrote in the Greek of his time.

OMISSIONS IN JOHN: (1) No genealogy is recorded in this Gospel. (2) No account of His birth is given because He was "in the beginning." (3) Nothing about His boyhood is recorded by John. (4) Nothing about His temptations are recorded by John because God cannot be tempted. (5) No transfiguration is specified. (6) There are no parables in John. (7) No account of the ascension is given, or (8) the great commission.

THEOLOGY OF JOHN: The Apostle John gives a clearer teaching about the Holy Spirit than any other gospel writer (14:26; 15:26; 16:7-14). The book is filled with Deity. The Deity of Christ is found in every chapter. "The Word (*logos*) becomes flesh." John uses titles to portray the deity of Christ: "the Word was God" (1:1), "the lamb of God" (1:29), "the Messiah" (1:41), "the Son of God" (1:49), "the King of Israel" (1:49), the "Savior of the world" (4:42), "Lord and . . . God" (20:28), "I Am" (4:24, 26; 6:35; 8:12, 24, 28, 58; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 14:6; 15:1, 5). The amazing thing is Satan and demons have almost no place in this Gospel (8:44; 12:31; 17:15). John does not record any demons being cast out. He treats themes such as the *logos*, love, life, light, truth, abiding in Christ, Spirit, world, lamb, wine, temple, the deity as well as the humanity of Jesus, etc. He traces a parallel development of faith and unbelief. One of the unifying themes in the Gospel is the growth of faith and development of unbelief.

GNOSTICISM: Although a fully developed Gnosticism did not come until mid second century the incipient teachings of the sect began early enough to effect the church at the end of the first century. John's opposition to the teachings of Cerinthus and Docetism is clear. Cerinthus held "that Jesus was a mere man upon whom the divine Spirit descended for a season and then left him." They "asserted that Christ did not exist before He was born of Mary and was not begotten of God that Father before all ages." The intense feelings were so high that Eusebius tells a story of John in a public bath house upon seeing Cerinthus ran out without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us flee lest the bath should fall in, as long as Cerinthus that enemy of truth is with in."

JOHN'S PORTRAIT OF JESUS: John has proven that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. Each picture of Jesus in the Four Gospels adds a personal touch of its own. When we bring the individual pictures together the features reveal the same person, the God-Man Jesus Christ. John, as does each of the Gospel writers, selects events and teachings from the life of Christ to fulfill his purpose in writing. "Each Gospel to a certain extent has coloring of the author in reporting the life and teachings of Jesus. But each Gospel preserves an accurate and vivid picture of Christ. We need all four pictures including that of John's Gospel for the whole view of Christ." In his own personal way the aged Apostle John supplements the narratives of the Synoptic Gospels with personal recollections. The Synoptics give mainly the Galilean, Perea and Judean ministry, but John adds a considerable Jerusalem ministry which is really demanded by allusions in the Synoptics. Ninety per cent of the material in the Fourth Gospel is unique, having no counterpart in the others. This Gospel contains a framework of history that is wanting in the Synoptics. Without John we would not know the length of Jesus' ministry.

Title: Introduction to Gospel of John
Series: A Look at the Book

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