

# The Gospel of John

## Who Wrote It:

Although the author is not named, and only refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved/the disciple whom Jesus kept on loving” (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20:20, 21:24), John son of Zebedee (one of the 12 disciples [Mark 3:17; Acts 1:13]), is the likely author, as he was part of Jesus’ most-inner circle (Peter, James, and John), and he and Peter appear with Jesus more than any other individuals. There is even some evidence that he was a cousin of Jesus (through their mothers), which would explain why at His crucifixion Jesus entrusts his mother, Mary, to John (Jn 19:25).

The writing style is consistent with 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> John, and Revelation, indicating that the same author wrote all five works. And, John names himself as the author of Revelation (Rev 1:4).

Additionally, the earliest of church fathers/theologians named John as the author of the gospel: Irenaeus, Polycarp, Eusebius, Polycrates, Clement of Alexandria, and the Latin Muratorian Canon.

## When Was It Written:

Between 62-70AD.

Clement of Rome testified that John’s Gospel was the last of the four to be written. This makes sense, as Matthew, Mark, and Luke show signs that they consulted with each other, yet nothing in them reveals that they had any knowledge of John’s text. The latest possible date for the other 3 gospels is Luke, which had to have been written by 62 AD.

However, like the other 3 gospels, John makes no indication that Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed, which occurred in 70AD. This is true, despite Jesus’s prediction that that the Temple would be destroyed, mentioned in the other gospel (Matt 24; Mrk 13; and Lk 21). If these had already be written before John’s Gospel, but he was writing after 70AD, then why didn’t he make mention that Jesus’ prediction had come true? Therefore, it is likely that John wrote after Luke’s gospel was finished (62AD), but before Jerusalem and the Temple was destroyed by the Romans (70 AD).

## Why Did He Write It:

So that his reader “*may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*” (Jn 20:31). As such, although there are other miracles that Jesus did, mentioned in the other 3 gospels (Jn 20:30), John specifically chose the ones that he did for that point and purpose.

## Audience:

Jews and Gentiles alike. Although he does make some assumptions that his reader will have some previous knowledge of Jesus and the people surrounding His stories:

- He doesn’t refer to John the Baptist with “the baptist” moniker, just “John” (Jn 1:19-34).
- His opening (John 1) is analogous to the Creation account (Genesis 1).

## Theme(s):

Jesus Christ is God, the Son of the Father; and, through believing in Him, you can have eternal life.

## Basic Outline:

Prologue – John 1:1-18

Introduction – John 1:19-12:50

Works and Words of Jesus, the Christ – John 2-12

The Farewell Discourse (Final Teachings) – John 13-16

Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer – John 17

Arrest and Trial – John 18

Death – John 19

### Interesting Passages/Theological Truths:

#### 1) Jesus as the Word (*Logos*) (John 1):

The Gospel of John, the fourth book of the New Testament begins like this:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it – Jn 1:1-5*

Anyone familiar with the creation account will instantly notice the parallel John is making with creation account in Genesis. Declaring “*In the beginning...*”, he wants to take his reader all the way back to before time; and does so by using the exact same verbiage God does, as He expressed the account to Moses. But John does something different. Whereas the reader is ready for the next words to be “*...God made the heavens and the earth,*” John suddenly says, “*...was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*”

John is immediately establishing the fact that God didn’t just create everything by His words, His Word is God Himself. Further, everything that has been made has been made through Him (Col 1:16-17), and life itself dwells within Him (Jn 1:3-4).

As he continues, John suddenly declares, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*” (Jn 1:14 & 17). Now to the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish reader, John just did two reprehensible things: he equated this person he is talking about to the glory of God, and supplanted the Law (the Ten Commandments, Torah, and all the Old Testament); and, he says that this person was Jesus.

John concludes his point by declaring, “*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known* (Jn 1:18).” If he stepped on the reader’s toes with verse 17, John just slapped them in the face with verse 18. A Jewish reader would wholeheartedly maintain that no one has seen the God’s face—In fact, Moses (whom they considered one of the “Fathers” of their faith) asked to see God’s glory, and God only gave him a glimpse of His back (Exod 33:18-23), and Isaiah, whom God appeared to, declared, “*Woe to me! For I am lost* (dead; ‘my life is lost’); *for I am a man of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts* (Isa 6:5)!” Yet, for John, as God, Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to the world, and to see Jesus is to see God’s glory.

#### 2) The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11):

In the earliest days of Jesus’ ministry, he attends a wedding in Cana, when the wine unexpectedly runs out. Taking six “purification jars” (used to purify someone of their sins), He turns water into wine.

The night of his arrest, Jesus sits down to observe the Passover meal with his disciples. Remember what He equated the wine as? His blood:

*In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” – Lk 22:20*

So, at Cana, Jesus turns water in purification jars into wine; and, then in instilling the Lord’s Supper, He equates wine to His blood. Now, recall now what happened on the cross:

*But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. – Jn 19:33-34*

At the cross, Jesus' blood comes as both blood *and* water. Why? Because, by His death, Jesus' blood is now the water of purification, which removes our uncleanness before God.

Cana: Water ☒ Wine

Lord's Supper: Wine = Blood

Cross: Blood ☒ Water

By His death, Jesus made the living water that He is accessible to all made unclean by their sin. And, everyone who is cleansed by this water is clean forever. Even more so, they themselves become springs of this living water from which others can drink of, as well (John 4:10-14, esp. v. 14).

### 3) Seven "I AM" statements:

*"I am the bread of life"* (Jn 6:35, 41, 48, 51).

*"I am the light of the world"* (Jn 8:12, 9:5).

*"I am the door"* (Jn 10:7, 9).

*"I am the good shepherd"* (John 10:11, 14).

*"I am the resurrection and the life"* (Jn 11:25).

*"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6).

*"I am the true vine"* (John 15:1, 5).

Confronted by the Jews, in John 8, Jesus declares, "...before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58). Upon this declaration, the crowd picks up stones to throw at Jesus (8:59). Why?

Recall God's response to Moses, when he asked God His name—"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'" (Exodus 3:14). Which is to say, "I am who I am; I am who I was; and, I am who I will be."

So, when Jesus says, "I am," He was declaring to the people that He is/was God. He is greater than the Jewish Fathers of the Faith—Abraham & Moses—because He is simultaneously the one they knew, and the one they awaited for:

*"Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."*

Coupling Jesus' declaration that He is God (John 8:58) with His seven "I am" statements, John is demonstrating that as God, Jesus is the Creator, Provider, Sustainer of Life, our Good Shepherd who comforts, guides and disciplines, the Truth, and the only way to salvation and eternal life.

### 4) The Farewell Discourse (John 14-16):

In the evening before His arrest, Jesus is observing the Passover meal with His disciples. The Passover meal has its own set of rituals, each moment having its own special meaning and significance. Yet, in the midst of the time, Jesus begins to give His disciples His final teachings...new teachings that seem so unfathomable that they never truly understand them until they happen, 50 days from now.

The Jews understood that a person could have one of 3 types of relationships with God:

- God or you = You choose self over God.
- God and you = You live in right relationship with God.
- God with you = Above and beyond God & you, God's favor was specifically upon you.
  - *"The LORD was **with** Joseph..."* (Gen 39:2, 3, 21, 23)
  - *"But the LORD was **with** Joshua..."* (Josh 6:27)
  - *"And Samuel grew, and the LORD was **with** him..."* (1 Samuel 3:19)
  - *"And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was **with** him"* (1 Sam 18:14, cf. 18:12, 28)

For the Lord to be **with** you was truly a dream come true. Most Jews were content to avoid having a God *or* you relationship with God. It was enough to just have a God *and* you relationship. God *with* you was so unlikely to happen, that for most Jews it seemed like an impossible reality to ever happen to them.

And then, right after the Passover meal, while walking to Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus begins to speak to the disciples about what will be accomplished through His death and resurrection. And

above-and-beyond a God *with* us relationship, Jesus begins to speak of an ever more magnanimous and spectacular reality: God **in** us:

- *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father”* (Jn 14:12).
- *“...I will ask the Father, and he will you another Helper, to be **with** you forever, even the Spirit of truth...You know him, for he dwells **with** you and will be **in** you”* (Jn 14:16-17).
- *“In that day you will know that I am **in** my Father, and you **in** me, and I **in** you”* (Jn 14:20).
- *“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was **with** you. But now I am going to him who sent me...Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you”* (Jn 16:5-6).
- *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you”* (Jn 16:13-15).

The kind of relationship that Jesus is talking about here was unfathomable to the disciples. The idea of God’s Spirit coming to live **in** them was truly astonishing, as evidenced by their responses to each other: *“What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about”* (Jn 16:18).

And yet, what He prays for next is even more astounding.

### 5) Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer (John 17):

After saying these things, somewhere either on the way or inside the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays the most amazing things. It is known as Jesus’s High Priestly Prayer, as it is the time where just like the High Priest stood between the people of Israel and God, so that He might intercede on the people’s behalf, and through sacrifice the people’s sins would be forgiven, Jesus is stepping between us and God, and interceding for us, as both our priest *and* our sacrifice.

In this prayer Jesus prays some amazing things for us:

1. That we would share in the very same relationship that the Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit) has with Himself:
  - *“...keep them in your name, which you have given men, that they may be one, even as we are one”* (Jn 17:11b).
  - *“I do not ask for these (current disciples) only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word (all believers through the centuries), that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us...”* (Jn 17:20-21a).
2. That God’s glory, the very glory that existed between the Father, Son and Spirit before the Creation of the universe, would be **in** us.
  - *“The glory that you have given me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me”* (Jn 17:22-23).

Noted in Point #1, Moses only got to see God’s back, because if any man saw His glory, he would die; and, Isaiah declared that he knows he is about to die, because He has seen God in His fullness. Additionally, because God’s glory dwelt in Ark of the Covenant, Uzzah *did* die when he touched it (2 Sam 6:7), and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies without dying.

Yet, John and the writer of Hebrews tell us that to see Jesus is to see God’s glory (Jn 1:18; Hebrews 1:3); and, to be in relationship with Jesus is to have that very same glory live **in** you (Jn 17:20-23).

### 6) John and *shalom* (Thematic throughout his gospel, but focused here on John 17:23 & 19:30):

For the Hebrew, in the Garden (Gen 3), the *shalom* (wholeness) of Creation was broken: 1) Between us and God; 2) Within us; 3) Between each other; and, 4) Creation itself. The Messiah—the promised see of Eve (Gen 3:15)—would come and restore what was broken in the Garden (Mark 5:34; Luke 1:79, 2:14). My

favorite is when Jesus calms the storm—As it rages, nearly drowning everyone on board, what does Jesus say to it, “Peace! Be still/quiet” (Mark 4:39). Jesus spoke shalom over the storm, and it was at peace.

*Shalom* in the Old Testament is expressed in the New Testament through *Eiréné* & *Teleioó*.

In John 17 prays that we would be one with the Trinity so that we might have *shalom*:

“...I in them and you in me, that they become perfectly one (*teteleiōmenoi* – complete wholeness)—that they may become completely whole, completely “shalomed” (17:23).

שלם  
*Shalom*  
“Peace/  
Wholeness”

εἰρήνη  
*Eiréné*  
“Peace”

Τελειόω  
*Teleiōó*  
“Complete/Fulfill/  
Make Whole”

What were Jesus’ final words on the cross, before He “...bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (Jn 19:30)? *Tetelestai*. Literally, “It is made whole.” “It is **shalomed**.”