

Subject: *Know Your Bible – Part 15*

Scripture: *John 1:1-18*

Charles Spurgeon said: “You may study, look, and meditate, but Jesus is a greater Savior than you think He is, even when your thoughts are at their highest.”

Gospel of John: Writer and Date

- The writer was a Jew. He understood and quoted from the Old Testament (Jn. 12:39-40; 13:18; 19:37). His knowledge of Jewish religious feasts was very natural (2:23; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 10:22; 13:1). He was aware of details of Jewish customs: wedding feasts (2:1-10); ceremonial purification (3:25; 11:55); manner of burial (11:38, 44; 19:40); differences between Jews and Samaritans (4:9, 20).
- The writer was obviously an eyewitness of many events in Jesus’ ministry (Jn. 1:14; 2:6, 11; 12:5; 19:33-35; 21:8, 11).
- Though not mentioned by name, the Apostle John is regarded as the writer of this gospel. Early church tradition identified him as the writer and there are significant internal characteristics that confirm his authorship. While the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) frequently identify John by name, he is not mentioned by name at all in this gospel. The author instead identifies himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). John was the last of the apostles to die, and according to tradition, the only apostle to escape a martyr’s death.
- John was the brother of James and both were known as “the sons of Zebedee” (Mt. 10:2-4). Jesus nicknamed them “sons of thunder” (Mk. 3:17), perhaps because they were full of prejudice and vengeance (Lk. 9:49-56). John was one of three inner-circle disciples of Jesus (along with Peter and James). These three men were with Christ at the raising of Jairus’ daughter, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- John wrote a total of five books included in the New Testament (Gospel of John, three Epistles of John, and Revelation). John’s gospel and three epistles have a similar style and vocabulary. The gospel and Revelation both refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God.
- John wrote this gospel from Ephesus between 85-95 AD, some 20 years after the other gospels were written. John came to Ephesus around 70 AD and died there around 100 AD. Here at Ephesus he wrote four of his New Testament books. Revelation was written on the Island of Patmos during his brief exile. John’s five books were the last New Testament books written.

Unique Features of John

- John offered a unique perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called “synoptic gospels” (from Greek, “to see together”). While John could have drawn upon the other three gospels, he instead recorded many of Christ’s words and works that are not found in these gospels. Over 90% of John’s content is found exclusively in this gospel. Of the eight recorded miracles in John only two are found in another gospel (feeding of the 5,000 and walking on the water).

- John included no parables, although Jesus' used them often in His teaching.
- John probably wrote his gospel for Gentiles because the various feasts and locations are described for the readers.
- John stressed the true identity of Christ as the God-man to counter the false teachings of his day. Christ had both a divine and human nature united in one person.
- John emphasized the subordinate role of John the Baptist in relation to Christ (Jn. 1:6-8, 15, 19-37; 3:25-36; 5:33-35; 10:40-42; compare Acts 19:1-7).
- John used the word believe about 100 times (twice as much as the other gospels). For this reason John has been called "The Gospel of Belief."
- John drew a sharp contrast between those who received Christ by faith and those who rejected Him (Jn. 1:10-13; 12:1-11). The gospel of John has been summarized in this way: God's revelation of Christ (signs and sermons) demands a response (belief or unbelief), producing a result (eternal life or death).
- John began this gospel with Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem as the eternal Word and Creator of all things. One of the unique features of this gospel is the prologue (Jn. 1:1-18) which portrays the incarnation of Christ as the eternal Word and expression of God's glory to men.
- John wrote in a clear and simple style, but his truths are profound. John is the most theological and doctrinal of the four gospels.
- John included a statement of purpose in writing this gospel (Jn. 20:30-31).
- John selected eight miracles that prove Jesus to be God's Son. He used the specific word "signs" to indicate that these are miracles with a message. Sometimes the message preceded the miracle (Jn. 11, statement on the resurrection and the life followed by the raising of Lazarus). At other times the miracle preceded the message (Jn. 6, feeding of the 5,000 followed by the sermon on the bread of life). Seven of these miracles led up to Christ's resurrection and one followed it.

Miracles (Signs) of Jesus in the Gospel of John:

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| 1) Water turned into wine (Jn. 2:1-11) | Jesus is the source of life |
| 2) Nobleman's son healed (4:46-54) | Jesus is master over distance |
| 3) Impotent man healed (5:1-9) | Jesus is master over time |
| 4) Feeding of the 5,000 (6:5-14) | Jesus is the bread of life |
| 5) Walking on the water (6:16-21) | Jesus is master over nature |
| 6) Healing of the man born blind (9:1-7) | Jesus is the light of the world |
| 7) Lazarus raised from the dead (11:38-44) | Jesus is master over death |
| 8) Miraculous catch of fish (21:1-11) | Jesus is master over human failure |

- John recorded eight statements that reveal Christ's identity and ministry. Christ used the expression "I am" as evidence of His deity. God revealed Himself as "I AM" to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Jesus therefore claimed to be the eternal, self-existent God.

"I am" Statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John:

- 1) I am the bread of life (Jn. 6:35, 48)
- 2) I am the light of the world (8:12)
- 3) Before Abraham was, I am (8:58)
- 4) I am the door of the sheep (10:7, 9)
- 5) I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14)
- 6) I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)
- 7) I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)
- 8) I am the true vine (15:1, 5)

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