***Providence Bible Church***

**New Testament Survey**

October 29th, 2023

A Study Paradigm for the Gospel of John

1. **The *human* Writer & *original* Recipients**

**Who wrote the Gospel?**

**'No verse in this Gospel records the name of the author. However, the traditional view that the author was John the Apostle has very early support** … the evidence strongly supports John as the author.' Benware, p.116

Several factors that support this can be observed in the Gospel itself:

* **the author was Jewish**

**T**he author of this Gospel was almost certainly Jewish. He is not only **familiar with Jewish language, traditions, and ways, he frequently explains them.**

* **he was from Palestine**

'… the author was a Palestinian Jew who clearly possessed a knowledge of Jewish customs, Jewish history and Palestinian geography.' Benware

**The author of this Gospel was almost certainly a native of** Palestine. Often, **when he introduces the readers to a new place, he takes the opportunity to describe it (John 11:18, John 1:28, John 1:44, John 4:47).**

* **he was an Apostle**

He was almost certainly an Apostle. **He includes private details about interactions among the Apostles** – a witness of the utmost reliability. (John 19:34–35, John 21:24)

* **he was an eyewitness**

**'The author was clearly an eyewitness of the ministry of Christ** … of the glory of the Lord Jesus (1:14) …

'… the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and **we saw His glory**, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:14).

the crucifixion (19:35) … **the author gave the kind of detail that only an eyewitness could have made**.' Benware, pp.116-117

* **he was intense**

'… the author was, by nature and temperament, **ardent, impulsive, vehement**. The **intensity** of his nature has been **tamed by age**, experience, or grace, or the three combined; but the indications of his native character crop out in occasional utterances.' Whedon

* **he was 'the disciple whom Jesus loved**.'

**The author of this Gospel identifies himself only as 'the disciple whom Jesus** (John 13:23–25, John 19:25–27, John 20:2, John 21:7, John 21:20) **because he stood, even after all these years, astonished at that simple fact that Jesus loved *even* him. How could he possibly take any glory from Him by naming himself in so glorious a testimony.**

**Who was John the Apostle?**

'… John was **a disciple of John the Baptist before he began to follow Christ** (1:40) … he was selected along with seven others … as [Christ's] apostles.' Benware, p.117

**John's officially recorded ministry fades in the book of Acts. Tradition puts him in Ephesus as the leader of the churches. He died at nearly 100 years old.**

**John's faith in Christ and ensuing discipleship**

Luke 5:7–10

:7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

:8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

:9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken;

:10 and so also were **James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon**. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.”

**He became one of the twelve, then one of the three, with Peter and James.**

Jairus' daughter – Mark 5:35–43

Transfiguration – Luke 9:28

Garden of Gethsemane – Mark 14:33

Jesus Tomb, with Peter – John 20:2–8

**John's Special commissioning**

**Entrusted with the care of Jesus' mother at the Cross**

**John 19:26–27**

:26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!”

:27 Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

**John's ministry following Christ's resurrection …**

**Jerusalem**

**In the book of Acts, John begins a slow fade to the background. He is initially associated with Peter, but he is never recorded as speaking (Acts 3:1–10, Acts 4:1–13, Acts 8:14–17).**

**Ephesus**

**Tradition – the historical testimony of the church – tells us that John eventually left Jerusalem and relocated to Ephesus.** We don't know when or why he left Jerusalem. We just know that he did.

'After Christ's ascension, John became one of the 'pillars' of the church in Jerusalem along with James and Peter (Gal. 2:9). He is mentioned three times by name in Acts (3:1, 4:13, 8:14), each time in association with Peter. Tradition says that John later went to Ephesus. He was eventually exiled by the Romans for a time to the island of Patmos.' W&B, p.336

**So, John ended up in Ephesus overseeing the churches there, and then we know that he was exiled to Patmos for a time.**

'At Ephesus he **lived to great age, and wrote his Gospel, three Epistles, and Revelation**.' Unger

**John's Death**

**The consistent report of the early Church Fathers – is that John eventually returned from exile to Ephesus, and that he lived to a very advanced age of approximately 100 years-old.**

1. **The *special* Theme & *Divine* Intention**

**'Eternal life comes through belief in Christ** (1:1, 3:16, 8:58, 10:30, 20:31).' Geisler, p.106

'John clearly states his purpose for writing the Gospel (20:30-31). It was written to evangelize. **John presents evidence so that people might come to the point where they believe in Jesus Christ with the result that they would receive eternal life**.' Benware, p.118

1. **The *unique* Position & *enduring* Contribution**

'The purposes of the book of John fall into several categories:

* *Christological* … stated in John 20:30-31: **'that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and that believing you may have life in His name.'
* *Biographical* … additional material, not the other three Gospels …
* *Apologetical* … to verify Jesus' claims …
* *Polemical* … to counter [false teaching]
* *Spiritual* … 'a spiritual Gospel' Geisler, p.106

Invaluable

Phillip Schaff, theologian and church historian, said that the Gospel of John is **'the most important literary production ever composed.'**

Dynamic

The Gospel of John has been creatively but accurately likened 'to **a pool in which a child can wade and an elephant can swim.'**

Beloved

To the vast majority of Christians, **the Gospel of John is esteemed most highly among all Biblical writings due simply to the fact that it was by reading this very Gospel that they were drawn to faith in Jesus Christ**.

'The fourth Gospel is the most familiar and the best loved book in the Bible. It is probably the most important document in all the literature of the world. It has induced more persons to follow Christ, it has inspired more believers to loyal service … than any other book that could be named …' Eerdmans, Gospel of John

1. **The *writing* Date**

**'John's Gospel strongly suggests that John assumed that his readers were familiar with the Synoptic Gospels, thus placing John well after the Synoptics.'** Benware, p.118

Early Church father, 'Irenaeus states that it was **the latest written of the four Gospels**.' Abbott, Gospel of John

'Alford fixes the date as between AD 70 and AD 85

Godet between AD 80 and 90.' Abbott

Ellicott: 'The earliest historical evidence we have is that of Irenaeus, who places the Gospel … after the other three not earlier than … AD 70'

'… last 3 decades of the 1st century.' Kent AD 70 and 100

Cambridge 'AD 80 to 95'

**Morris… '… last decade of the 1st century.' (AD 90 and 100)**

'John wrote well after AD 70 … well before Irenaeus who cites the Gospel in the early second century … It must have been written early in the late first century … before John died (in AD 98 …). This would place the writing during the reign of Domitian **(AD 81-96)** …' Geisler, p.105

**'… the best evidence points to a late date, near the end of the first century, perhaps around AD 85-95.'** Benware, p.118

**Factors to consider**

* John is never mentioned in Paul's writings …

* Some of the theological themes that John treats seem to be addressing errors which were not in full bloom in 1st century Christianity …
* What is the order of the Apostle John's writings - his Gospel, the Revelation, and his three epistles …
* John *seems* to refer to the Jews and Jewish things as things distant …
* **'John does not mention the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (AD 70).** If his Gospel were written a decade or more after that event, it may no longer have been an issue to his readers … although not dependent on them, **John was aware of the Synoptic Gospels**. The later date allows for them to have been written and circulated among John's readers.' MSB

'The precise date cannot be determined with certainty.' Cambridge, *John*

**I can tell you exactly *when* it was written …**

**When did the Apostle John write his Gospel? At the precise moment that God 'moved' him, prompted him to write.**

1. **The *access* Codes**

'The **Key Verse**: 'I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.' (**10:10**)

**The word 'believe' is used more than 100 times!**

1. **The *major* Chapters & *significant* Passages**

[Students are asked to adopt at least three of their own favorite chapters, together with an explanation as to why such are their favorites.]

1. **The *basic* Outline**
2. **1:1-4:45 His Inaugural Ministry**
3. **4:46-5:47 His Foundational Ministry – in Galilee**
4. **6:1-71 His Developmental Ministry – outside of Galilee**
5. **7:1-10:39 His 2nd Judean Ministry**
6. **10:40-11:54 His Instructional Ministry – in Perea**
7. **11:55-19:42 His Sacrificial Ministry – in Jerusalem**
8. **20:1-21:25 His Resurrection Ministry**

**Bibliography, with Abbreviations**

Primary sources

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***NTI***Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1968

***MSB*** MacArthur, John.*MacArthur Study Bible.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006

***Schaff's***Schaff, Philip. *A Dictionary of the Bible.* Philadelphia: American Sunday-School Union, 1880

***Unger's***Unger, Merrill F. *Unger's Bible Dictionary.* Chicago: Moody, 1985