

BOOK OF JOHN

STUDY GUIDE

AUTHOR

Looking at evidence within the book, we learn this gospel is an eyewitness account (John 1:14). Though the book doesn't formally announce its author, the numerous references to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" point to the traditionally accepted authorship of the apostle John. John is first introduced with his brother, James, as one of the sons of Zebedee (Matt. 4:21; John 21:1-3), who lived as fishermen in Galilee. Because John is always named after James, it is believed John is the younger of the two. This same John is the apostle exiled to the island of Patmos and author of 1, 2, 3 John and Revelation. John was a companion of Peter (Mark 5:37, 9:2, 14:33; Acts 3:1) and recognized leader of the church by Paul (Gal. 2:9).

DATE & PLACE OF WRITING

Because the gospel does not mention the destruction of the Temple (AD 70), some think the book was written before that date. Lack of mention is not reason alone to date the book that early, plus John uses past tense Greek verbs (more than any other New Testament writer) to refer to events within the book. Therefore, it stands to reason the writing occurred at a later date. Most scholars agree on the writing of John to be between AD 80-95, dates echoed by the early church fathers as well.

The Gospel According to John was most likely written in Ephesus, a city within part of Asia Minor (western third of modern-day Turkey). Numerous writings by early church fathers back up this theory and Eusebius (2nd century writer) in particular writes that Asia was allotted to the John when the apostles were dispersed throughout the land at the outbreak of the Jewish War (AD 66-70), the war which led to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

Purpose & Original Audience

John states his purpose in writing in John 20:31 – "But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." The Greek words for "that you may believe" result in two different possible meanings & purposes for the book. First, it can be translated in an evangelistic sense of coming to faith and belief. The second possibility is one of edification, a continuing in faith and belief. I think it's safe to say both hold merit, as Christians gain much insight and comfort from John's words.

The main question John's gospel answers is "Who is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God?" Christians wouldn't need that question answered, because they knew it to be Jesus. But Jews and Jewish converts would have an expectation of a coming Messiah and would ask such a question. John's combination of biblical quotations and allusions to the Old Testament point to an audience familiar with Old Testament scriptures and the challenge John gives toward an *individual* faith & proper response to God's grace through Jesus is important. It is as if John desires to prevent readers from committing the same errors the Jewish people & leaders made – failure to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Whether Jew, Samaritan, or "other sheep" (John 10:16), those accepting Jesus as the

© 2024 Global Outreach Foundation. All rights reserved.

Permission is granted to reproduce or download for personal and non-commercial educational and/or religious purposes. Any other use requires written permission.

Messiah are blessed, but those rejecting Him do so out of unbelief, disobedience, and blindness (John 3:36, 9:39-41). Being of Jewish descent is not enough. Personal faith matters!

INTERESTING POINTS & STRUCTURE

Where Matthew, Mark, & Luke focus on what Jesus did & taught, John focuses more on the Person of Jesus. It is interesting that John does NOT include: narrative parables, the account of His transfiguration, instruction to practice the Lord’s Supper, reports of demonic deliverances, or Jesus’ wilderness temptations by the devil. Pay close attention to what John portrays Jesus teaching and to whom.

John also adopts a series of “opposites” or dualisms.

Here are just a couple ways to outline John:

Son of God Focus	Ministry Focus
Incarnation of the Son of God (1:1-18)	Prologue & Implications of Jesus (1:1-18)
Presentation of the Son of God (1:19-4:54)	Public Ministry (2:1-12:50)
Opposition to the Son of God (5:1-12:50)	
Preparation of the Disciples (13:1-17:26)	Private Ministry to Disciples (13:1-17:26)
Crucifixion & Resurrection of the Son of God (18:1-21:25)	Crucifixion & Resurrection (18:1-21:25)

OBSERVATION WORDS

- **Jesus**-- Don’t just notice the references, but what do you learn about Him through those references? Names, functions, His emotional responses, how others address Him, etc.
- **Holy Spirit** – When He’s named directly, what He does, note miracles, etc.
- **God** -- Different ways He’s referenced & what you learn about Him, how Jesus speaks of Him, etc.
- **Kingdom** – What kind of kingdom? What do you learn about the kingdom?
- **World** – How does John use the word? What does it describe?
- **“I am...” / “I am not...”** – What is Jesus and what is He not?
- **Believe** – What are you to believe? How is belief described?
- **True / Truth / Truly** – What do you learn about this?
- **Divide / Division** – Who is divided? What is the cause of division?

- **Disciple(s)** – What are they saying/doing? What are they to learn? What defines a disciple?
- **Pharisees / Sadducees / Scribes** – Who are they? What are they doing? What do you learn?
- **Miracles / Signs** – Note anytime a miracle or sign takes place. What do they signify?
- **Old Testament passages** – Usually identified by all capital letters. How are these references used? What’s the purpose of them?

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What did you learn about Jesus through this book?
- What did you learn about the Holy Spirit through this book?
- What did you learn about God through this book?
- What are the “I am”/ “I am not” statements & what do you learn about Jesus through them?
- What do you learn about the gospel message from John? What is it to be?
- What caused the various divisions that you see in John? Who was divided? What divided them? What does this mean for faith and Christian life today?
- Chapter 17 gives great insight into Jesus’ prayer for His disciples and all believers. What things stand out to you in His prayer?

- What differences do you see between Matthew, Mark, Luke, and now John?
 - How Jesus is portrayed

 - What do the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) address that John does not. What does John focus upon that the others do not?

 - Anything else you notice

KEY WORD – How do you summarize the whole book in one word or short phrase?

KEY VERSE – What verse stands out to you as the summary of the whole book, or a verse that the Lord used to teach you something important. Why did you choose the verse you did?

KEY CHAPTER – What chapter summarizes the book, is a turning point, or just stands out to you? Why did you choose this chapter?