

Gospel According to John

Authorship: Two Options – John, the apostle or Johanne School. Recipients? Probably Christians living in Ephesus. (More specifically, Jews who became Christians and pagans who became Christians). This Gospel is a pastoral document that was written to help people in their situation.

Date: Sometime between AD 90 – AD 100 and after the other Gospels had been written and were circulating.

Unique Features:

1. Its simple and direct style. (Vocabulary is limited and simple. Often beginner Greek students start translating in John.)
2. Elevated view of Christ. Often described as the “Cosmic Christ.” (Emphasis on Jesus’ divine nature. Ex. “the Father and I are one.”)
3. Its different from the Synoptics. Most of the earthy content mentioned in the other Gospels are not mentioned in John. Ex. No parables in John. Most of the stories in John are not mentioned in the other Gospels. Ex. Water into wine (3), Encounter with Nicodemus (3), Encounter with the Samaritan woman (4), Encounter with the woman taken in adultery (8), Resurrection of Lazarus (11). So, the content is significantly different. However, the Triumphal Entry is similar to the Synoptics. Miracles are identified as “signs.” John does not use the Greek word for miracle but uses the Greek word for sign. So, the importance is not merely the miracle but what it signifies.
4. Judaism, Hellenism and Gnosticism are addressed. Drenched in OT illusions. Emphasis on Jews. The story of Jesus is built around Jerusalem and the Feast Days. Remember, the other Gospels focus on Galilee until the last week of Jesus’ life. John’s Gospel is the most Jewish of all and the most Greek of the Gospels (Hellenistic). Also, Gnosticism is combated. John does this by talking about *above and below, life and death, light and darkness*. Those categories come out of Gnosticism. Remember that Gnosticism is characterized by dualism. Gnosticism embodied Platonic thought. The language that Jesus uses in John’s Gospel is very Gnostic. Therefore, John’s readers were probably Jews that believed in Jesus, COMPLETED Jews. This is why John’s Gospel is so Jewish. But why the dualism? The eyes that they had as pagans were not checked at the door. So, when they accepted Jesus that had to deal with how they would fit Jesus into their background (Jewish, Greek and Gnostic).

Remember that Gnostics had a problem with Jesus. What problem did the Gnostics have with Jesus? They couldn’t accept that he was both divine and human. That Gnostic world-view is still present. The problem was not confessing that Jesus was God but confessing that Jesus was God and man. The Bible teaches that Adam was human before the fall. Afterwards he was less human. Jesus was fully human.

John 1:14 is as anti-Gnostic as it gets because flesh is evil according to the Gnostics and God became flesh in v. 14. In the story of Lazarus, “Jesus wept.” Human beings weep, ghost don’t. So, with the divine power of calling forth a dead man, Jesus is seen weeping.

John 19 - The spear cast into Jesus’ side and out flows water and blood, humans bleed, ghost don’t.

John 20 - the first Sunday night service- Jesus comes through a locked door and Thomas touches him, only human beings have wounds, ghost don’t.

Jesus is God in the flesh!

Content: 4 Parts

1. Prologue (1:1-18) First part of the Prologue climaxes in v. 14. Second part of the Prologue climaxes with the use of “grace and truth.”
2. The Book of Signs (1:19-12:50) Why is it called this? It is because it is built around 8 miracles that John identifies as “signs.” Most would say that The Book of Signs is an exposition of 1:11. Notice the culmination of the 8th sign in 1:53 He came unto his own and his own received him not.
3. The Book of Passion (13-20) Most would say that this is an exposition of 1:12. The biggest part is concerned with the disciples. Chapters 13-17 center in the Upper Room. 14:16 promise of the Holy Spirit, PARAKLETE (One who stands by your side). Jesus promises himself in the midst of their suffering.
4. Epilogue (21) Restoration of Peter. Prove you love me Peter. If you love me feed my sheep and in Acts 3 he does.

Sources: Elwell, Walker A. and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998). Jensen, Irving L. *Simply Understanding the Bible.* (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1990).