

= Gospel of John =

The Gospel According to John (Greek : *Εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Ἰωάννην* , translit . *To kata I?ánn?n euangélion* ; also called the Gospel of John , the Fourth Gospel , or simply John) is one of the four canonical gospels in the New Testament . It traditionally appears fourth , after the synoptic gospels of Matthew , Mark , and Luke . John begins with the witness and affirmation of John the Baptist and concludes with the death , burial , resurrection , and post @-@ resurrection appearances of Jesus .

The author is identified as " the Disciple whom Jesus loved " , whom early Christian tradition identified as John the Apostle , one of Jesus ' Twelve Apostles . The gospel is so closely related in style and content to the three surviving Johannine epistles that commentators treat the four books , along with the Book of Revelation , as a single corpus of Johannine literature , but there are some arguments made by modern scholars who believe John the Apostle was not the author of any of these books .

C. K. Barrett , and later Raymond E. Brown , suggested that a tradition developed around the " Johannine Community " , and that this tradition gave rise to the gospel . The discovery of a large number of papyrus fragments of manuscripts with Johannine themes has led more scholars to recognize that the texts were among the most influential in the early Church .

The discourses contained with this gospel seem to be concerned with issues of the church ? synagogue debate at the time of composition . It is notable that in John , the community appears to define itself primarily in contrast to Judaism , rather than as part of a wider Christian community . Though Christianity started as a movement within Judaism , it gradually separated from Judaism because of mutual opposition between the two religions .

= = Structure and content = =

The Gospel of John can be divided into four sections : a prologue (1 : 1 ? 18) , a Book of Signs (1 : 19 ? 12 : 50) , a Book of Glory (13 : 1 ? 20 : 31) , and an epilogue (21) . The structure is highly schematic : there are seven " signs " culminating in the raising of Lazarus (foreshadowing the resurrection of Jesus) , and seven " I am " sayings and discourses , culminating in Thomas 's proclamation of Jesus as " my lord and my God " ? the same title (*dominus et deus*) claimed by Roman Emperor Domitian .

= = = Prologue = = =

Jesus is placed in his cosmic setting as the eternal Logos made flesh who reveals God and gives salvation to believers ; John the Baptist , Andrew , and Nathanael bear witness to him as the Lamb of God , the Son of God , and the Christ .

= = = Book of Signs = = =

The narrative of Jesus ' public ministry , beginning with the introduction of the first disciples of Jesus . It consists of seven miracles , or " signs " , interspersed with long dialogues , discourses , " Amen , amen " sayings , and " I Am " sayings , culminating with the raising of Lazarus from the dead . In John it is this , and not the cleansing of the Temple , that prompts the authorities to have Jesus executed . The seven signs consist of Jesus ' miracle at the wedding at Cana , his healing the royal official 's son , his healing the paralytic at Bethesda , his feeding the 5 @,@ 000 , his walking on water , his healing the man born blind , and his raising Lazarus from the dead . Other incidents recounted in this segment of the gospel include the cleansing of the Temple ; Jesus ' conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus , wherein he explains the importance of spiritual rebirth ; his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well , wherein he gives the Water of Life Discourse ; the Bread of Life Discourse , which prompted many of his disciples to leave ; the Pericope Adulterae ; Jesus ' claims to be the Light of the World ; the *veritas liberabit vos* ; the Good Shepherd pericope ; Jesus ' rejection by the Jews ; the Jesus wept ; the plot to kill Jesus ; the anointing of Jesus by Mary

Magdalene ; Jesus ' triumphal entry into Jerusalem ; the prediction of the glorification of the Son of Man ; and the prediction of the Last Judgment .

= = = Book of Glory = = =

The narrative of Jesus ' Passion , Resurrection , and post @-@ Resurrection appearances . The Passion narrative opens with an account of the Last Supper that differs significantly from that found in the synoptics , with Jesus washing the disciples ' feet instead of ushering in a new covenant of his body and blood . This is followed by Jesus ' Farewell Discourse , an account of his betrayal , arrest , trial , death , burial , post @-@ Resurrection appearances , and final commission for his followers . It also includes Peter 's denial , the institution of the New Commandment and the New Covenant , the promise of the Paraclete , the allegory of the True Vine , the High Priestly Prayer , the *ut omnes unum sint* , the *What is truth ?* , Jesus ' mocking and crowning with thorns , the *Ecce homo* , the discovery of the empty tomb , the *noli me tangere* , the Great Commission , and the incredulity of Thomas . The section ends with a conclusion on the purpose of the gospel : " that [the reader] may believe that Jesus is the Christ , the Son of God , and that believing you may have life in his name . "

= = = Epilogue = = =

The narrative of Jesus ' post @-@ Resurrection appearance to his disciples by the lake , the miraculous catch of fish , the prophecy of the crucifixion of Peter , the restoration of Peter , and the fate of the Beloved Disciple . A large majority of scholars believes this chapter to be an addition to the gospel .

= = Composition and setting = =

= = = Authorship , date , and origin = = =

The Gospel of John is anonymous , its author only identified as " the Disciple whom Jesus loved " . The evangelist was always called John , and Church tradition identified the Beloved Disciple as John the Apostle . This latter identification , however , is rejected by the majority of modern biblical scholars . Scholars believe that the text went through two to three " editions " before reaching its current form .

Nevertheless , a significant minority consider the traditional account of John the Apostle 's authorship to be genuine . Scholars have argued that the stylistic unity of John is a significant barrier to theories of multiple stages of editing , with D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo arguing that " stylistically it is cut from one cloth " . In addition , the ancient external attestation for Johannine authorship is strong and consistent . As Craig Blomberg has noted , " No orthodox writer ever proposes any other alternative for the author of the Fourth Gospel and the book is accepted in all of the early canonical lists , which is all the more significant given the frequent heterodox misinterpretations of it . "

John is usually dated to AD 90 ? 110 . It arose in a Jewish Christian community in the process of breaking from the Jewish synagogue .

John , which regularly describes Jesus ' opponents simply as " the Jews " , is more consistently hostile to " the Jews " than any other body of New Testament writing . Historian and former Roman Catholic priest James Carroll states : " The climax of this movement comes in chapter 8 of John , when Jesus is portrayed as denouncing ' the Jews ' as the offspring of Satan . " In John 8 : 44 Jesus tells the Jews : " You are of your father the devil , and the desires of your father you will do . He was a murderer from the beginning , and he stood not in the truth ; because truth is not in him . " In 8 : 38 and 11 : 53 , " the Jews " are depicted as wishing to kill Jesus . However , Carroll cautions that this and similar statements in the Gospel of Matthew and the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians

should be viewed as " evidence not of Jew hatred but of sectarian conflicts among Jews " in the early years of the Christian church .

As noted by New Testament scholar Obrey M. Hendricks , Jr . : " Although its scathing portrayal of the Jews has opened John to charges of anti @-@ Semitism , a careful reading reveals ' the Jews ' to be a class designation , not a religious or ethnic grouping ; rather than denoting adherents to Judaism in general , the term primarily refers to the hereditary Temple religious authorities . " In later centuries , John was used to support anti @-@ Semitic polemics , but the author of the gospel regarded himself as a Jew , championed Jesus and his followers as Jews , and probably wrote for a largely Jewish community .

= = = Historical reliability = = =

Chapters 19 and 21 of John hint that " the Disciple whom Jesus loved " , or " the Beloved Disciple " , was an eyewitness to Jesus ' ministry , but the majority of scholars are cautious of accepting this at face value . With the exception of the " Johannine Thunderbolt " passages , the teachings of Jesus found in the synoptic gospels are very different from those recorded in John , and since the 19th century some scholars have argued that these discourses in Johannine style are less likely to be historical , and more likely to have been written for theological purposes .

Scholars usually agree that John is not entirely without historical value . It has become generally accepted that certain sayings in John are as old or older than their synoptic counterparts . His representation of the topography around Jerusalem is often superior to that of the synoptics , his testimony that Jesus was executed before , rather than on , Passover , might well be more accurate , and his presentation of Jesus in the garden and the prior meeting held by the Jewish authorities are possibly more historically plausible than their synoptic parallels .

= = = Textual history and position in the New Testament = = =

Rylands Library Papyrus P52 , a Greek papyrus fragment with John 18 : 31 ? 33 on one side and 18 : 37 ? 38 on the other , commonly dated to the first half of the 2nd century , is the oldest New Testament manuscript known . A substantially complete text of John exists from the beginning of the 3rd century at the latest , so that the textual evidence for this gospel is commonly accepted as both earlier and more reliable than that for any other . John stands fourth in the standard ordering of the gospels , after Matthew , Mark and Luke , but in the earliest surviving gospel collection , Papyrus 45 of the 3rd century , they are in the order Matthew , John , Luke and Mark , while in syrcur it is placed third in the order Matthew , Mark , John and Luke .

= = Theology = =

= = = Christology = = =

The Gospel of John presents a " high Christology , " depicting Jesus as divine , and yet , according to some unorthodox interpretations , subordinate to the one God . However , in his Summa Theologiae , Thomas Aquinas flatly rejects any denial of equality among the persons of the Trinity , including denials based Johannine passages . John 's gospel gives more focus to the relationship of the Son to the Father than the synoptics . It also focuses on the relation of the Redeemer to believers , the announcement of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter and Advocate (Greek : ????????? , translit . Parákletos , lit . ' Paraclete ' ; Latin : Paracletus , from the Greek) , and the prominence of love as an element in Christian character .

= = = Jesus ' divine role = = =

In the synoptics , Jesus speaks often about the Kingdom of God ; his own divine role is obscured (

see Messianic Secret) . In John , Jesus talks openly about his divine role . He echoes the Father 's own statement of identity , i.e. " I Am Who Am " , with several " I Am " declarations that also identify him with symbols of major significance . He says " I am " :

===== Logos =====

In the prologue , John identifies Jesus as the Logos (Word) . In Ancient Greek philosophy , the term logos meant the principle of cosmic reason . In this sense , it was similar to the Hebrew concept of Wisdom , God 's companion and intimate helper in creation . The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo merged these two themes when he described the Logos as God 's creator of and mediator with the material world . The evangelist adapted Philo 's description of the Logos , applying it to Jesus , the incarnation of the Logos .

The opening verse of John is translated as " the Word was with God and the Word was God " in all " orthodox " English Bibles . There are alternative views . The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures of Jehovah 's Witnesses has " The Word was with God , and the Word was a god . " The Scholars Version of the gospel , developed by the Jesus Seminar , loosely translates the phrase as " The Logos was what God was , " offered as a better representation of the original meaning of the evangelist .

===== Sacraments =====

Among the most controversial areas of interpretation of John is its sacramental theology . Scholars ' views have fallen along a wide spectrum ranging from anti @-@ sacramental and non @-@ sacramental , to sacramental , to ultra @-@ sacramental and hyper @-@ sacramental . Scholars disagree both on whether and how frequently John refers to the sacraments at all , and on the degree of importance he places upon them . Individual scholars ' answers to one of these questions do not always correspond to their answer to the other .

===== Frequency of allusion =====

According to Rudolf Bultmann , there are three sacramental allusions : one to baptism (3 : 5) , one to the Eucharist (6 : 51 ? 58) , and one to both (19 : 34) . He believed these passages to be later interpolations , though most scholars now reject this assessment . Some scholars on the weaker @-@ sacramental side of the spectrum deny that there are any sacramental allusions in these passages or in the gospel as a whole , while others see sacramental symbolism applied to other subjects in these and other passages . Oscar Cullmann and Bruce Vawter , a Protestant and a Catholic respectively , and both on the stronger @-@ sacramental end of the spectrum , have found sacramental allusions in most chapters . Cullmann found references to baptism and the Eucharist throughout the gospel , and Vawter found additional references to matrimony in 2 : 1 ? 11 , anointing of the sick in 12 : 1 ? 11 , and penance in 20 : 22 ? 23 . Towards the center of the spectrum , Raymond Brown is more cautious than Cullmann and Vawter but more lenient than Bultmann and his school , identifying several passages as containing sacramental allusions and rating them according to his assessment of their degree of certainty .

===== Importance to the evangelist =====

Most scholars on the stronger @-@ sacramental end of the spectrum assess the sacraments as being of great importance to the evangelist . However , perhaps counterintuitively , some scholars who find fewer sacramental references , such as Udo Schnelle , view the references that they find as highly important as well . Schnelle in particular views John 's sacramentalism as a counter to Docetist anti @-@ sacramentalism . On the other hand , though he agrees that there are anti @-@ Docetic passages , James Dunn views the absence of a Eucharistic institution narrative as evidence for an anti @-@ sacramentalism in John , meant to warn against a conception of eternal life as

dependent on physical ritual .

= = = Individualism = = =

In comparison to the synoptic gospels , the Fourth Gospel is markedly individualistic , in the sense that it places emphasis more on the individual 's relation to Jesus than on the corporate nature of the Church . This is largely accomplished through the consistently singular grammatical structure of various aphoristic sayings of Jesus throughout the gospel . According to Baukham , emphasis on believers coming into a new group upon their conversion is conspicuously absent from John . There is also a theme of " personal coinherence " , that is , the intimate personal relationship between the believer and Jesus in which the believer " abides " in Jesus and Jesus in the believer . According to Moule , the individualistic tendencies of the Fourth Gospel could potentially give rise to a realized eschatology achieved on the level of the individual believer ; this realized eschatology is not , however , to replace " orthodox " , futurist eschatological expectations , but is to be " only [their] correlative . "

= = = John the Baptist = = =

John 's account of the Baptist is different from that of the synoptic gospels . In this gospel , John is not called " the Baptist . " The Baptist 's ministry overlaps with that of Jesus ; his baptism of Jesus is not explicitly mentioned , but his witness to Jesus is unambiguous . The evangelist almost certainly knew the story of John 's baptism of Jesus and he makes a vital theological use of it . He subordinates the Baptist to Jesus , perhaps in response to members of the Baptist 's sect who regarded the Jesus movement as an offshoot of their movement .

In John 's gospel , Jesus and his disciples go to Judea early in Jesus ' ministry before John the Baptist was imprisoned and executed by Herod . He leads a ministry of baptism larger than John 's own . The Jesus Seminar rated this account as black , containing no historically accurate information . According to the biblical historians at the Jesus Seminar , John likely had a larger presence in the public mind than Jesus .

= = = Gnostic elements = = =

Although not commonly understood as Gnostic , many scholars , including Bultmann , have forcefully argued that the Gospel of John has elements in common with Gnosticism . Christian Gnosticism did not fully develop until the mid @-@ 2nd century , and so 2nd @-@ century Proto @-@ Orthodox Christians concentrated much effort in examining and refuting it . To say John 's gospel contained elements of Gnosticism is to assume that Gnosticism had developed to a level that required the author to respond to it . Bultmann , for example , argued that the opening theme of the Gospel of John , the pre @-@ existing Logos , was actually a Gnostic theme . Other scholars , e.g. Raymond E. Brown have argued that the pre @-@ existing Logos theme arises from the more ancient Jewish writings in the eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs , and was fully developed as a theme in Hellenistic Judaism by Philo Judaeus .

Comparisons to Gnosticism are based not in what the author says , but in the language he uses to say it , notably , use of the concepts of Logos and Light . Other scholars , e.g. Raymond E. Brown , have argued that the ancient Jewish Qumran community also used the concept of Light versus Darkness . The arguments of Bultmann and his school were seriously compromised by the mid @-@ 20th @-@ century discoveries of the Nag Hammadi library of genuine Gnostic writings (which are dissimilar to the Gospel of John) as well as the Qumran library of Jewish writings (which are often similar to the Gospel of John) .

Gnostics read John but interpreted it differently from the way non @-@ Gnostics did . Gnosticism taught that salvation came from gnosis , secret knowledge , and Gnostics did not see Jesus as a savior but a revealer of knowledge . Barnabas Lindars asserts that the gospel teaches that salvation can only be achieved through revealed wisdom , specifically belief in (literally belief into) Jesus .

Raymond Brown contends that " The Johannine picture of a savior who came from an alien world above , who said that neither he nor those who accepted him were of this world , and who promised to return to take them to a heavenly dwelling could be fitted into the gnostic world picture (even if God 's love for the world in 3 : 16 could not) . " It has been suggested that similarities between John 's gospel and Gnosticism may spring from common roots in Jewish Apocalyptic literature .

= = Comparison with the synoptics = =

The Gospel of John is significantly different from the synoptic gospels , with major variations in material , theological emphasis , chronology , and literary style . There are also some discrepancies between John and the synoptics , some amounting to contradictions .

= = = Material = = =

John lacks scenes from the synoptics such as Jesus ' baptism , the calling of the Twelve , exorcisms , parables , the Transfiguration , and the Last Supper . Conversely , it includes scenes not found in the synoptics , including Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana , the resurrection of Lazarus , Jesus washing the feet of his disciples , and multiple visits to Jerusalem . The Fourth Gospel contains no account of the Nativity of Jesus , unlike Matthew and Luke , and his mother Mary , while frequently mentioned , is never identified by name . John does assert that Jesus was known as the " son of Joseph " in 6 : 42 . In contrast to Matthew and Luke , and in agreement with Mark , in John Jesus comes from Nazareth rather than the messianic town of Bethlehem . For John , Jesus ' town of origin is irrelevant , for he comes from beyond this world , from God the Father . While John makes no direct mention of Jesus ' baptism , he does quote John the Baptist 's description of the descent of the Holy Spirit as a dove , as happens at Jesus ' baptism in the synoptics . Major synoptic speeches of Jesus are absent , including the Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet Discourse , and the exorcisms of demons are never mentioned as in the synoptics . During the Last Supper narrative , Jesus washes the disciples ' feet instead of celebrating the first Eucharist as in the synoptics . No other women are mentioned going to the tomb with Mary Magdalene , whereas in the synoptics she is accompanied by Mary of Clopas , Mary , mother of James , " the other Mary " , and / or Salome . John never lists all of the Twelve Disciples and names at least one disciple , Nathanael , whose name is not found in the synoptics . Nathanael appears to parallel Bartholomew found in the synoptics , as both are paired with Philip in the respective gospels . While James , son of Zebedee and John are prominent disciples in the synoptics , John mentions them only in the epilogue , where they are referred to not by name but as the " sons of Zebedee . " Thomas is given a personality beyond a mere name , described as " Doubting Thomas " .

= = = Theological emphasis = = =

Jesus is identified with the Word (" Logos ") , and the Word is identified with theos (" god " in Greek) ; no such identification is made in the synoptics . In Mark , Jesus urges his disciples to keep his divinity secret , but in John he is very open in discussing it , even referring to himself as " I AM " , the title God gives himself in Exodus at his self @-@ revelation to Moses . In the synoptics the chief theme is the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven (the latter specifically in Matthew) , while John 's theme is Jesus as the source of eternal life and the Kingdom is only mentioned twice . In contrast to the synoptic expectation of the Kingdom (using the term parousia , meaning " coming ") , John presents a more individualistic , realized eschatology .

= = = Chronology = = =

In the synoptics the ministry of Jesus takes a single year , but in John it takes three , as evidenced by references to three Passovers . Events are not all in the same order : the date of the crucifixion is different , as is the time of Jesus ' anointing in Bethany , and the cleansing of the temple occurs in

the beginning of Jesus ' ministry rather than in the beginning .

= = = Literary style = = =

In the synoptics , quotations from Jesus are usually in the form of short , pithy sayings ; in John , longer quotations are often given . The vocabulary is also different , and filled with theological import : in John , Jesus does not work " miracles " (Greek : ????????? , translit. *dynámeis* , sing. ???????? , { { | transl | el | *dýnamis* } }) , but " signs " (Greek : ??????? , translit. *s?meia* , sing. ???????? , *s?meion*) which unveil his divine identity . Most scholars consider John not to contain any parables . Rather it contains metaphorical stories or allegories , such as those of the Good Shepherd and of the True Vine , in which each individual element corresponds to a specific person , group , or thing . Some scholars , however , find some such parables as the short story of the childbearing woman (16 : 21) or the dying grain (12 : 24) .

= = = Discrepancies = = =

According to the synoptics , the arrest of Jesus was a reaction to the cleansing of the temple , while according to John it was triggered by the raising of Lazarus . The Pharisees , portrayed as more uniformly legalistic and opposed to Jesus in the synoptic gospels , are instead portrayed as sharply divided ; they debate frequently in John 's accounts . Some , such as Nicodemus , even go so far as to be at least partially sympathetic to Jesus . This is believed to be a more accurate historical depiction of the Pharisees , who made debate one of the tenets of their system of belief . John the Baptist publicly proclaims Jesus to be the Lamb of God . The Baptist recognizes Jesus secretly in Matthew , and not at all in Mark or Luke . The Gospel of John also has the Baptist deny that he is Elijah , whereas Mark and Matthew identify him with Elijah . The Cleansing of the Temple appears towards the beginning of Jesus ' ministry . In the synoptics this occurs soon before Jesus is crucified .

= = Representations = =

The Gospel of John has influenced Impressionist painters , Renaissance art , literature , and other depictions of Jesus , with influences on Greek , Jewish and European history .

It has been depicted in live narrations and dramatized in productions , skits , plays , and Passion Plays , as well as in film . The most recent such portrayal is the 2014 film ' The Gospel of John ' , directed by David Batty and narrated by David Harewood and Brian Cox , with Selva Rasalingam as Jesus . The 2003 film The Gospel of John , was directed by Philip Saville , narrated by Christopher Plummer , with Henry Ian Cusick as Jesus .

Parts of the gospel have been set to music . One such setting is Steve Warner 's power anthem " Come and See " , written for the 20th anniversary of the Alliance for Catholic Education and including lyrical fragments taken from the Book of Signs . Additionally , some composers have made settings of the Passion as portrayed in the gospel , most notably the one composed by Johann Sebastian Bach , although some verses are borrowed from Matthew .