

John

The gospel of John is unique. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the synoptic gospels because, despite their individual emphasis, they describe many of the same events in the life of Jesus. John deals mainly with events and stories not found in the other gospels to prove to his readers that Jesus is the Son of God in the flesh. He portrays Jesus as the “eternal Word” come to earth, born for one purpose - to die as God’s sacrifice for man’s sin. John records seven miraculous signs “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

INTRODUCTION

Just as a coin has two sides, both which provide authentication, so Jesus Christ has two natures both of which are authentic and cannot be separated. Luke presents Christ in His humanity as the Son of Man; John portrays Him in his deity as the Son of God. John’s purpose is crystal clear: to show Christ in His deity in order to spark believing faith in his readers. John’s gospel is topical, not primarily chronological, and it revolves around seven miracles and seven “I am” statements of Christ.

Following an extended eyewitness description of the Upper Room meal and its conversation, John records events leading up to the Resurrection. This is the final climactic proof that Jesus is who He claims to be - the Son of God.

AUTHOR

The author of this gospel is identified only as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 20:2; 21:7,20; cf. 19:26). The disciple “whom Jesus loved” was part of the inner circle of disciples and was closely associated with Peter. The synoptic Gospels name this inner circle as Peter, James, and John. Since Peter is separate from the beloved disciple, only James and John are left. James was martyred too early to be the author (Acts 12:1-2), so the apostle John was the author of this gospel. This conclusion from internal evidence is consistent with the external testimony of the early church.

The title of the fourth Gospel follows the same format as the titles of the synoptic Gospels: *Kata Ioannen*, “According to John.” As with the others, the word “Gospel” was added later. *Ioannes* is derived from the Hebrew name *Johanan*, meaning “Yahweh has been gracious.”

DATE & SETTING

Some suppose that this is the last book of the New Testament to be written. However, it seems appropriate to consider the writings of John in sequence: the Gospel of John, the three Epistles, and the Revelation. All were written evidently during the last ten years of John’s life, so the probable range for this work is A.D. 90 to 100. By this time, John would have been one of the last surviving eyewitnesses of Jesus. According to tradition, John wrote this gospel in Ephesus.