

## JOHN

### Commentaries:

Brown-Anchor, 2 vols.	Michaels-NIC
Barrett	Bruce
Schnackenburg-3 vols.	Carson-Pillar
Beasley-Murray-Word	Burge-NIVAC
Köstenberger -BECNT	Keener-2 vols.
Thompson-NTL	Klink-ZECNT
Culpepper, <i>The Gospel and Letters of John</i>	Kruse-TNTC

### I. Purpose:

A. **20:30-31** "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." It is debatable whether this verse indicates whether the readers John had in mind were Christian or not. There is a textual variant involving the tense of the word "believe" which some believe may have bearing on the issue. As the NRSV alternatives indicate, the present tense might be translated "may continue to believe" and the aorist "may come to believe." However, many scholars doubt John would have intended such a distinction between these tenses anyway. The decision about John's audience is usually made on broader considerations. There are some indicators of a Christian readership, including the implications of 11:2 and 21:20-23.

B. Various theories that go beyond or for some scholars replace 20:30-31:

1. Polemic against Gnosticism. Suggested as early as Irenaeus, who saw a polemic vs. Cerinthus.
2. Polemic against a John the Baptist group.
3. Polemic against Jewish attacks. This has become a dominant theory among many contemporary scholars who believe that chapter 9 in particular is an anachronistic story reflecting the time of the writing of the book when Christians were being ejected from the synagogues.

### II. Major themes: (cf. 20:30-31)

- A. Christology. Preexistence, deity, incarnation.
- B. Faith. The verb "believe" is used 100x in the book.
- C. Eternal life.
- D. Holy Spirit.

### III. Structure:

1:1-18	Prologue
1:19-12	Public Ministry (Book of signs)
13-20	Passion and Resurrection (Book of glory)
21	Epilogue

#### Dislocation theories:

1. Some alter the order of the book, but there is no textual evidence for such theories.
2. In the late 2nd C., Tatian reversed chs 5 & 6. This is still accepted by some.
3. The problem is the flow of several chapters especially chapters 5-7.  
 Ch. 5 in Jerusalem--Ch. 6 they go to the other side of Galilee--Ch. 7:1 they go about in Galilee. Some reverse order to 5,7,6 but this creates other problems also. Ch. 14:31 seems to close out the Last Supper but 15-17 continues the story. Some say John was put into codex form early and the sheets were shuffled. However, the sections are not of same length like individual sheets. Guthrie and others suggest that John was not concerned about the geographical and chronological details, but focused on other things.

#### IV. Authorship:

##### A. Internal Evidence

1. Anonymous
2. **21:24** Does this mean that the beloved disciple was the author? (cf. 19:35)
3. Who is the beloved disciple? 13:23-24; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20 indicate a disciple (one of the 12?), associated with Peter.

##### B. External Evidence.

1. Title: Gospel according to John
2. Irenaeus A.H. 3.1-2 says that John published his Gospel at Ephesus, where he lived until the time of Trajan (AD 98-117.) Eusebius H.E. 5.20 cites Irenaeus's letter to Florinus in which Irenaeus says he heard Polycarp talk about his personal acquaintance with John Bauckham argues Irenaeus did not intend to talk about the apostle John.
3. Theophilus of Antioch ad Autolyicum 2.22 (c. AD 180) indicates John wrote the Gospel, but does not specify John the apostle
4. Polycrates, bishop in Ephesus about AD 190, said John sleeps at Ephesus and called John the one who leaned on Jesus' breast. Thus, he would be the beloved disciple.
5. Muratorian Canon said John wrote the Gospel when the Lord gave a vision to Andrew for the apostles to write--the apostles worked together, with John as the writer.
6. In the late 2nd century, a little-known group called the Alogoi (according to the 4<sup>th</sup> c. writer Epiphanius) denied John wrote the Gospel. Gaius, bishop at Rome, agreed with them.
7. Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others repeat what Irenaeus said.
8. The Johannine prologue of the so-called Anti-Marcionite Prologues says Papias said he wrote the Gospel at John's dictation. (Many date the Prologues to the 4th century, some earlier.)

##### C. Arguments vs. John the apostle as the author:

1. The crucial issue is the debate over the historicity of John's account.
2. Some doubt because of possible confusion in late 2nd C concerning John the apostle, John the prophet, John the elder, and others.

##### D. Alternatives:

1. Another John wrote the book. Eusebius H.E. 3.39.3-4 cites a statement of Papias which he believes establishes an "elder John" who was not the apostle. Most modern scholars agree with Eusebius's interpretation of Papias. The author of 2 and 3 John calls himself "the elder."
2. John was in the underlying witness, but not the author.
3. Some say the tradition about John is totally wrong.
4. Any of these theories may be linked with the notion that John went through multiple revisions.

#### V. Issues related to authorship:

##### A. Redaction theories:

21:24 was perhaps written by someone besides the author. Some say all of chapter 21 is by another since 20:31 seems to end the book. 19:35 is also in the 3rd person. Some believe that any verse that seems to break the flow or which is in tension with other passages was added by a redactor. Some say a redactor rearranged the book.

##### B. Source theories:

1. Possibly the Synoptics
2. Improbably a hypothetical "Signs Source" (Bultmann and Fortner))

## VI. Date:

### A. Latest date:

P<sup>52</sup> (John Rylands Papyrus) is perhaps from before 150. The Egerton Papyrus 2, a fragment of an apocryphal gospel, appears to be dependent on John and also probably dates before 150.

### B. Earliest date:

If we accept Irenaeus's view that John wrote the Gospel in Ephesus, then it must be after John went to Ephesus. Paul was there on his 3rd journey in the mid-50's. It seems unlikely that John would be there when Paul wrote to Timothy in the mid-60's. Therefore, the late 60's would perhaps be the earliest possibility. Irenaeus (*A.H.* 2.22.5, 3.1.1, and 3.3.4) says that John wrote the Gospel in Ephesus, that he wrote after the Synoptics, and that he lived in Ephesus until the time of Trajan (AD 98-117). Many erroneously believe Irenaeus says that John wrote near the time of Trajan.

### C. Other data:

1. Some argue ch 9 and other texts imply John wrote after the expulsion of Christians from the synagogue. They often relate this to the birkath ha-minim, a curse against Christians which was added to the Jewish daily prayers, which they questionably date to c. AD 85.
2. Some argue that 21:18-23 indicates John wrote after Peter's death and after John had lived a long time.

## VII. Place:

If we accept Irenaeus, Ephesus was the location.

Syria, Palestine, and Alexandria have been suggested.

## VIII. Relationship to the Synoptics:

### A. John's Gospel differs in many areas

1. Geography: John has 3 or more trips to Jerusalem and most of the events occur in Jerusalem
2. Chronology: John has 3 Passovers, a cleansing of the temple early in Jesus' ministry, and appears to suggest that the crucifixion took place on the day the lambs were slaughtered for the Passover meal.
3. John omits Jesus' baptism, the temptations, Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, and the inauguration of the Lord's Supper. He omits all exorcisms, all of what modern interpreters call parables, and has only 7 signs (besides Jesus' resurrection).
4. In John Jesus makes public "messianic" claims, speaks in long discourses, and emphasizes different things than in the Synoptics (eternal life over the kingdom of God; light, glory, truth, knowledge, etc.)
5. John is explicit about Jesus' pre-existence and deity. Cf. 1:1-18.

### B. Five ways to bridge the gap between John and the Synoptics

1. Attempt to harmonize the chronology, geography, etc., in specific instances.
2. Emphasize the versatility of a great teacher.
3. Emphasize differing audiences for Jesus' teaching.  
(E.g., that John has more of Jesus' private teaching to the disciples.)
4. Defend the legitimacy of John paraphrasing Jesus' speech and other items in a looser way than the Synoptics. Some appeal to Clement of Alexandria's idea that John wrote a "spiritual" Gospel.
5. With respect to the high christology point out that John also emphasizes the humanity of Jesus and the Son's subjection to the Father.

On these issues see M. M. Thompson, "The Historical Jesus and the Johannine Christ," in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, eds R. A. Culpepper and C. C. Black (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 21-42.