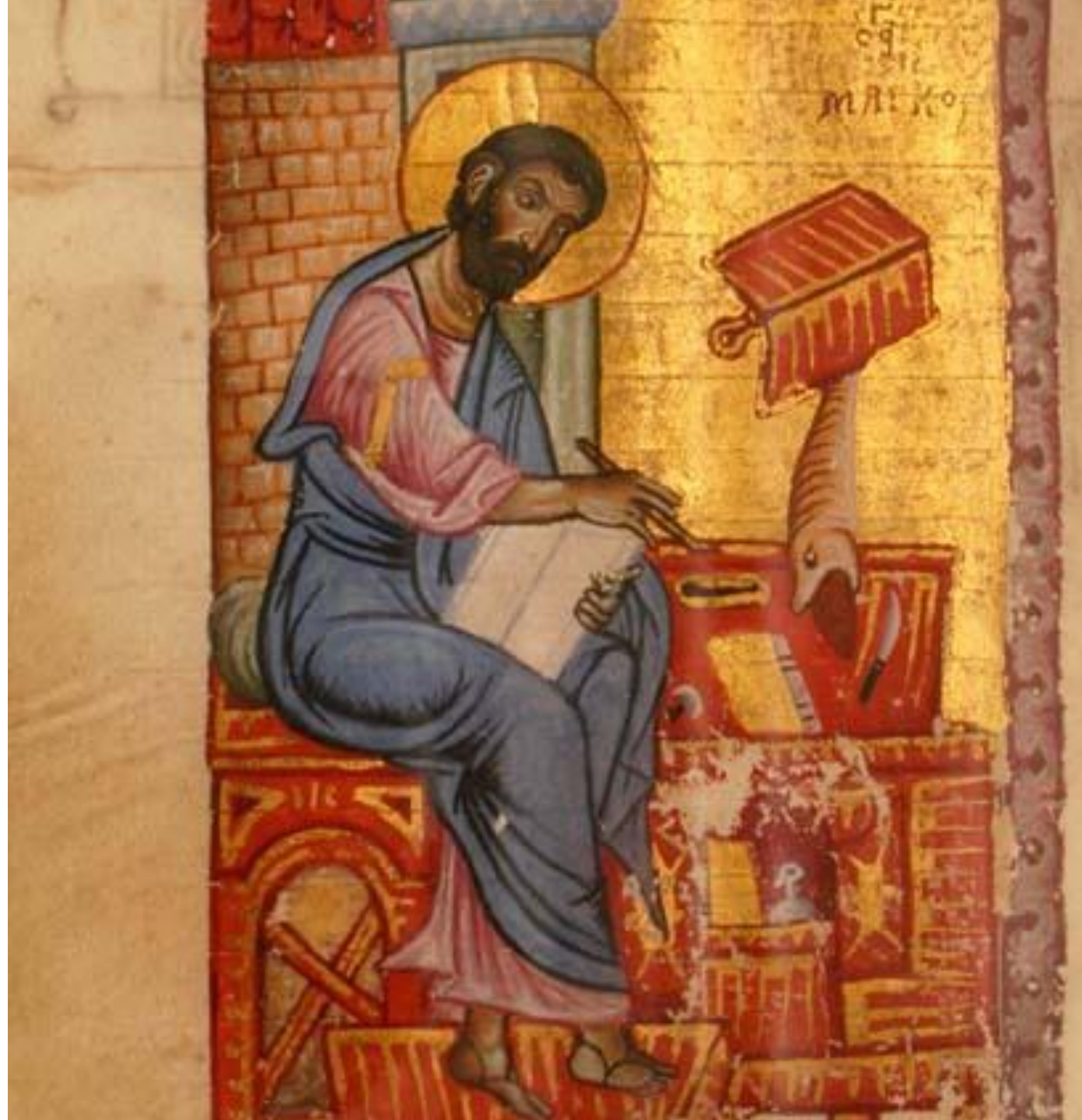


From Jesus to the Gospels: Part 3

The Johannine Tradition



John: Apostle, Presbyter, Both?

- The consensus tradition since the fourth century (and arguably earlier) is that the John who wrote the Gospel is John the son of Zebedee.
- But: John the son of Zebedee = John the Apostle = John the Elder/Presbyter?



Gaspar de Crayer, "St. John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos,"
ca. 1649-1669 (photo: Public Domain)

John: Apostle, Presbyter, Both?

- Another possibility is that “John the Presbyter” (2 John 1) is different from John the Apostle / Son of Zebedee, and that John the Presbyter is John the Evangelist.
- John the Presbyter was an eyewitness (1 John 1:1–4), and he could have been a young teenager when he followed Jesus in his itinerant ministry, belonging to a priestly family based in Jerusalem. If Jesus died and rose again in 33AD, John would have been born ca. 20 AD, and he could have written his Gospel when he was in his 70s between 90-100AD, having already read the Synoptics.
- John the Presbyter is distinguished from John the Apostle by Papias (in ca. 110AD; *apud* Eusebius, *eccl. Hist.* 3.39), and Irenaeus (in ca. 180AD) recalls that his teacher Polycarp (d. 155 AD), learned directly from John the Presbyter.

John: Apostle, Presbyter, Both?

- Whatever the case may be, we can be confident that John was an eyewitness (John 1:14; 13:23; 19:35; 20:2; 21:24), and he wrote with apostolic authority (1 John 1:1–4), and his authority was widely recognized by the early church as complementary with the apostolic witness.
- John's legacy was carried by faithful disciples well into the second century, including unnamed elders from Asia Minor, Papias (d. ca. 130 AD), Polycarp (d. 155 AD), Polycrates (ca. 130-200 AD), and Irenaeus (ca. 133–202 AD).

John: Gospel Proclamation / Contribution to NT Canon

- Jesus, as **Messiah**, is the Shepherd-King of Israel (Ezek 34 // John 10:1–18; 1:49). He is also the eternal Son of God, the pre-existent LORD seated on the throne (8:58; 12:41), who comes down to earth to be lifted up on a cross (12:23–36).
- Jesus' **substitutionary death** as the Paschal Lamb (1:29; 19:14, 31), on behalf of Israel and the Gentiles (11:49–52), takes away the sins of world (1:29).
- Jesus' **resurrection** is proclaimed to those who would doubt (20:19–29), and it demonstrates Jesus' authority as the Son of God to call the dead out to either eternal life or final condemnation (5:24–30; 11:43).
- According to the **Scriptures**: the OT point to Jesus (5:39–40), because Jesus is the veiled glory of God that appears throughout the OT (12:41) and is finally revealed in Jesus' incarnation (1:14–18), miracles, death, and resurrection, all of which were prophesied in the OT.

The Gospel according to John: Purpose

- John writes to persuade his readers to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (20:31).
- John writes to show that “Jesus is Israel’s Messiah, in whom God’s presence is enfleshed and who bridges the heaven-earth divide, who embodies God’s grace, glory, and truth, whose actions fulfill the words of scripture, and who brings the fullness of God’s gift of life to those who believe” (Wright and Bird 2019: 663).



John: a *précis*

Jesus is the Divine Word who manifested God's glory by tabernacling in human flesh, and he is the Paschal Lamb whose death brings eternal life to all who believe in him.



John and the Synoptics

John is like the Synoptics	John is unlike the Synoptics
The same broad structure of 1) John's baptism, 2) Jesus' Ministry, 3) Triumphal entry, 4) Passion and Crucifixion, and 5) Resurrection.	John has Jesus visiting Jerusalem several times, whereas the Synoptics focus on Jesus' Galilean ministry and bring him to Jerusalem at the end.
Jesus' Temple cleansing is paradigmatic for his entire ministry	John puts the Temple cleansing at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, whereas the Synoptics put it at the end.
Jesus' key disciples are the same, Peter confesses Jesus as Messiah / Holy One, Jesus is anointed by a woman, Joseph of Arimathea buries him, etc.	John's Jesus speaks in a very distinct way, using the same metaphors as John the Elder: light, dark, flesh, blood, water, Spirit, truth, Word, only-begotten, etc.
Jesus is crucified under Pontius Pilate, under the High Priesthood of Caiaphas, around the time of the Jewish Passover. John Presupposes the same four-part <i>kerygma</i> .	John follows the priestly calendar and consider Good Friday to Nisan 14, the day when the Lambs were sacrificed for Passover, The Synoptics follow the Galilean/Pharisaic calendar consider Good Friday to be Nisan 15, the first day of the Passover.

John: Complementary not Contradictory

- John was an eyewitness (John 1:14; 13:23; 19:35; 20:2; 21:24).
- John's Gospel was either written before the Synoptics, or after the Synoptics. If *GJohn* was written after the Synoptics, he probably drew from at least *GMark* and respected its authority.
- The differences in emphasis and wording (not to be misunderstood to be contradictions) between *GJohn* and the Synoptics could probably be explained if we consider John to be related to the priestly family (John 18:15), a Jerusalemite (not a Galilean), and a younger disciple who lived longer than the other disciples and wrote his Gospel later, as a "capstone" to the others.

Close Reading: John 1:14–18, 20:30–31

- What are the key words in these passages? Why are they important in the passage?
- What is the most important clause in each passage?
- How does this clause contribute to the main theme of the Gospel of John?
- How is this clause developed or unpacked in the rest of the Gospel of John?

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