

## SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**Author:** John the Apostle. While originally anonymous, we have had to rely on the internal, stylistic and grammatical evidence as well as external witnesses and records to confirm John's authorship of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel:

*The most important external information about authorship of the Gospel comes from Polycarp, who was martyred at Smyrna in Asia Minor in A.D. 156 at the age of eighty-six. Polycarp claimed to be associated with the apostle John, and information about this relationship appears in Eusebius's rendition of statements by Irenaeus (Eusebius, Church History 5.20.5-6). Concerning the authorship of the fourth Gospel, Irenaeus said, "John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3.1.1). Irenaeus identified the fourth evangelist as John and linked him with the beloved disciple mentioned in John 13:23.<sup>1</sup>*

At the end of the day, books upon books have been written about the authorship of the fourth gospel. The most straightforward reading of the evidence, both internal & external, points to the traditional view of John the son of Zebedee, the beloved disciple, as being the author of the gospel that bears his name.

**Date Written:** Anywhere between 85-100 A.D most likely while John was in Ephesus.

**Theme:** Jesus is the promised Messiah and Son of God.

### Quick Outline:

- I. The Eternal Word became Flesh (1:1–18)
- II. The Signs of the Messiah (1:19–12:50)
  - a. John the Baptist's witness and the first week of Jesus' ministry (1:19–2:11)
  - b. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to Gentiles (2:12–4:54)
  - c. Mounting opposition and additional signs (5:1–10:42)
  - d. Death and Resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus' anointing at Bethany, the Triumphal Entry (11:1–12:19)
  - e. The approaching Gentiles and the Messiah's rejection by the Jews (12:20–50)

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<sup>1</sup> Lea, Thomas; David Alan Black. *The New Testament: Its Background and Message* (p. 156). B&H Publishing. Kindle Edition.



- III. The Farewell Discourse and the Passion Narrative (13:1–20:31)
  - a. The Last Supper (13:1-38)
  - b. The Way, The Truth, The Life (14:1–31)
  - c. The True Vine (15:1-27)
  - d. The Gift and Role of the Holy Spirit (16:1-33)
  - e. The High Priestly Prayer (17:1-26)
- IV. The Suffering of the Son of God (18:1-20:31)
  - a. Jesus’ arrest, trials, death, and burial (18:1–19:42)
  - b. Jesus’ resurrection, appearances, and sending of his disciples (20:1–29)
  - c. Purpose statement: Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (20:30–31)
- V. The Ongoing Work of the Son of God (21:1–25)
  - a. Appearance to seven disciples (21:1-14)
  - b. Jesus’ conversation with Peter, *Feed my sheep* (21:15-25)

### Summary:

Originally written to the Greco-Roman and Jewish world in Ephesus in the last first century A.D., John, the Beloved Disciple, presents Jesus as the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, the long-awaited Messiah come to redeem mankind back to God. Aware of his non-Jewish audience, John frequently explains Jewish customs and geography while also translating Aramaic terms into Greek for this part of his audience to understand the events of Jesus’ ministry. To that end, John also leans towards his Jewish readers in his focus on Jesus fulfilling Old Testament prophecy thus proving He is the Messiah sent by God to not only reveal the one true God but also to provide redemption for humanity.

With 20:30-31 in view as John’s purpose in writing his gospel, it becomes clear John’s intent is purely evangelical:

*<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (CSB)*

John’s gospel is clearest in teaching the deity and preexistence of Christ (see 1:1-2, 18; 8:58; 17:5, 24; 20:28). When paired with Matthew’s focused genealogy and fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the Messiahship of Jesus is most clearly identified and proved. The two most pronounced aspects of the theme of John’s gospel are found in Jesus’ deity and the phrase “know and believe.” John emphasizes Jesus’ deity from the onset of his writing and records seven “I Am” statements made by Jesus. Following suit, John ensures his readers know eternal life with God is found in trusting/having faith in Jesus as His Son. The terms *know* and *believe* are important terms for John as he uses each word over ninety times in his gospel always as verbs. Putting these two focuses together reminded John’s first century readers and reminds us today that *knowing* God and *believing* in Jesus are both expressed in the visible actions of our lives.



## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

*This list is not intended to be exhaustive but a starting point to provide additional study tools should you desire to dig deeper. ~Bro. Mark*

### **STUDY BIBLES**

*Life Application Study Bible (NIV)*, Tyndale House Publishers, 2005.

*The Literary Study Bible (ESV)*, Crossway Bibles, 2007.

*ESV Study Bible*, Crossway Bibles, 2008.

*The Disciple's Study Bible (CSB)*, Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.

*CSB Study Bible*, Holman Bible Publishers, 2017.

*Archaeological Study Bible (NIV)*, Zondervan, 2005.

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED READING**

#### **Devotional Style Commentaries**

*The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 1: Matthew-Galatians*, Warren W. Wiersbe, Chariot Victor Publishing, 1989.

*John: Holman New Testament Commentary*, Stuart K. Weber, Author; Max Anders, Editor, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.

*NIV Application Commentary: John*, Gary M. Burge, Zondervan Publishers, 2000.

#### **Deeper Digging Commentaries**

*An Introduction to the New Testament*, D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, & Leon Morris, Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.

*The New Testament: Its Background and Message 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003.

*Luke-Acts, Revised: The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Editors: Tremper Longman, III & David E. Garland, Zondervan Publishers, 2005.

*John: That You May Believe (Preaching the Word Commentary)*, R. Kent Hughes, Crossway Bibles, 2014.

*John 1-11: New American Commentary*, Gerald L. Borchert, B&H Books, 1996.

*John 12-21: New American Commentary*, Gerald L. Borchert, B&H Books, 2002.

