

# THE STORY OF JOHN, THE APOSTLE

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The Gospel of John takes on the task of telling us who Jesus of Nazareth is from an inherently reflective perspective. Written by the youngest of Jesus' apostles, he takes a look back to describe Jesus. John refers to himself as the 'disciple whom Jesus loved'. John, the son of Zebedee and Salome, is the author of this Gospel.

The Gospel of John was written to prove that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. As an eyewitness to the love and power displayed in the miracles of Jesus, John gives us an up-close look at Christ's identity. He shows us that Jesus, though fully God, came in the flesh to distinctly and accurately reveal God, and that Christ is the source of eternal life to all who believe in Him.

John played a significant role in Jesus' life. He and his brother James are called the 'sons of thunder', most likely for their lively, zealous personalities. They were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus called them to follow Him. Of the twelve disciples, John, James, and Peter formed the inner circle, chosen by Jesus to become His closest companions. They had the exclusive privilege of witnessing and testifying about events in the life of Jesus that no others were invited to see.

John was present at the resurrection of Jarius' daughter, the transfiguration of Jesus, and he did not flee when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, instead, because of a previous relationship with Joseph Caiaphas, he was allowed to be present during the trial of Jesus, and he waited to hear Jesus charged with blasphemy and insurrection.

John is also the only recorded disciple to be present at Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified. He was also the one entrusted with Jesus' mother, Mary, when Jesus died on the cross. He was the first disciple to witness the empty tomb after the women's discovery, and he was there to see Jesus ascend to Heaven.

John served the church in Jerusalem for many years, then moved to work in the church at Ephesus. Early church legend holds that John was taken to Rome during a persecution and thrown into boiling oil, but emerged unhurt. He was then exiled to the island of Patmos. John supposedly out lived all the disciples, dying of old age at Ephesus, perhaps about A.D. 98.

While John was the youngest of the twelve apostles, he waited until late in his life to tell the account of what he saw and heard. It appears that John's purpose was to show who Jesus is and to demonstrate the truth of Jesus. He specifically covers seven statements and signs that Jesus is the Messiah. John's goal was to take those that thought Jesus was just a prophet, teacher, and miracle maker and prove that He was far more.

It is in this Gospel that Jesus refers to Himself in a divine manner. Often John describes conversations where Jesus revealed His divine role only to His disciples, which gives

the reader a sense of being brought inside the inner circle of understanding. There is a great emphasis on Jesus' miracles, but only in a way that emphasized His divinity rather than just to discuss a miracle, and it does not contain the parables and exorcisms as found in other Gospels.

Most scholars agree that the Gospel of John was written circa 85-90 A.D. and written primarily to new believers and seekers. John wrote the Gospel sometime after 70 A.D. and the destruction of Jerusalem, but prior to his exile on the island of Patmos. It was most likely written from Ephesus. Settings in the book include Bethany, Galilee, Capernaum, Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria.

Because John's gospel account was written late in his life, it gives the book a reflective and spiritual feel. He had time to think about the things he heard and saw, and wrote from a place of maturity and life experience.

He takes the writing to a deeper, spiritual place, allowing the reader to delve deeper into the life of Jesus, rather than just taking the story literally. He writes with simplicity in the original Greek, which makes this Gospel a good book for new believers. However, below the surface of John's writing are layers of rich and profound theology.

The predominant theme in the book of John is the revelation of God to man through his living illustration--Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. The opening verses beautifully describe Jesus as the Word. He is God revealed to man--the expression of God--so that we might see Him and believe. Through this Gospel we witness the everlasting power and nature of the Creator God, offering Eternal Life to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. In every chapter, Christ's deity is unveiled. The eight miracles recorded by John reveal His divine power and love. They are signs that inspire us to trust and believe in Him.

The Holy Spirit is a theme in John's Gospel as well. We are drawn to faith in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit; our belief is established through the indwelling, guiding, counseling, comforting presence of the Holy Spirit; and through the power of the Holy Spirit in us, the life of Christ is multiplied to others who believe.

The Gospel of John is often described as the most ecumenical. It does not make any attempts to reconcile other religions, thus it is where we find the statement, "I AM the Way, and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:16)

As he himself had a relationship with Jesus, John's Gospel puts forth a need for each individual to have their own personal relationship with Him. It is written in a way to make the reader focus on eternity and accepting Jesus as our personal Savior.

John also put a great deal of emphasis on the last teaching of Jesus and His death. He describes Jesus washing the disciples feet. Unlike the other Gospels, there are over five chapters that deal with the death of Jesus.

He preferred to focus on snippets of Jesus' life and death like this rather than His genealogy. Through these stories, John gives us the person of Jesus as the Son of God. He allows us to see the connection and unity of Jesus as Son and God as the Father.

John's Gospel is outlined as follows:

- John 1:1-2:11      The birth and preparation of Jesus
- John 2:12-12:50    The message and ministry of Jesus
- John 13:1-21:25    The death and resurrection of Jesus

Some key verses found in John are:

- John 1:14
- John 11:25-26
- John 20:30-31

Home Assignment: Let's read the Gospel of John and write down nuggets that the Lord shows you as you read through this book.