

The Gospel according to John

Introduction

What is a Gospel?

- * Story of Jesus—not biography but Good News
- * Four Gospels or Four-fold Gospel?
- * How many Gospels?
- * The authority of the Gospels: apostolic, eye-witnesses

The fourth of the Gospels is that of John, one of the disciples. To his fellow disciples and bishops, who had been urging him to write, he said, 'Fast with me from today to three days, and what will be revealed to each one let us tell it to one another.' In the same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the apostles, - that John should write down all things in his own name while all of them should review it. And so, though various elements may be taught in the individual books of the Gospels, nevertheless this makes no difference to the faith of believers, since by the one sovereign Spirit all things have been declared in all the Gospels: concerning the nativity, concerning the passion, concerning the resurrection, concerning life with his disciples, and concerning his two-fold coming; the first in lowliness when he was despised, which has taken place, the second glorious in royal power, which is still in the future. What marvel is it then, if John so consistently mentions these particular points also in his Epistles, saying about himself, 'What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears and our hands have handled, these things we have written to you?' For in this way he professes himself to be not only an eye-witness and hearer, but also a writer of all the marvellous deeds of the Lord, in their order. ...

But Hermas wrote the Shepherd very recently, in our times, in the city of Rome, while bishop Pius, his brother, was occupying the [episcopal] chair of the church of the city of Rome. And therefore it ought indeed to be read; but it cannot be read publicly to the people in church either among the Prophets, whose number is complete, or among the Apostles, for it is after [their] time. (*Muratorian Fragment*)

Origin of John

- * Author: The Apostle, another John, or a committee?
- * Place: Ephesus? → Gentile audience
- * Time: before AD 100. Before 70?

Relationship to other Gospels

- * The Synoptic Gospels (Mt, Mk, Lk): very similar, related (Lk 1:1–4)
 - Galilean ministry
 - Compressed timescale
 - Emphasis on short sayings, summaries, parables; Kingdom of God
 - Numerous accounts of Jesus' miracles

* John: almost entirely different

- Mainly in Jerusalem
- Several Jewish feasts: extended timescale
- Different cast of characters
- Long monologues by Jesus, no parables, Kingdom of God almost absent
- Only a few miracles
- Only overlap with Synoptics: Baptism, Feeding of 5,000, Passion (incl. cleansing of Temple)

Conclusion: Jn aware of others, but giving us another side of Jesus' ministry. Many similarities with St. Paul

Key themes

Jesus' identity: pre-existent Son of God—sent by the Father

Jesus' death as atonement

Predestination and God's gracious choice

Emphasis on faith and on God's love

Focus on love flowing from faith and the grace of God

Work of Holy Spirit

Outline (modified from Lutheran Study Bible, p. 1776)

I Prologue (1:1–18)

II Jesus' Ministry (1:19–10:42)

A John the Baptist and the first disciples (1:19–51)

B Early ministry (ch. 2–4)

C Rising opposition to Jesus' ministry (ch. 5–10)

III Preparation for Death (ch. 11–12)

III Passover and Holy Week (ch. 13–19)

A Farewell discourse (ch. 13–16)

B High-priestly prayer (ch. 17)

C Trial and passion (ch. 18–19)

IV Resurrection (ch. 20)

V Epilogue (ch. 21)