

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

— 1 John 4:1 —

What About the Gospel of John

When I began reading the Bible, I asked a friend where I should start. He suggested I begin with the Gospel of John. I believe he was right. The Gospel of John is a fitting introduction to Christ.

This may seem like a bit of Bible trivia, but there is a lesson to learn from it. There is nothing trivial about the Bible. The first four books of the New Testament are the gospels. They are biographies of Jesus' time on earth. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the synoptic gospels because of the similarity in their accounts of Jesus. The Gospel of John, however, is unique from the other three.

Authorship of the Gospel of John

None of the gospels identify their authorship. It is only by tradition that we presume to know who wrote them. The Gospel of John is the only one that gives us a hint of who its author might be. Let us begin with the end. After Jesus' resurrection, He appeared to some of His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias "the Sea of Galilee".

John 21:20-25 Then Peter, turning about, **seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved** following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and **what shall this man do?** Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? **This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.** And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

These verses tell us a few things about the author. He was that "disciple whom Jesus loved." He was the disciple leaning on Jesus at the last supper. He was the disciple coaxed by Peter to ask the Lord who would betray Him. It also tells us that he "is the disciple which testifieth of these things and wrote these things."

John was one of Jesus' chosen twelve disciples. Why would Peter, another one of the twelve, single out John to ask the Lord, "and what shall this man do?" If the writer of this book were one of the twelve disciples, there would have been no reason for Peter to ask what the Lord had intended for this man to do. If we go back to the beginning of chapter 21, we find who all was present at this meeting with the Lord.

John 21:1-2 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and **the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.**

We see here that seven brethren were present at this encounter with the Lord: Peter, Thomas,

Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples. John was one of the sons of Zebedee, along with his brother James. The writer of this book, therefore, could have been one of the “two other of his disciples.”

The Lord had many disciples other than His inner circle of twelve.

John 19:38-40 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, **being a disciple of Jesus**, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Luke 10:1 After these things the Lord appointed **other seventy also**, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

The writer mentions the “disciple whom Jesus loved” several times throughout the Gospel of John. Let us go back to the first mention of him at the last supper.

John 13:23-25 Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom **one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved**. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

The author refers to himself anonymously out of humility. The next time he appears is at the time of Jesus’ arrest.

John 18:15-16 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did another disciple*: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

When he is a part of the story, the author refers to himself as “the disciple whom the Lord loved” or “that other disciple.” Note that he was known to the high priest. We will understand why later. He next mentions himself at the crucifixion.

John 19:25-27 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and **the disciple standing by, whom he loved**, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour **that disciple took her unto his own home**.

Just prior to his crucifixion, Jesus told His twelve disciples,

John 16:32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

The disciple at the cross was not one of the twelve. They were scattered “every man to his own.” Jesus would not have given the responsibility of caring for His mother to one of the twelve disciples. Their mission was to spread the gospel around the world. We find the author at Jesus’ tomb in John 20:1-10.

The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and **to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved**, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and **that other disciple**, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran together: and **the other disciple** did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also **that other disciple**, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

After His resurrection when Jesus appeared to the seven disciples at the sea of Tiberias, the author was the first to recognize Him.

John 21:7 Therefore **that disciple whom Jesus loved** saith unto Peter, It is the Lord...

The Author

Now let us review what we know about the author. He sets himself apart as “**that disciple whom the Lord loved.**” He was not one of the twelve. He was at the last supper. In at least two of the encounters, he and Mary Magdalene were both present. The high priest knew of him. Jesus gave him the responsibility of caring for His mother. And he was the one who wrote the Gospel of John.

Lazarus

Some years ago my dad and I were discussing the Bible. My dad brought up the subject of the disciple whom the Lord loved asking, "who do you think he is?". At the time, neither of us knew there was any controversy over the authorship of the fourth gospel. His question intrigued me so I began to read the gospel over and over until one day I had an epiphany. As I was reading John 11 a realization came over me that this was the "disciple whom Jesus loved."

John 11:1-26 Now a certain *man* was sick, named *Lazarus*, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. “It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.” Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, **he whom thou lovest** is sick. When Jesus heard *that*, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. **Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.** When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, **Our friend Lazarus** sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said

Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him. Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat *still* in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And **whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die**. Believest thou this?

Remember in John 21:20-23, Peter asked Jesus of the disciple He loved, “Lord, what shall this man do?” Jesus responded, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee.” Then the brethren thought that that disciple would never die. In their minds, it reinforced what He said in John 11:26, “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”

John 11:27-36 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, **Behold how he loved him!**

The author was the “**disciple whom Jesus loved**.” In John 11:3, Lazarus’ sisters said, “...Lord, behold, **he whom thou lovest is sick**” and in John 11:36 the Jews said, “**Behold how he loved him**.”

John 11:37-46 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. **But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.**

Remember after Jesus’ arrest they took Him to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest? John 18:15 said that the other disciple that followed Him was known to the high priest. Why did the high priest know him? The resurrection of Lazarus was a famed event.

John 11:47-53 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. **Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.**

The high priest was aware of the resurrection of Lazarus. In John 12:10-11, the connection is more specific.

But the chief priests **consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death**; Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

Was Lazarus the one who leaned on Jesus at the last supper? It was common for Lazarus and his sisters to be among the inner circle of disciples as we see in John 12:1-2.

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: **but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.**

Jesus Authors All the Books of the Bible

Whether you accept, or not, the contention that Lazarus wrote the Gospel of John, you must admit that you cannot simply accept traditional beliefs without question. The titles of the Bible are not part of the original texts, neither are the chapter and verse divisions. The translators added them later when they compiled the books of the Bible. The authorship of the various books of the Bible is irrelevant. The same person wrote all of them! Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is the true author of the entire Bible. Through His Holy Spirit, He inspired individuals of God to record His message to us.

2 Peter 1:20-21 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

Only Jesus Saves