



GOSPEL OF JOHN 101

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

It seems like a book called the Gospel of John would have clear authorship. But as with much of life, it's a little more complicated. According to tradition, the Gospel of John—along with the Epistles (letters) of John and the Book of Revelation (which, together, are known as the Johannine works)—was written by John the Apostle, one of Jesus' original twelve disciples. This John is known by several names, including John the Evangelist and the Beloved Disciple.

Today, many scholars dispute the notion of a single author for the Johannine works—and even whether the Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle. However most scholars agree that the Gospel of John and the three letters were written around the same time (90-110 CE) and from the same community, probably Ephesus (now part of modern-day Turkey). The Book of Revelation was likely written by a different author, John of Patmos (also known as John the Divine or John the Revelator). Clearly a lot of important folks in the Bible were named John—and we would be helped by first, middle, and last names!

ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Of the four gospels, the Gospel of John stands on its own. It is not one of the synoptic gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called this because they contain many of the same stories and sometimes the same words. Indeed, John's approach and content are distinct from the other three gospels. This distinction is reflected in the wider church's lectionary cycle: Over the course of three years, we rotate reading through one of the three synoptic gospels. Meanwhile, the Gospel of John is sprinkled throughout the years. The familiar first verses of John—*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*—are always read on the first Sunday after Christmas.

The Gospel of John features the most beloved scripture of sign-waving sports fans: John 3:16. It includes the only mention of some well-known stories, including Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana, Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well, and Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

John is also different from the other gospels in the way it is written. The first three make heavy use of parables and description, creating vivid images of Jesus and his followers in first-century Palestine. John is more interested in theoretical, theological discourses about the divinity of Jesus and what it means to be a follower of Christ. Nevertheless, it is still a gospel—that is, a telling of the Good News—and it includes the preaching, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ.



The Gospel of John is divided into halves. The first half is a "Book of Signs," focusing on Jesus' ministry and miracles; the second half is often called the "Book of Glory," as it explores the death and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel is bookended by its well-known prologue and an epilogue (Jesus' appearance to the disciples after his resurrection) that many believe was later added to the text.

In John, we hear the great "I AM" statements: Each statement gives us insight into the nature of God. And in his discussion with the woman at the well (the longest recorded conversation Jesus has with anyone in scripture, man or woman), we hear Jesus compare himself to "living water." These passages are part of the gospel's exploration of "Christology"—understanding the nature and work of Jesus.

JOHN SOUNDBITES

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. *John 1:1*

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. *John 3:16*

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." *John 4:13-14*

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." *John 6:35*

I am the good shepherd. *John 10:14*

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. *John 13:34-35*

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." *John 14:6*

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." *John 20:18*

