

**INTRODUCTION TO JOHN'S GOSPEL**

**I. Overview**

**The Book of Signs: John 1-12**

1:1-18	1:19-51	2:1	4:54	5:1	10:42	11:1	12:50								
<b>Prologue</b>	<b>John the Baptist</b>	<b>Institutions of Judaism</b>		<b>Festivals of Judaism</b>		<b>Fulfillment of Judaism</b>									
		Purity Laws (2)	The Temple (2)	A Rabbi (3)	<i>Excursus on John the Baptist 3:22-36</i>	A Holy Mountain (4)	<b>Sabbath (5)</b>	<i>Healing of Paralytic (5:1-15)</i>	<b>Passover (6)</b>	<b>Tabernacles (7-8)</b>	<i>Healing of Man Born Blind (9:1-41)</i>	<b>Dedication (10)</b>	Lazarus: Death & Resurrection (11)	Plot to Kill Jesus (11)	Jesus Anointed (12)
		<b>Cana</b> First sign 2:1-11		<b>Cana</b> Second sign 4:46-54											

**The Book of Glory: John 13-21**

13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
<b>Jesus' farewell discourse: 13:31-16:33</b>				<b>The priestly prayer of Jesus</b>	<b>Arrest and Trial</b>	<b>Death</b>	<b>Life</b>	<b>Appendix</b>
<b>Footwashing Betrayal</b>	<b>The Holy Spirit and . . .</b>							
	<i>Hope</i> 14:15-20 14:25-27	<i>Trials</i> 15:18-27 16:7-11	<i>Revelation</i> 16:12-15 16:25-28					
Preparing for the coming of darkness				Darkness comes		Triumph of the light		

Burge: "John is telling us more about Jesus' messianic impact on Judaism than he is about the sequence of events in Jesus' ministry" (Burge 2000:43). FG is thematically, not chronologically, arranged.

## II. The Enigma of John's Gospel

### A. Shrouded in mystery

This Gospel, which we call John, is shrouded in mystery. Everything we want to know about it is uncertain and everything about it that is knowable is a matter of dispute.<sup>1</sup>

For example:

- It is not clear who wrote it.
- We really don't know when and where it was written.
- It is unclear to whom it was written.
- For a long time it was assumed to be written to Greeks, but now many scholars believe it was written to Jews.

### B. Material found *only* in the Fourth Gospel, not in the Synoptics

Scholars estimate that about 90 percent of the material in John is unique and has no parallel in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

1. **Prologue** (1:1-18)
2. Wedding/Miracles at Cana (2:1-12)
3. Dialogue with **Nicodemus** (2:23—3:21)
4. Samaritan Woman at the Well (4:1-42)
5. Healing of a Sick Man at Pool of Bethesda (5:1-18)
6. New Details at Feeding of 5000 (6:1b, 3-6, 8-9, 12b, 14-15)
7. **Bread of Life Discourse** (6:22-65)
8. [Woman caught in Adultery (7:53—8:11)]
9. Giving Sight to a Man Born Blind (9:1-41)
10. Raising of **Lazarus** (11:1-44)
11. Washing of the Disciples' Feet (13:1-20)
12. Last Supper Discourses, including "**Paraclete**" & "Vine and Branches" (13:31—16:33)
13. The "Disciple Whom Jesus Loved" (13:23-25; 19:26-27; 20:2-10; 21:7, 20-24; cf. 18:15-16?)
14. **Great Prayer** of Jesus (17:1-26)
15. New Details at the Crucifixion (19:20-24, 26-28, 30-37, 39)
16. Resurrection Appearance to Mary Magdalene alone (20:11-18; cf. Matt 28:9)
17. Resurrection Appearance to **Thomas** (20:24-29)
18. Resurrection Appearance at the Sea of Galilee (21:1-25; cf. Luke 5:1-11)

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<sup>1</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, xxxii.

### C. Material from the Synoptics, but *not* in the Fourth Gospel

Note: Have students compare the “baptism” narratives. Does John baptize Jesus?

1. No **Baptism** of Jesus—but see 1:19-34 (John testifies about Jesus)
2. No Infancy Narrative—but see John 1:14 ("the Word became flesh")
3. No Childhood Episodes—but see 1:12; 13:33; 21:5 (believers called "children")
4. **No Temptation in the Desert**—but see 8:44; 13:2, 27 (the role of Satan & the Devil)
5. No Call for Repentance—but see 1:29; 5:14; 9:41; 15:22; 20:23 (on sin & forgiveness)
6. No list of "Twelve Apostles"—but see 1:35-51; 21:2 (sm groups & lists of disciples)
7. No **Parables**—but see 10:6; 15:1-8; 16:25, 29 (use of "figures of speech" and metaphor)
8. No **Exorcisms**—but see 7:20; 8:48-52; 10:19-21 (Jesus accused of having a "demon")
9. No **Transfiguration**—but see 1:45; 3:14; 5:45-47; 9:28-29 (Jesus associated with Moses)
10. No Passion Predictions—but see 5:18; 11:50-53 & 18:14; 12:24-25 (talk of Jesus' death)
11. No **Last Supper**—but see 6:22-59; 13:1-20 (Bread of Life Discourse)
12. Almost No Predictions of Jesus' Return—but see 14:3; 21:22-23 (Jesus will "come")

### D. Material Significantly Different in John and the Synoptics

Synoptics	Fourth Gospel
1 Jesus' ministry lasts about <b>one year</b>	Jesus' ministry spans <b>three Passovers</b> (2:13; 6:4; 11:55)
2 <b>Only one</b> journey to Jerusalem (e.g., Lk 9:51)	<b>Multiple</b> Journeys to Jerusalem (2:13; 5:1; 7:10)
3 First Disciples called are Simon & Andrew, James & John (Mk 1:16, 19)	First Disciples are Andrew, an anonymous second one, Simon Peter, Philipp, Nathanael (1:35-51)
4 Temple cleansing <b>one week before</b> Jesus' death (Mk 11:12-17)	Temple cleansing at the <b>beginning</b> of Jesus' ministry (2:13ff)
5 Jesus' ministry <b>begins after</b> John the Baptist's arrest	Jesus' ministry <b>overlaps</b> with John (3:22-24)
6 Anointing at Bethany by anonymous woman, and objection by anonymous people	Anointing at Bethany by Lazarus' sister Mary, and objection by Judas Iscariot (12:1-8)
7 Last Supper <b>is</b> the Passover Meal	Last Supper <b>is before</b> Passover (13:1; 18:28)
8 Jesus dies on <b>the Day of Passover</b> (Matt 26:17; Mk 14:12; Luke 22:7)	Jesus dies on <b>the Preparation Day</b> , the day before Passover (18:28; see 13:1; 19:14, 31, 42)
9 Many miracles, but <b>few</b> longer speeches	Only a few "signs" but <b>several</b> long monologues and dialogues
10 Opponents of Jesus include Sadducees, Herodians, Pharisees, Scribes.	Jesus' opponents are usually called " <b>the Jews</b> " or "the world"

	Synoptics	Fourth Gospel
11	<b>Love your neighbors; love your enemies</b> (Mk 12:29-31; Mt. 5:43)	<b>Love one another; focus within community</b> (Jn 13:34-35; 1 Jn 4:7-8)
12	Peter is the first, most prominent "apostles"	Martha of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, and the "Beloved Disciple" are the prominent disciples
13	<b>Future</b> Eschatology (Imminent)	<b>Realized</b> Eschatology (Present)
14	Main focus: " <b>Kingdom of God</b> "	Main focus: " <b>Eternal Life</b> " and <b>Jesus himself</b>

## E. Develops and Expands Earlier Traditions

### 1. The "Son of God" tradition

FG develops the tradition that identifies Jesus as "the Son of God." We can see that by how many times God is identifies as Jesus' Father and by how many times Jesus is called "Son" or "Son of God."

Look at the following chart and notice how the tradition increases from Mark to John.

Jesus referred to as the divine son					
Terms	Mark	Q	Luke	Matthew	John
Father	<b>3</b>	4	4	31	<b>100</b>
The Father	<b>1</b>	1	2	1	<b>73</b>
Son	<b>2</b>	3	5	8	<b>23</b>
Son of God	<b>5</b>	2	5	8	<b>2</b>
Total	<b>11</b>	10	16	48	<b>205</b>

John did not invent the idea that Jesus was God's Son. Rather, he enlarged an element of Christian tradition that was already present in earlier Christian tradition. As the statistics suggest, the claim that Jesus was God's Son, that God was his Father, seems to have expanded over the years.

### 2. The central focus changes

The central focus of the Gospels changes with FG. In the Synoptic Gospels, we get the impression that the "kingdom of God" was a key concept for Jesus' preaching and teaching.

In contrast, John's Gospel *never* shows Jesus preaching or proclaiming the kingdom of God. The phrase is found twice times, but not on Jesus lips (Jn 3:3, 5); however, Jesus uses “my kingdom” three times (Jn 18:19 thrice).

Rather, in FG Jesus’ preaching and teaching center on himself. In FG, the KG sayings decrease, whereas the “I am” sayings increase dramatically.

Central focus shifts from proclaiming Kingdom of God to Jesus				
Terms	Mark	Luke	Matthew	John
Kingdom of God	18	37	47	5 <sup>2</sup>
“I am” sayings	9	10	17	118

This provides a clue regarding why the Fourth Gospel is so different from the other Synoptic Gospels. FG was expanding (elaborating on) earlier traditions about Jesus.

Two types of “I am” sayings:

- (1) **Absolue Form.** Jesus presents himself as the "I am," using an absolute form; e.g., "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58).
- (2) **Predicative Form.** The “I am” followed by a predicate; e.g., "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). See appendix for more details.

## F. Other unique characteristics of the Fourth Gospel

### 1. Jesus as God

#### a. Explicit Statements

There are three explicit statements about Jesus’ divinity.

**Jn. 1:1.** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (NRSV)  
 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

**Jn 1:18.** No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. (NRSV)  
 Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε· μονογενὴς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς

<sup>2</sup> Jn 3:3, 5; 18:19 (thrice).

ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

**Jn 20:28.** Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (NRSV)  
ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου.

## b. Allusions

There are cases where Jesus' use of "I am" alludes to or parallels Yahweh's use.

**Jn 8:58** Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." (NRSV)  
εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί.

**Deut. 32:39** See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me. (NRSV)  
ἴδετε ἴδετε ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς πλὴν ἐμοῦ

**Isa. 46:4.** Even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save. (NRSV)  
ἕως γήρου ἐγὼ εἰμι καὶ ἕως ἂν καταγηράσῃτε ἐγὼ εἰμι ἐγὼ ἀνέχομαι ὑμῶν ἐγὼ ἐποίησα καὶ ἐγὼ ἀνήσω ἐγὼ ἀναλήμψομαι καὶ σώσω ὑμᾶς

## c. Incarnational language

John 1:14 insists that the Word became flesh (*sarx*)!

**Jn 1:14.** And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (NRSV)  
Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

Here, FG provides the foundation for the Christian doctrine of incarnation; that is, belief that God became (incarnated himself) in a human being, Jesus. FG doesn't articulate this explicitly, but provides a statement that others have used to formulate the doctrine.

It is important to note that, if John attributes divinity to Jesus, he also emphatically insists that Jesus was also human—flesh (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 2:19; 2 Jn 7).

## 2. The Disciple who Jesus loved

**Jn 13:23.** One of his disciples-- the one whom Jesus loved-- was reclining next to him;  
(NRSV)

### 3. Symbolism

#### a. Lamb of God

**Jn 1:29.** The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (NRSV)

**Jn 1:36.** and as he [John] watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" (NRSV)

#### b. "I am" sayings (see appendix)

- 1) I am the bread of life (6:35, 48, 51)
- 2) I am the light of the world (8:12, 9:5)
- 3) I am the gate/door (10:7, 9)
- 4) I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14)
- 5) I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)
- 6) I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)
- 7) I am the true vine (15:1, 5)

#### c. Dualistic imagery of light and darkness

**Jn 1:5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.(NRSV)

**Jn 3:19.** And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.(NRSV)

**Jn 8:12.** Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (NRSV)

**Jn. 9:1-41** - narrative of man born blind!

**Jn 12:35** <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them. (NRSV)

**Jn 12:46** I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. (NRSV)

#### d. Sacramental symbols” (controversial)

1) References to **water** (3:5; 4:10-15; 5:2-7; 7:37-39; 9:7)

**Jn 3:5** Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit." (NRSV)

**Jn 7:37-39.** <sup>37</sup> On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, <sup>38</sup> and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" <sup>39</sup> Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (NRSV)

2) References to **bread** (6:5-13, 28-58; 21:9-13)

**Jn 6:35.** <sup>35</sup> 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. (NRSV)

**Jn 6:51.** <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." (NRSV)

3) References to **wine** (2:1-10)

**Jn 2:9.** <sup>9</sup> When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom. (NRSV)

4) References to **blood** (6:53-56; 19:34)

**Jn 6:53-54.** <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; (NRSV)

**Jn 19:34.** <sup>34</sup> Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (NRSV)

Question: Why do you think FG does not contain an account of Jesus being baptized or of Jesus giving the words of institution for the Lord's Supper?

#### **4. Misunderstanding motif**

Various characters fail to understand what Jesus means. They literalize what is meant to be symbolic.

##### **a. The Jews misunderstand: Will you raise the temple in three days?**

**Jn 2:19-20.** Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 2:21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. (NRSV)

##### **b. Nicodemus misunderstands: How can one be born again/above?**

**Jn 3:3-4.** <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" (NRSV)

##### **c. The crowd misunderstands: Are you advocating cannibalism?**

**Jn 6:51-53.** <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." <sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (NRSV)

##### **d. The disciples misunderstand: What food?**

**Jn 4:31-34.** <sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." <sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.

The crowd misunderstands when Jesus describes his divine destiny as going where they cannot (7:33-36; 8:21-22; cf. 13:33-37 with Peter).

### **e. Purpose of the motif**

The purpose of the misunderstanding motif is to sensitize readers to look for multiple or deeper layers of meaning throughout the narrative, to look for symbolism even where there is no obvious misunderstanding.

## **5. Jesus' teaching style**

In the Synoptics, we find aphorisms, short parables, and only a few longer exemplary stories. But in John we find long monologues by Jesus on abstract notions:

- Jesus' authority (5:19-30)
- Jesus witnesses – Torah, Moses, Father (5:31-47)
- Bread from heaven (6:25-70)
- Light of the world (8:12-59)
- Jesus' "hour" (12:23-36)
- Jesus' farewell address (14:1-16:33)
- Jesus' prayer (17:1-26)

## **6. Emphasis on the Spirit (Paraclete—14:26; 15:26; 16:7)**

The Spirit is referred to as the Paraclete, which is often translated in English version as "the Comforter," "the Counselor," or "the Advocate" (14:26; 15:26; 16:7).

The Spirit is promised by Jesus (7:37-39 and 14:16-17), but the Spirit can only come after he leaves (16:7). John even records Jesus giving the Spirit directly to his disciples (20:22). This is similar to Luke-Acts.

The primary function of the Spirit is to teach and reveal after Jesus' departure (14:25-26; 16:13; cf. 2:22 and 7:37-39).

## **7. Jesus' miracles are called "signs"**

In the Synoptics, Jesus refuses to work signs (Matt 12:38-39; Lk 11:29-32) and links signs with false prophets (Mk 13:22).

But in John, signs lead people to faith (Jn 20:30-31), yet also betrays some reservation about the value of signs (Jn 4:48).

On the one hand, people are encouraged to believe based on the work they have seen (9:16; 10:38). On the other hand, there is a special blessing on those who "have not seen and yet have come to believe" (20:29).

## 8. Jesus' crucifixion is his exaltation

Whereas the Synoptics show Jesus predicting his death three times (Mk 8:31-32; 9:31; 10:33-34), FG shows Jesus saying that he will be "lifted up" three times (3:14; 8:28; 12:32-34).

**John 3:13-14.** <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up (ὑψόω), (NRSV)

**Jn 8:28**

**Jn 12:32-34.**

What does *hupsoō* mean? the Greek word, *hupsoō*, which literally means "to lift up," is used with double meaning (a double entendre) for both *being lifted up on the cross* and *being killed and for exaltation*. In other words, Jesus' crucifixion is his exaltation. Jesus' suffering is the way to glorification!

## 9. Jesus' opponents are "the Jews" (*hoi Ioudiaoi*)

### a. Most caustic polemic in NT

The invective against *the Jews* in the Fourth Gospel (hereafter FG) is widely recognized as some of the most caustic polemic in the NT.

### b. Anti-Semitic overtones

Sandmel states "John is widely regarded as either the most anti-Semitic or at least the most overtly anti-Semitic of the gospels."<sup>3</sup> We need only look at the use of John throughout history, from Chrysostom to Luther to Nazi Germany.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sandmel (1978) 101.

<sup>4</sup> Motyer (1997) 2-3.

During the reformation, Martin Luther quoted Jn 8:44 as a presupposition for castigating Jews in his 1543 treatise, "On the Jews and Their Lies."<sup>5</sup>

Within the last century, the first page of a children's picture-book published in Nazi Germany has the slogan, *Der Vater der Juden ist der Teufel*, an obvious allusion to Jn 8:44 where Jesus says to *the Jews*, "You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires."<sup>6</sup> It is not surprising; therefore, that some scholars identify Johannine passages like Jn 8:44-47 as "the road to Auschwitz."<sup>7</sup>

### c. Judeans or Jews?

Even with efforts to dampen or explain why FG uses such a harsh tone, FG lends itself to anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish interpretations. A major reason for this involves FG's distinct use of the term *hoi Ioudaioi* (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι), which can be translated as either *the Judeans* (stressing the geographic connotation) or *the Jews* (stressing the religious and ethnic connotations).<sup>8</sup>

### d. Tensions and ambiguities

As we will see, what FG says about the *Ioudaioi* can sound harsh and anti-Semitic. The harsh tone is amplified by the fact that FG uses the term *Ioudaioi* more frequently than all the other Gospels combined.<sup>9</sup>

A surface reading of FG reveals several tensions and ambiguities:<sup>10</sup>

First, at least some Ἰουδαῖοι are inhabitants of Ἰουδαία (*Judea*) and, therefore, can be called Judeans (e.g., Jn 7:1).<sup>11</sup> In fact, when the term Ἰουδαῖοι is used to describe non-authority figures in FG, it is found thirty-six times in a Judean context, but only twice in a Galilean context (Jn 6:41, 52).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Luther's Works, Vol 47, 121-306, esp. 172, 268-272. Hillerbrand (1990) 127-50 argues that prior to 1530, Luther spoke more positively about the Jews, but after that Luther took a more polemic stance against those who, in his mind, were opposed to the gospel. This included Anabaptists and Catholics and not just Jews.

<sup>6</sup> Motyer (1997) 1.

<sup>7</sup> Freudmann (1994) 267. Ruether (1974) 28, 116 argues that "there is no way to rid Christianity of its anti-Judaism," because the roots of Christianity go back to the "dispute between Christianity and Judaism over the messiahship of Jesus."

<sup>8</sup> On the difficulty of translating Ἰουδαῖοι, see Lowe (1976) and Meeks (1975) 182.

<sup>9</sup> The adjective, Ἰουδαῖος, occurs 71 times in the FG, 68 in the plural form. In contrast, Matthew uses it five times; Mark, six times; Luke, five times. Only Acts uses it more frequently (79 times).

<sup>10</sup> Kysar (1993) 114-7.

<sup>11</sup> Jn 7:1; 11:7-8; 11:54 (cf. 11:17). Two texts may be exceptions (Jn 6:41, 52). See Ashton (1994) 49-51 and Lowe (1976) 101-30.

<sup>12</sup> So Lowe (1976) 122.

Second, the narrator does not identify with the Ἰουδαῖοι and distances readers from them. This is accomplished with phrases like “the feast of the Jews” (not “*our* feast”)<sup>13</sup> and “your law” (not “*our* law”),<sup>14</sup> by explaining Aramaic and Hebrew words and customs as if the reader was an outsider,<sup>15</sup> and by presenting the Ἰουδαῖοι as if they were an alien group from Jesus and the disciples.<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, distancing the reader from the Ἰουδαῖοι is accomplished by depicting them as opponents of Jesus, who is the hero of FG. The Ἰουδαῖοι not only misunderstand Jesus,<sup>17</sup> they oppose him<sup>18</sup> and seek to kill him.<sup>19</sup>

Third, the Ἰουδαῖοι are characterized as unfaithful to the Torah (Jn 7:19), children of the devil (Jn 8:44), lacking knowledge of scripture (Jn 5:39), not listening to Moses (5:45-47), ignorant of God (8:19), and idolatrous (Jn 5:44; 19:15).

Fourth, the φαρισαῖοι (*pharisees*) and the ἀρχιερεῖς (*high priests*) are distinct sub-groups within the Ἰουδαῖοι<sup>20</sup> and, together, they function as leaders and authority figures,<sup>21</sup> though at one point the Pharisees are distinguished from certain unnamed ἀρχόντοι (*rulers*) who believe.<sup>22</sup> As a sub-group within the Ἰουδαῖοι, the φαρισαῖοι (*Pharisees*) are often interchangeable with Ἰουδαῖοι.<sup>23</sup>

Fifth, the φαρισαῖοι (*pharisees*) and the ἀρχιερεῖς (*high priests*) sharply oppose,<sup>24</sup> seek to apprehend,<sup>25</sup> and try to kill Jesus.<sup>26</sup> In return, Jesus describes them as blind guides and false leaders.<sup>27</sup> FG also gives the impression that the φαρισαῖοι (*pharisees*) and the ἀρχιερεῖς (*high priests*) are solely responsible for Jesus' arrest, trial, and death.<sup>28</sup> It appears as if Pilate hands Jesus over to the ἀρχιερεῖς (*high priests*) for execution,<sup>29</sup> though στρατιῶται (*Roman soldiers*) exact the penalty.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jn 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 11:55.

<sup>14</sup> Jn 8:17; 10:34.

<sup>15</sup> Jn 2:6; 4:9; 19:40, 42; cf. Also Jn 1:38, 41-42.

<sup>16</sup> Jn 11:8; 13:13; 18:20, 36.

<sup>17</sup> Jn 2:20-21; 3:4-10; 6:41; 8:57.

<sup>18</sup> Jn 2:18; 6:41; 7:13, 35; 8:48, 57, 59; 9:22; 19:7, 12, 38; 20:19.

<sup>19</sup> 5:16-18; 7:1; 8:59; 10:31, 33, 39; 11:8; 18:12

<sup>20</sup> Jn 7:32, 35; 19:21.

<sup>21</sup> Jn 7:32, 45; 11:47, 57; 18:3.

<sup>22</sup> Jn 12:42.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Jn 1:19 & 1:24; 7:32 & 7:35; 8:13 & 8:22; 9:13-16 & 9:19; 9:22 & 12:42; 9:40 & 10:19.

<sup>24</sup> Jn 4:1; 8:13; 12:42.

<sup>25</sup> Jn 7:32.

<sup>26</sup> Jn 5:18; 7:1; 8:59; 10:31, 9; 11:46-53.

<sup>27</sup> Jn 9:40-41 and the discourse of 10:1-18.

<sup>28</sup> Jn 18:3, 12, 19ff, 31, 38-40; 19:4-8, 12-16. Cf. Kysar (1993) 116 and Granskou (1986) 214.

<sup>29</sup> Jn 19:15-16.

<sup>30</sup> Jn 19:23.

Sixth, and ironically, one gets the impression that the Ἰουδαῖοι should be differentiated from John the Baptist,<sup>31</sup> the Galileans,<sup>32</sup> the crowds in Jerusalem,<sup>33</sup> the parents of the blind man,<sup>34</sup> the Ephraimites,<sup>35</sup> Martha,<sup>36</sup> the disciples,<sup>37</sup> and Joseph of Arimathea.<sup>38</sup> It is puzzling why the narrator never tells the reader that these groups or individuals are Ἰουδαῖοι also.

Seventh, further ambiguity is added when we read that Jesus himself is a Ἰουδαῖος<sup>39</sup> (Jn 4:9; 18:35) and that salvation is from the Ἰουδαῖοι (Jn 4:22). Jesus is even called οἱ βασιλευὶ τῶν Ἰουδαίων (*the king of the Jews*) seven times.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, certain Ἰουδαῖοι are neutral inquirers or admirers of Jesus,<sup>41</sup> while others even believe in him.<sup>42</sup> Even Nicodemus, a leader of the Ἰουδαῖοι, defends Jesus' rights and eventually helps bury him.<sup>43</sup> The Ἰουδαῖοι are deeply divided on the issue of Jesus.<sup>44</sup>

Lastly, the religious commitments of the Ἰουδαῖοι are also severely criticized. From the perspective of the implied author of FG, the Judaism of the Ἰουδαῖοι falls desperately short of the ideal Judaism of true *Israel* (Ἰσραήλ).<sup>45</sup> Somehow—and scholars are divided on this issue—Jesus is presented as *correcting*, *reinterpreting*, or *abrogating* the Judaism of the Ἰουδαῖοι.<sup>46</sup>

In sum, although the irregular use of Ἰουδαῖοι undermines any one-dimensional explanation, it is hard to deny that, on the whole, the Ἰουδαῖοι, and the Judaic

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<sup>31</sup> Jn 1:19.

<sup>32</sup> Jn 4:43-45.

<sup>33</sup> Jn 7:13; 12:17.

<sup>34</sup> Jn 9:18.

<sup>35</sup> Jn 11:54.

<sup>36</sup> Jn 11:19, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Jn 13:33.

<sup>38</sup> Jn 19:38.

<sup>39</sup> Jn 4:9; 18:35.

<sup>40</sup> Jn 18:3, 39; 19:3, 14, 19, and 21 (twice). Jesus is also called ὁ βασιλεύς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ twice (1:47; 12:13).

<sup>41</sup> Jn 7:15; 10:24; 11:36.

<sup>42</sup> Jn 8:31; 11:45; 12:11.

<sup>43</sup> Jn 7:50-51; 19:39.

<sup>44</sup> Jn 10:19; (cf. 1:11-12; 7:43; 9:9, 16).

<sup>45</sup> On a historical level, FG represents one form of Judaism criticizing another. The first century exhibits multiple Judaic systems (beliefs and practices) that nevertheless share a “common and unifying core” [so Dunn (1991) 18, 143] or reveal a social order linked to the Torah and identified as *Israel* [so Chilton and Neusner (1995) xvi, 8, 22-23, 42-44]. Pancaro (1974-75) 398-403 argues that FG presents a sharp contrast between the Johannine community as the true *Israel* (Ἰσραήλ), of whom Nathanael is a symbolic figure (Jn 1:47), and a false Israel, whom the Ἰουδαῖοι represent. A true *Israelite* (Ἰσραηλίτης) (1:47) recognizes Jesus as the one to whom Moses points (1:45) and then believes in him (1:50). In contrast, the Ἰουδαῖοι do not listen to Moses (5:45-47) and therefore do not believe in Jesus (5:39-40). The contrast between people from *Judea* (Ἰουδαία) and true *Israel* (Ἰσραήλ) is also made by the authorship of the Damascus Document, who prefers the self-designation of *Israel* (CD 3.19) and who will “no more consort with the house of Judah” (4.11). Simply put, FG exemplifies the type of intra-Jewish polemic characteristic of other early Jewish literature. Also see Dunn (1991) 143-6 on the distinction between Ἰουδαῖοι and Ἰσραήλ.

<sup>46</sup> Smiga (1992) 11-23 presents three basic ways in which scholars have interpreted Jesus' relationship to historical forms of Judaism: *prophetic polemic*, *subordinating polemic*, or *abrogating anti-Judaism*.

system they represent, have a negative role to play in FG. To whom did the term refer?

- All ethnic Jews: No. FG uses the term in more limited ways.
- Judeans: People from the land of Judea? Historical evidence suggests that the term Ἰουδαῖοι primarily had regional-geographical connotations during the first-century.<sup>47</sup>
- Jewish authorities: Von Wahlde argues that when the term is used in the “characteristically Johannine way”—*when it refers to people hostile to Jesus*—it does not refer to common Jews, but to certain *Jewish authorities*.<sup>48</sup>

### 10. Distinctive ethic: Love one another (13:34-35; 15:12)

Not love God and neighbor (Mk 12:29-31)

Not “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:43-44)

Rather, “love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12).

Especially, keep this New Commandment “that you love one another” (13:34-25)

### G. Let John Be John

We do a disservice to the Fourth Gospel if we too quickly explain away all of these discontinuities between John and the other Gospels. It is a temptation to try to harmonize John with the other Gospels, which invariably ends up distorting the Gospels themselves.

For example, it is often asserted that Jesus must have cleansed the Temple twice, once at the beginning of his ministry (as in John) and once at the end (as in the Synoptics). The problem is, none of the Gospels support this! It is better if we “Let John be John.”

### III. The Origin of the Fourth Gospel

The material of the Fourth Gospel is very different from the other Gospels. So, where did the author of the Fourth Gospel get his material?

It is often asserted that one of Jesus' apostles wrote the Gospel based on his recollections of Jesus. However, after careful analysis, very few scholars believe that the Fourth Gospel preserves traditions that go *directly* back to Jesus or *directly* back to the Apostle John.

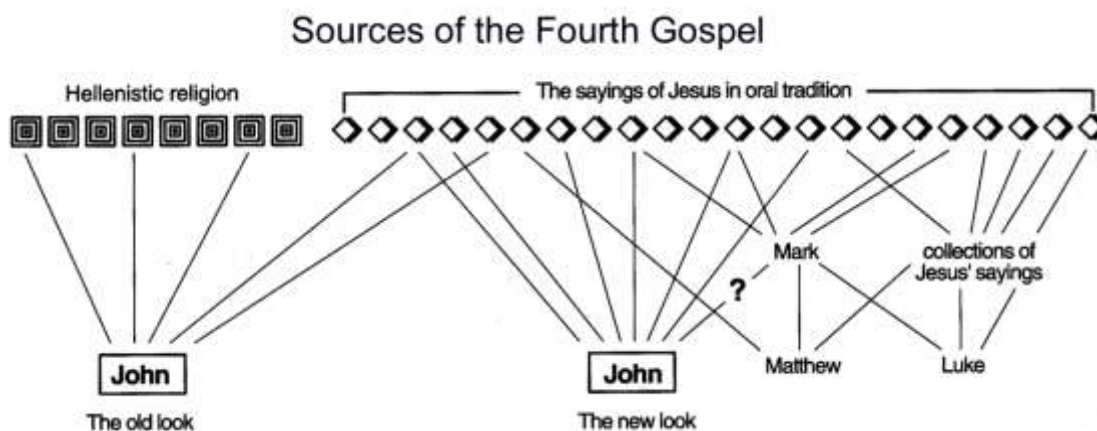
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<sup>47</sup> Lowe (1976) 104-5 provides several strands of evidence and rationale.

<sup>48</sup> Von Wahlde (1982) 33-60; see also Brown (1966) lxxi and (1979) 41; Barrett (1978) 172; Beasley-Murray (1987) lxxxix; Smith (1990) 82; Ashton (1991) 136, 151-2; Dunn (1991) 157; Kysar (1993) 118; Ridderbos (1997) 231.

As the diagram shows, some scholars believe that the author of John's Gospel borrowed *some* material from Mark, but that most of his material came from sources independent of the Synoptic Gospels.

Scholars use to believe that the Fourth Gospel drew material from Hellenistic religion, but in the last 30 years scholars have increasingly realized that the Fourth Gospel reflects very Jewish traditions that circulated among early Jewish Christians.



#### IV. Literary and Oral Sources for the Fourth Gospel

If sources were used, what were they? It is largely guesswork, but there are some proposals.

##### A. Sign Source Document

A number of scholars have argued that the author of the Fourth Gospel used a "sign source." Within the Gospel the word "sign" (*semeion* = σημειον) is used 17 times to refer to miracles performed by Jesus. John 2-12 recounts seven miracles/signs of Jesus.

- 1) Water to Wine (2:1-12)
- 2) Healing Royal Official's son (4:46-54)
- 3) Healing the Paralytic (5:1-9)
- 4) Feeding 5000 (6:1-13)
- 5) Walking on Water (6:15-25)
- 6) Healing the Man Born Blind (9:1-7)
- 7) Raising Lazarus (11:1-44)

\* Miraculous Catch of Fish (21:1-8)

## **B. Revelation-Discourse Document**

Bultmann proposed that the writer of John used "revelation-discourses" similar to Gnostic or Hellenistic revelatory writings. Each discourse has a tripartite pattern:

- A deity or Revealer presents himself and his significance,
- Then the Revealer invites people to come to him, and
- Result: The acceptance or rejection of the Revealer is made know in a promise or threat.

## **C. Passion Document**

This would include the account of Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, which is distinct from the Synoptics. This could have come from "the beloved disciple."

## **D. Preaching Material**

Many scholars believe that much of the Fourth Gospel was originally (oral) preaching material, which was added along the way.<sup>49</sup> These may have been sermons by the beloved disciples or another prominent member of the community.

## **E. Different Redactors**

A "redactor" is a fancy name for an editor. The Fourth Gospel shows signs of having gone through several editions or redactions. Each redactor added and shaped the material. The second to last redactor is often referred to as the *Evangelist*. The last redactor added the ending to chapter 21.

## **V. How was the Gospel was built?**

### **A. Editorial Layers**

Although none of the proposed sources can be established with certainty, most scholars would believe that John's Gospel in the form we now have it passed through stages of editing. The Gospel shows signs of editing or redaction.

That is, the Gospel of John appears to be made up of a variety of editorial layers. The Gospel is made up of a collection of stories about Jesus, teachings of Jesus, miracles by Jesus, and some things that were never said by Jesus during his earthly life.

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<sup>49</sup> Beasley-Murray, *John*, xli.

What evidence do scholars have that the Gospel is the product of splicing together various stories and sayings of Jesus? Is there any evidence that the Gospel is the work of one or more editors?

There are two kinds of evidence: *parenthetical remarks* and *narrative irregularities*.<sup>50</sup>

## **B. Parenthetical remarks ("reader helps")**

When we read the Fourth Gospel, we frequently run into comments by the author that seem to interrupt the narrative in order to explain something to the reader. Such parenthetical remarks indicate that the author is using sources that the original readers would not fully understand.

### **1. First example: Jn 1:41-42**

Look at Jn 1:41 — "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).

Look at Jn 1:42 — "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Indicates that the author wanted to keep the original wording of his source, but know that the reader would not understand, so he had to explain it.

### **2. Second example: Jn 2:21-22**

Look at Jn 2:21-22. Here the author explains what Jesus meant about raising the temple in three days. Note particularly verse 22: "After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said."

This comment intrudes into the story to give a post-resurrection insight into what was happening.

### **3. Third example: Jn 4:9**

Look at Jn 4:9 — "The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink? (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans)."

Apparently, the reader would not have understood the risk Jesus was taking with his reputation by talking to a Samaritan.

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<sup>50</sup> Burge (2000: 36-39) notes three types of *contextual evidence* for "literary layers": textual evidence, parenthetical remarks, and literary seams (*aporia*).

#### 4. The point is:

The presence of parenthetical comments in the Gospel of John (of which there are over 50) suggests that an editor took source material, added his own comments along the way and produced the *final form* of the Gospel that we have today.

### C. Narrative difficulties (*aporia*) (*aporeo* = "to be at a loss")

The Fourth Gospel also shows signs of narrative breaks or irregularities in the narrative flow of the text. This also indicates that there was a final editor or editors at work who brought different sources together into a final form.

#### 1. First example: Shift in genre (Jn 1:1-18 to Jn 1:19)

There is a dramatic shift between Jn 1:18 and Jn 1:19, from a poetic style to narrative. The Gospel could easily begin at Jn 1:19. It suggests that Jn 1:1-18 was added at a later time.

#### 2. Second example: How many signs (Jn 2:11, 23; 4:54)?

Look at Jn 2:11. After changing water into wine, the text says, "This is the first of the miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee."

Now turn to Jn 4:54. After healing the official's son, the text says, "this was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed."

The problem is that in between these two signs, the text states that Jesus did many other signs. Look at Jn 2:23: "many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name." So how can 4:54 be a second sign?

#### 3. Third example: Geographical mystery (Jn 5:1 and Jn 6:1)

In chapter 5, Jesus is shown in a lengthy debate in Jerusalem. Now look at Jn 6:1: "After this (μετὰ ταῦτα), Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias)." There is no mention of Jesus going back to Galilee. It would be like describing a visit to Wichita and then saying "after this we went to the other side of Marion Reservoir."

For this reason, some scholars want to switch chapter 5 and 6.

#### **4. Fourth example: Free floating tradition (Women caught in adultery; 7:53-8:11)**

Another sign there was an editorial process is associated with the story of the adulterous woman. In modern Bibles, the story is listed as Jn 7:53-8:11, but in some manuscripts it is found after Jn 7:36 and in other manuscripts is it found at the very end of the Gospel following Jn 21:25. In one case, it is found in Luke's Gospel and in many manuscripts is it missing.

#### **5. Fifth example: Chronological irregularity (Jn 14:31 and 18:1)**

In chapters 13-14, Jesus has been talking to his disciples in the upper room. Then, in Jn 14:31, Jesus dismisses them: "Come now; let us leave." The problem is that they do not leave, at least not for another 86 verses. It is not until Jn 18:1 that we read, "Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley."

To account for this, it is suggest that chapters 13-16 are a composite of two or three blocks of Jesus' teaching—early church preaching material—sewn together.

Look at 16:5. Jesus asks the disciples why no one has asked him, "Where are you going?" Now look back at 13:36 where Peter had asked that very question. Why does 16:5 come after 13:36? Again, the most frequent explanation is that chapters 13-16 reflect multiple traditions stitched together.

#### **6. Sixth example: Ending of the Gospel (Jn 20:30-31 and Jn 21:24)**

Look at Jn 20:31-31. Most scholars believe this was the ending of the Gospel at one time. But now turn to Jn 21:24. It sounds like a second ending. Most scholars think that chapter 21 was added by the final redactor who collected the teaching of the "beloved disciple." That is, chapter 21 appears to be an addendum to the book as a whole.

### **D. How do scholars deal with the *aporia*?**

Some scholars argue that each of the irregularities can be explained away. However, three are a large number of irregularities and it is the cumulative effect of these *aporia* that is important.

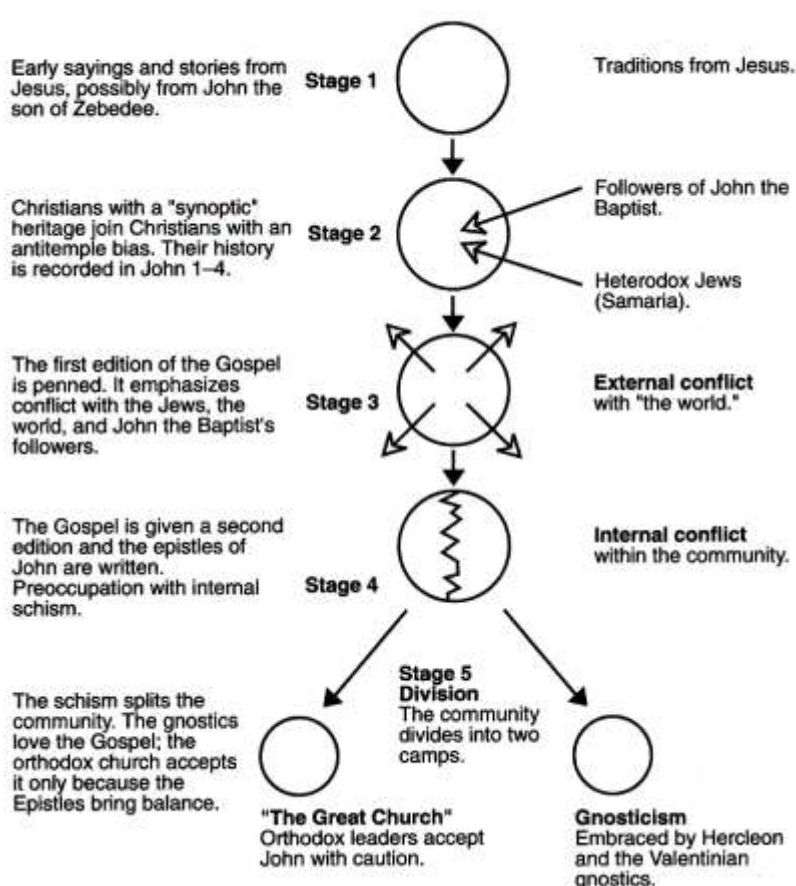
Some believe that the author produced two editions, which have been artificially joined (Pierson Parker, JBL, 1956). Other believe that John wrote a Gospel and then, as time went on, added more material, but was not so concerned with the overall flow of the Gospel (Schnackenburg and Kasemann).

In the nineteenth century, German scholars argued that John was a clumsy writer (Eduard Meyer) or was confused (William Wrede). Most scholars (including Burge) believe that the parenthetical comments and the aporia indicate that the author used sources. The Gospel is the product of redactors who compiled various sources or traditions into one Gospel. This process occurred in various stages over many years.

### E. Literary Stages

Raymond Brown has argued that FG was written, compiled, and edited in several stages.<sup>51</sup>

#### R. E. Brown's Five Literary Stages



**Stage One:** Oral traditions from Jesus and beloved disciple.

**Stage Two:** Oral preaching and teaching with a high Christology, which led to expulsion from the synagogue (9:22; 12:42; 16:2).

**Stage Three:** Oral material is gathered and the first written edition.

**Stage Four:** Second edition written by "the evangelist". Added Prologue, chapter 6, chapters 15-17.

**Stage Five:** Third and final edition, which included chapter 21.

If Raymond Brown is even partially correct, then the Gospel is a very complex and unique piece of literature. It is the product of a faith community, which produced the Gospel over several years in response to crucial issues that confronted them.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, Anchor Bible, vol. 1, 1966, xxxiv-xxxix.

## VI. Authorship

Since most scholars believe that John's Gospel is the compilation of traditions collected by a specific group of Christians—the Johannine Community—how does John the Apostle fit into this? There are several different options. Since this was covered in your assigned reading, I will only highlight the options that scholars have given.

### A. Anonymous

The problem is that the Gospel that we call "John" is anonymous. The author never identifies himself by name. The superscription—"According to John"—was not part of the original Gospel. We know this because the superscription seems to "float" around.

In addition, we don't know which "John" is being referred to.

John the Apostle—the son of Zebedee (Mk 1:19-20)

John the Elder—the author of the Epistles (2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1)

John the Seer—the visionary author of Revelation (Rev 1:1, 9)

In P<sup>75</sup>, it comes at the beginning of the Gospel. In Codex Sinaiticus, it comes at the end. Thus it is likely that the superscription was only added some years after the Gospel was written. Because the Gospel is anonymous, some prefer to call it the Fourth Gospel.

### B. The "disciple whom Jesus' loved" (the beloved disciple)

Note: Have students look up the verses; then describe the beloved disciple.

13:23 —Leans on Jesus' chest at last supper

13:24-25 —Intermediary between Peter and Jesus

18:15-16—Gains admittance for Peter to Pilate's court

19:26-27—20:4—Outruns Peter to the tomb on Easter morning

20:8—First to believe in the resurrection

21:7—Identifies the risen Jesus for Peter

21:21-23—His fate should not concern Peter

#### 1. An ideal figure

Some have suggested that the "beloved disciple" was not a real person, but a literary character in the story with whom readers can identify.

## 2. John, the Apostle, the son of Zebedee

This is the traditional view. John the Apostle is identified as the “beloved disciple” by virtually all of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century witnesses—Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Papias, Tatian, and Polycarp, even heretics (Basilides and Heacleon).

However, John, the son of Zebedee, is not mentioned in the Fourth Gospel (the “sons of Zebedee are mentioned once in Jn 21:2). Thus some believe that the “beloved disciple” was a humble way that FG talks about John. Two things count against this.

- First, calling oneself the “beloved disciple” seems a little arrogant.
- Second, the beloved disciple does not come into the story until fairly later, when it is assumed that John was with Jesus from the beginning.

## 3. Lazarus

Some have suggested that Lazarus was the beloved disciple, who Jesus explicitly said that he loved (11:36). Furthermore, resurrection of Lazarus may have contributed to the rumor that the beloved disciple would not die (21:23). However, Lazarus is never called a disciple and no indication that he was among the guests at the last supper (13:23)

## 4. Thomas

## VII. Authorship and Authority

Even if the Fourth Gospel cannot be traced to John the Apostle, the Gospel itself claims a remarkable authority. Several times in John 14-14 Jesus is represented as promising his disciples that he will send a *paraketos*—“counselor” (NIV), “helper” (NASB), or “comforter” (KJV)—the Spirit of God.

### When the Spirit comes, the Spirit will:

- Teach you all things (14:26)
- Remind you of everything I have said to you (14:26)
- Testify about Jesus (15:26)
- Convict the world in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8)
- Guide you into all truth 16:26
- Not speak on his own, but only what he hears (16:13)
- Tell you what is to come (16:13)
- Bring glory to Jesus by taking what is his and making it known (16:14)

For the Johannine Community, the Spirit had already come and has lead them into all the truth about Jesus. Whether it was written by John the Apostle or whether any of it could be traced back to the pre-Easter Jesus did not matter to them.

For them, the post-Easter Jesus, the Risen Christ, through the Spirit, had guided them into all the truth. The implicit claim is that the Gospel itself was a repository of truth revealed by the Spirit to the Johannine believers, and that the Gospel continues to teach and to guide the disciples of Jesus in all truth.

## **IX. The Socio-Historical Setting of the Fourth Gospel**

### **A. Historical Context: Late first-century**

#### **1. Destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.**

The Temple in Jerusalem was the center of the religious, national, and economic life of the Jews or Judeans. It was a massive building surrounded by a fortress-like area and was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was thought to be indestructible, because it was God's House. God would always protect it. When the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans, it came as a great shock to Jews and Jewish Christians everywhere.

The Temple symbolized the place and the presence of God on earth. The Temple was the place where Jews and pious Gentiles could meet God, pray and sacrifice.

With the destruction of the Temple, Jewish identity and Jewish Christian identity was thrown into chaos. It was as though God had abandoned them. Where could people meet God, if not at the Temple? Where could sacrifices be made? Where could they meet to celebrate the major festivals of Passover, Tabernacles, and Dedication? Did the destruction of the Temple mean the end of the Jewish people, the end of the People of God?

#### **2. Emerging Rabbinic Judaism**

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple, one group of Jews responded to the crisis by forming a community at Yavneh (Jamnia) where they continued the traditions of the Pharisees and instituted dramatic changes for Judaism. Under Rabbi Yohanan, the center of Judaism shifted in several ways.

First, without a Temple there could no longer be sacrifices, because sacrifice for sins happened in the Temple. In its place, Yohanan and his fellow rabbis announced that **acts of compassion** atoned for sin (Hos. 6:6 "I desire mercy not sacrifice").

Second, the Rabbis emphasized that even without the Temple, God was present in the intense **study of the Torah** in the synagogue.

Third, the Rabbis emphasized the importance of **keeping the Torah**, obeying God's commandments and statutes.

Fourth, the Rabbis also began to reinterpret the **Jewish calendar** and address how to celebrate Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, and other Jewish feasts that use to center on the Temple.

The Johannine Christians shared the same post-70 reality as the Rabbis. The issues addressed by the Rabbis are very similar to the questions addressed by the Fourth Gospel, including: religious authority (7:17), Torah study (5:39), the Temple and its loss (11:48), the Temple and a New Temple (2:13-22), where to worship without the Temple (4:20), synagogue participation (9:22), and the Jewish calendar—Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, and Dedication

## C. Social Context: Conflict

### 1. Two-level Reading

Most scholars agree that the Fourth Gospel can be read at two levels simultaneously. That is, the Gospel not only presents the life of Jesus, but it also provides clues for what was happening to the Johannine Community that produced it. In this way, the *story of Jesus* is the *story of the Johannine Community*.

Look at Jn 3:10-12. Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus, but as the conversation continues, the "I" become "we" and the "you" singular become "you" plural. The voice of Jesus becomes the voice of the Johannine Community and Nicodemus becomes a representative of Jewish leaders (Rabbis) who do not understand the messianic commitments of Johannine Community.

### 2. Conflict with the *Ioudaioi* (Ιουδαῖοι) = "Jews" or "Judeans"

Throughout the Fourth Gospel there is a strong polemic against the *Ioudaioi*. From Jn 5-10, the Gospel depicts a sharp conflict between Jesus and the *Ioudaioi*.

Jesus is accused of breaking the Sabbath (5:18), blasphemy (5:18; 210:33), demon possession (7:20), being a Samaritan (8:48), deceiving the people (7:13, 47), and threatening both the temple and the Jewish nation (2:20; 11:48). And the *Ioudaioi* seek to kill Jesus.

In contrast, Jesus accuses the *Ioudaioi* of being unfaithful to the Torah (7:19), children of the devil (8:44), ignorant of scripture (5:39) not listening to Moses (5:45-47), and idolatrous (5:44).

Just as Jesus encounters hostility at the story level, so there are indications that the Johannine community is experiencing similar hostility. The witness of the Johannine group is not being accepted by other *Ioudaioi* (3:11), they are being kicked out of the synagogue (9:22; 12:42; 16:2), and are experiencing persecution (15:18) and possibly death (16:2) at the hands of fellow Jews.

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## APPENDIX: I AM SAYINGS IN JOHN

The use of I AM (*ego eimi*) in John has two basic patterns.<sup>52</sup>

**Predicative form:** Seven times John uses an "I AM + predicate":

- I am the bread of life (6:35, 48, 51)
- I am the light of the world (8:12, 9:5)
- I am the gate/door (10:7, 9)
- I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14)
- I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)
- I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6)
- I am the true vine (15:1, 5)

Predicative use of I AM reflects Jesus' dealings with humans; He is the bread, light, gate, shepherd, way, vine for humans. Thus, the predicative I AM sayings do not reflect his identity with God; rather they metaphorically reveal what Christ does for humanity.

**Absolute form:** Eight times John uses the I AM without a predicate:

- I am; do not be afraid (6:20).
- You will die in your sins unless you believe that I am [he] (8:24).
- When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know I am [he] (8:28)
- Truly, truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am (8:58).
- I tell you this ... so that ... you may believe that I am [he] (13:19).
- They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am [he]" (18:5).
- When Jesus said to them, "I am," they ... fell to the ground (18:6).
- I told you that I am [he] (18:8).

The absolute form alludes to God's name in the Old Testament. In Exodus, Moses asked God what His name was (Ex 3:13). In response, God said, *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*, which is Hebrew for "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex 3:14), forever God's name (3:15). So, Jesus' use of the phrase I AM is probably an identification with God.

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<sup>52</sup>Bultmann describes four patterns: (1) *Presentation formula*, which is a reply to "Who are You?" (2) *Qualificatory formula*, which responds to "What are you?" with a "I am that." (3) *Identification formula*, which is a reply identifying the speaker with another person or object. (4) *Recognition formula*, which is a reply of "I am he." The last, unlike the first three, the *ego* is the predicate, not the subject. Bultmann views John 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 15:1, 5 as employing the recognition formula. George Beasley-Murray, *John, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36* (Waco: Word, 1987) 89.