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John - Introduction



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg introduces the Gospel of John, describing it as a favorite among Christians, and notes that it differs significantly from the synoptic gospels in its content and structure. He also discusses the authorship of the gospel, arguing that it is likely the work of the apostle John, and presents evidence from the text itself and from early church traditions to support his claim. Gregg's analysis is informed by his commitment to a traditional understanding of the gospel's origins and reliability.

Transcript

Well, tonight we're going to begin reading, or studying, I should say, the Gospel of John, which to many Christians is their favorite gospel. I'm sure many of you would, probably a certain percentage of you at least, would say that it's your favorite gospel. I love the Gospel of John, but I'm not like some who would recommend it as the first gospel for a new believer to read.

This is something that's very common, is when people become new Christians, sometimes the older Christians say, Oh, read the Gospel of John. I think, well, that's an interesting suggestion. I think the Gospel of John is the most mysterious of the gospels and the least direct, except, of course, in one respect, that it's the gospel that more than any other presents the deity of Christ.

I suppose that may be the reason it's recommended by many. It has some people's favorite proof texts of Christ's deity, which you don't find very many of in the synoptic gospels. Now, I better define my terms.

Synoptic is a term that is used to describe the three gospels that are not the Gospel of John. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the synoptic gospels, as they're usually called. The Bible doesn't call them that.

Scholars call them that, but you might as well know the term because you'll hear it a lot if you're in the places where people talk about the gospels. Synoptic comes from two Greek particles. Syn, S-Y-N, means together, as in synthesis and other words that have that particle in it.

Synthetic and synchronized and so forth. Syn, S-Y-N, is a Greek particle that means together. The other part of that word is optics.

Now, we should recognize what optics refers to, what an optometrist is, what the word optical illusion refers to. Optic is a Greek word that means seeing. So, synoptic means seeing together.

I'm not sure who coined that term for these three gospels, but the reason it was coined is because it's obvious when you read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you're reading stories about the life of Jesus that are very similar to each other, with a lot of overlapping content. As a matter of fact, I don't know what percentage, but probably as much as maybe a third of the content of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are all found in all three of them, in some form or another. And then Luke and Matthew share a lot of material together that isn't in Mark and so forth.

But if you read through the gospels just from the beginning of the New Testament on through, by the time you get to Luke, you're familiar with most of what you're reading because you've read a lot of it in Matthew and a lot of it in Mark. And everyone's observed that. There's a lot of parallelism in the first three gospels, and some have said they are synoptic because you can see them together as almost like one.

You can harmonize them into one fairly easily, into one story of the narrative of Jesus. But when you come to the gospel of John, it's different. It has very little overlap with them.

For example, the other synoptic gospels, they have lots of miracles of Jesus and lots of parables. The gospel of John doesn't have any parables and very few miracles, relatively. In 21 chapters, there's only seven miracles.

You can get that many miracles in one or two chapters, consecutive chapters in Matthew or Luke. And so John's different in its emphasis. The dialogues in John are much more theological, much more deep.

You see, when you read the synoptic gospels and Jesus' teaching there, the Sermon on the Mount and such, most of his teaching is in very clear aphorisms and parables and so forth, kind of directed to the common man. Where it takes a good theologian to make any sense out of the sayings of Jesus in the gospel of John. Because there's really deep stuff, a lot of conversation about Jesus himself in the gospel of John.

Whereas in the synoptics, he hardly talks about himself at all. He talks about his father all the time in the synoptics and he talks about ethics and he talks about the law and how to be righteous and so forth in the synoptic gospels' teaching. But in the gospel of John, he's not talking, there's hardly any ethical teaching.

His discussions about the father are mostly talking about his connection with the father

and what his status is and what his relationship is to the father, almost entirely absent from the synoptics. And so the emphasis is really different. Another thing too is that the gospel of John primarily focuses on things that Jesus said and did in Judea, which is the southern part of the country of Israel.

In Jesus' day, Israel was divided into three provinces or three segments. And the southernmost was Judea and that's where the capital city of Jerusalem was. That's where the really snooty Jews lived in Judea.

They were the most uncompromised. They lived near the temple. They lived in the part of the land where Judah had been the one tribe, along with the little tiny tribe of Benjamin that had remained faithful to David when the kingdom had split in the days of Rehoboam.

The northern tribes had gone off and become apostate and eventually had been swallowed up by Assyria. But the Jews of Judea had, for the most part, been preserved through the Babylonian exile and the return. And so the people living in Judea were mostly Jewish, of course, as you'd expect.

But you might expect that to be true of the rest of the country too, but it wasn't. The northernmost section of the country was Galilee. And there were more Gentiles than Jews in Galilee.

In fact, in the scripture at one time it's referred to as Galilee of the Gentiles. Actually, Isaiah chapter 9 refers to it as Galilee of the Gentiles in a prophecy about the ministry of Jesus, which is quoted, I believe, in the fourth chapter of Matthew. But Galilee was the northernmost district, Judea the southernmost, and in between them lay a district called Samaria.

And Samaria was neither Jew nor Gentile. The people in that region were mostly half-breed Jew-Gentiles because their ancestors had been mixed with the Gentiles after the Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and they imported many Gentiles to repopulate the land and the Jews that were there intermarried. And so after many centuries had passed, the population was hardly Jew at all.

It was mostly Gentile mixed with Jew. They had even a half-breed religion there. The Samaritans not only were half-breed ethnically Jew-Gentile, but they were also kind of religious half-breeds.

They retained lots of the distinctives of the Jewish religion, but not all of them. And in fact, they even had an alternative side of worship because the Jews worshipped in Judea in the temple in Jerusalem and the Samaritans had their own side of worship. Mount Gerizim, alternative, even a rival worship site to the Jews.

There was great hostility between the Samaritans and the Jews. And as you might

recognize, the majority of the Jewish population lived in Judea and most of the rest of it, that was in Palestine at least, was living in Galilee and Samaria lay between them. The average Jew, when traveling from one of those regions to the other, wouldn't pass through Samaria.

They'd go around it. They'd leave the country altogether and travel south from Galilee to Judea and then re-enter across the Jordan into Judea or vice versa. The Jews didn't want to have any contact with Samaritans.

They believed that they were unclean because they were so compromised, so half-breed, so syncretized in their religion with the paganism. And syncretized is a real word. Syncretism is not like synchronism.

Syncretism is the mixing of more than one religion into a hybrid. That's called syncretism. And so the Samaritans were syncretized and frowned upon by the Jews because of that.

Galilee was not looked on very highly by the Jews of Jerusalem. They were pretty snooty, like I said. They'd say, can any good thing come out of, and then they'd name a Galilean town like Nazareth or any other Galilean town.

Or sometimes if they wanted to really insult each other, the Jews in Judea would say, what are you, a Galilean? Because Galileans lived in that defiled area up to the north which had more Gentiles than Jews. But in the middle section, Samaria, it was even worse because they'd all intermarried and all mixed, and so they'd really kind of seen as betraying their ancestry and their religion and so forth. So they hated the Samaritans.

That's why Jesus chose a Samaritan as an example in the famous story we call the Good Samaritan. He was trying to point out the antipathy between the two men in the parable, the one who fell among thieves and the one who helped him. You might remember the context of that in Luke, that Jesus was asked what was the great commandment.

He said, love God and love your neighbors yourself. And the scribe said, well, who's my neighbor? Who do I have to love as a neighbor? And Jesus told the story of the Jewish man who fell among thieves, and it was a Samaritan man who helped him, which would be a rather shocking act of kindness since there was such hostility between those two groups. In fact, at the end of the parable, Jesus said, which of those men do you think showed the kindness to the man who fell among thieves? The answer was the Samaritan, but the scribe couldn't even bring himself to say it.

He just said, I suppose the one who showed him mercy. He didn't even say the one who showed him mercy. They didn't want to say anything at all ennobling about the Samaritans.

They hated them. That's important because in the Gospel of John, we actually see Jesus

doing some ministry in Samaria and not showing any of that kind of prejudice that the Jews had. Although later in the Gospel of John, some of his critics say you have a demon and you're a Samaritan.

They may have thought he really had a demon, but they knew he wasn't really a Samaritan. That was just an insult. That was just a gratuitous insult.

You're a Samaritan. So we have this geography. Jesus was from Galilee, and the synoptic Gospels record his ministry primarily in Galilee with a few exceptions.

In the synoptics, we do read about him making a journey once in a while down to Jerusalem for a festival like Passover. But in John, we have very little Galilean activity of Jesus mentioned, and almost all of it is Judean. There's a little bit.

The wedding feast of Cana was in Galilee, and the feeding of 5,000 was in Galilee. But mostly John ignores Galilee and focuses on Judean ministry. So we can see that the differences between John's Gospel and the synoptics are very profound.

Profound enough, in fact, that skeptics have sometimes said, well, we can't really trust John's Gospel as a historical document because it's so different. Now, if these skeptics were really honest, they don't believe in the synoptic Gospels either. So different from what? You know, I mean, they're acting like they trust the synoptic Gospels, and they're going to reject John on the basis that it's not enough like them.

But then when they talk about the synoptic Gospels, they have their criticisms of them too. So they're just a bunch of hypocrites in most cases. I shouldn't say they're a bunch of hypocrites, but they're not always consistent, let's put it that way.

But the thing is, there is a huge difference in the picture of Jesus in the synoptics and from the picture of Jesus in the Gospel of John. That's caused problems for some people. It doesn't cause any problems for me, and I'll give you the reasons why later in this lecture why I don't see any problem with all those differences.

But the point is, the differences are there, and that's why John is singled out and treated separately, different than the synoptics. It's not one of the synoptics. You can't really just kind of merge John easily in a harmony.

You can do it, but it's not as easy. It takes a lot more thinking, a lot more innovation to see how the stories in John actually fit in chronologically with the stories in the other Gospels. So Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the synoptic Gospels, and then John, sometimes scholars just refer to it as the fourth Gospel because they don't want to commit to John being the author.

That's one thing about liberal scholarship, and I don't mean to just badmouth liberals, because some of them probably are sincere and have picked up their prejudices from

their training. But they do have unreasonable prejudices. You'll find that liberal scholarship almost always assumes the worst about the integrity of any biblical book.

If they can, they'll question the authorship of it, the traditional authorship. If they can, they'll late-date it, that is, make the writing of it much later than its traditional date in order, of course, to distance the writing of it from the actual events and to raise questions about whether the story has really come down unchanged or not. The common view of most liberals is that the Gospel of John is not historically useful for reconstructing anything about the life of Jesus because of the different kinds of discourses in it, because of the different information and so forth, a different portrayal of Jesus, they say, than you have in the synoptics.

They say, really, what we have in John is not so much a historical picture of Jesus as a theological interpretation of Jesus, and that the speeches put into Jesus' mouth are not really things he said, but they are things that the church in the maybe in the second century had come to believe about him. And in writing this story, they wrote this gospel to kind of put these kinds of claims in his mouth, which he never really would have made. And you never find him making in the synoptic gospels.

So they try to raise doubts about whether there's anything really historically reliable in the Gospel of John. Now, my desire in this lecture is to give you reasons to believe in the reliability of the gospel and its authority as an apostolic product, apostolic authority. So I want to look with you at what we could call the traditional idea of the date and authorship and reliability of the Gospel of John.

Then I'm going to acquaint you with what the liberals say, because you're going to run into them more often than not, unless you just don't, you know, unless you don't circulate in any circles where people talk knowledgeably about the Bible. Unfortunately, if you do, you're going to find more liberals there than there should be. And I'll let you know what it is they say, why they say it, and why they're wrong, in my opinion.

Okay, so let's talk about the traditional idea about John first. Let's talk about the authorship first. One of the most important things about any New Testament book to consider is whether its author is known to us and whether its author is authoritative, especially helpful if the author is an apostle.

Because Jesus appointed the apostles to be his official representatives and spokespersons. Whatever they say is authorized by Jesus. And therefore, if we have the record of anything that comes from the mouth or the pen of an apostle, we have as good as it gets.

Now, the only way it could be better is if Jesus himself wrote it. But Jesus did not write any books that we know of. In fact, there's nothing in the Bible that would even tell us that he knew how to write, except that he did once when he wrote in the dust of the

temple floor.

But even then, it doesn't tell us what he wrote, which is interesting, because you'd think that the dearth of written material from the hand of Jesus would make anything he wrote particularly sacred and worthy of preserving. But the only time we know of him ever writing anything, it was not even in a permanent medium. And those who were there who saw it didn't record what it was he wrote.

Very frustrating. But we don't have any written records from Jesus. The best thing we can hope for are writings that have the apostolic stamp upon them.

Now, the early church believed that John, the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, one of the so-called sons of thunder, as Jesus called them. Boanerges is the Greek word that Jesus used for them. Or maybe that's Aramaic, come to think of it.

But the point is, he used this word Boanerges, which means sons of thunder, for these two boys. They were among the first disciples that we know of him calling. They weren't the very first, but they were two of the four fishermen that Jesus called them, along with Peter and Andrew.

So James and John, sons of Zebedee, two fishermen, early disciples. And then when Jesus chose from among the larger group of disciples, he chose 12 to call apostles. They were selected from that group.

And even among the apostles, James and John and Peter were the most privileged. There are many stories about Jesus going places alone with his disciples, getting away from the crowd so he could spend private time with his disciples, teaching them alone, and so forth. But there's a few times when Jesus would just take a few disciples, a few of the apostles, and leave the others out.

And these few that he took with him on those occasions, sometimes he would call them the inner circle, because it was always the same three. It was Peter and James and John. When Jesus went up on the Mount of Transfiguration, he took Peter, James, and John.

The other nine apostles had to stay at the foot of the mountain, just wait for them to come back and report what had happened. When Jesus went into the home of Jairus to raise his daughter from the dead, he left nine of the apostles outdoors and took in Peter, James, and John into the room. No one else was allowed in the room except the parents of the girl.

And then in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus went to pray there, he left nine of the apostles at the gate, and he and Peter and James and John went in to pray in the interior of the garden. These three men had a much closer access to Jesus even than the other apostles. And they are seen as leaders among the apostles in the Book of Acts.

Peter and John especially, because James, the brother of John, was killed early. James, the brother of John, was the first apostle to die, a martyr. Of course, Judas was the first apostle to die, but he was no martyr.

But James had his head cut off by Herod in Acts chapter 12, and was the first of the apostles to seal his testimony with his blood. And that was quite early in the history of the church. So Peter and John remained very, very influential as leaders of the apostles.

Another James at that point kind of became prominent. That was James, the brother of Jesus. So there was still a Peter and James and John pretty much heading the church.

And when Paul wrote about those three in Galatians chapter 1, he referred to them as pillars. Or in chapter 2 actually, Galatians 2, he talked about those who were reputed as the pillars of the church. And he mentioned Peter and James and John.

John was obviously an extremely important disciple, an apostle. If he wrote the Book of John, as is commonly believed by the early church, then it is an extremely valuable document. And there is, to my mind, very good reason to see John as the author.

Now the reason we're going to go over these evidences is because, of course, liberal scholarship denies that John was the author. They don't believe any of the apostles wrote any of the Gospels. They believe the Gospels are late productions after the death of the apostles.

They think that John especially was a late production, possibly in the second century that John was written. Now there's no good reason to believe this except for the skeptical trend in liberal scholarship. Certainly the people who lived closer to the time, the early church fathers in the second and third century, they were much more aware of these things than someone sitting 20 centuries later trying to guess.

And that's what liberal scholars are trying to do. They're trying to guess alternative views of authorship. Whereas the belief that John is the author comes from the earliest men, including Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, the apostle.

Polycarp, in the second century, was the bishop of Smyrna, and he was personally disciplined by John. Irenaeus was another important church father in the middle part and later part of the second century. He was disciplined by Polycarp.

So these men were mighty close to John. And their opinions about this would be certainly worth more than the speculations of some liberals who are just trying to undermine the authority of the document. So I'm very convinced that John wrote it, but I think we need to have more than just saying I'm convinced.

Because some might say, well, you're just committed to tradition. Not necessarily. I'm committed to a tradition that's built upon solid evidence.

What do we know from the book itself about the author? Who was the author? Well, we know one thing, and that is that the gospel of John is the only gospel that makes frequent reference to a particular disciple, which is referred to as the disciple that Jesus loved. Now, you probably, if you've been a Christian long, have heard that John is the disciple whom Jesus loved. Well, that's a little bit begging the question.

Because we believe John wrote the gospel of John, because we believe he's the author of the fourth gospel, and because that gospel actually alludes to its own author as the disciple Jesus loved. Evangelicals, who have no trouble with the tradition, have said John is the beloved disciple. But actually, John's name is not given anywhere in the book.

And it is never said that John is the beloved disciple. It is my conviction that he is. And I think we can reach that conclusion very responsibly from evidence.

But it's never actually stated in the Bible John is the beloved disciple. We have to reach that position from considering evidence in the text. And I just might say that in recent years, I've heard a theory presented that Lazarus was the beloved disciple.

To my mind, the theory is not convincing. But I'll just tell you, because you might hear it too. The beloved disciple is not referred to by that term prior to John 13.

So in the first 12 chapters, you don't run into any reference to the beloved disciple by that name. But two chapters before that, in John 11, we have the story of Lazarus and Mary and Martha. And when Lazarus became sick, his sisters sent message to Jesus in verse 3 of John 11.

The sisters sent to him saying, Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick. Now, Mary and Martha and Lazarus were all disciples. And thank you.

And Mary and Martha, in speaking to Jesus, referred to their brother Lazarus as he who you love. Sounds like a beloved disciple. You know? And it's specifically, you know, Lazarus is the only person in the gospel that is specifically said to be beloved by Jesus.

And two chapters later, we begin to read of references to the beloved disciple. So on this basis, some have said Lazarus is the beloved disciple. But there are a number of reasons to dispute this.

One thing is the passage that tells us that Lazarus is the beloved disciple also says that Mary and Martha were beloved disciples too. Because it says in John 11, 5, now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So it says Jesus loved Lazarus, but he loved his sisters too.

So it's not just one disciple that Jesus loved. But there's one who's referred to as the disciple that Jesus loved. However, I don't think it's Lazarus because it would appear that this disciple whom Jesus loved was one of the twelve.

I'll show you why in a moment. But first, look at chapter 19. John 19, 26 and 27.

Jesus is on the cross. It says, Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved. That's one of the several references to this disciple.

Standing by, and he said to his mother, Woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother. And from that hour, that disciple took her to his own home.

And then, if you look at chapter 21, near the end there, verse 20, John 21, 20. Then Peter turning around saw the disciple whom Jesus loved. Following.

Now look down a little further. Speaking about that disciple. Verse 24, John 21, 24.

This is the disciple who testifies of these things and wrote these things. In other words, the disciple whom Jesus loved is the author of the book, or at least the testimony behind the book. Someone else may have written it in its final form.

Someone maybe with more literary talents than the author. But the disciple whom Jesus loved is the authority behind the book. Now the reason I said someone else may have written it in its final form is because if you read just a moment, just a bit more.

Verse 24 says, This is the disciple who testifies of these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true. Who's we? Well, I think many scholars believe that John was an old man at the time that he told these stories and they were written down by those in his church who wished to preserve them. And so the final literary form of the book may be the literary work of men who wrote under John's dictation, or as John told them what the stories were and what was said.

And so they say this is the one who... Actually, John may have even written them down in an earlier draft. It says he testifies of these things, he wrote these things, and we, apparently we who are the custodians of the letter after John died, or we who may have had a final literary hand in the matter, we know his testimony is true. There is somebody else there beside this disciple.

But they make it very clear that this disciple is the authority behind the book. But who was this particular disciple? Was he one of the twelve? I think it can be established that he was. If you look at John 13, 23, this is at the Last Supper in the upper room.

It says in verse 23 of John 13, Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. He was actually closer to Jesus than Peter was, because Peter wanted to ask Jesus something, but instead he asked this disciple to ask Jesus for him. Apparently this disciple was right next to Jesus and Peter was one seat away.

And so he whispered in this guy's ear, ask Jesus this question, namely who is going to betray him. But the point is, the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who is the writer of

the book, that one that Jesus committed the care of his mother to from the cross, that guy, he was at the table in the upper room. But if you look over at Mark, just for a moment, in Mark chapter 14 and verse 17, in talking about the Last Supper, it says in verse 17, In the evening he came with the twelve.

That is, he came to the upper room where they had the Last Supper, if you read the context. It would suggest that the only ones that Jesus had the Last Supper with were himself and the twelve. Yet one of them was the disciple whom Jesus loved.

Lazarus was not one of the twelve. And so we have to say that the disciple whom Jesus loved, most reasonably, is one of the twelve apostles. Now, by the process of elimination, we know it's not Peter, because Peter is named as a character separately in the Gospel of John.

In fact, sometimes the disciple whom Jesus loved is with Peter doing things. We can probably deduce that since the disciple whom Jesus loved is left unnamed, that he's not any of the disciples whose names actually appear in the narrative elsewhere. And that would exclude Peter and Andrew, Philip and Nathanael, Thomas, Judas Iscariot, and that other Judas who's quaintly referred to as Judas not Iscariot, as I would wish to be referred to if my name was Judas and I was one of the twelve.

Just not Iscariot. And so that seven of the twelve are named apart from the disciple whom Jesus loved. That means he's one of the five whose names do not appear in there.

Now, he can't be his brother James. He can't be James, because James was dead too early to have written this Gospel. This Gospel was not written in the first few years after Pentecost.

No one would suggest that it was. And James died quite early. So we can exclude James also.

That limits it down to four. Now, he probably wasn't any of the really unknown disciples like Simon the Zealot or some of these guys we know almost nothing about. We only have four disciples that it could be, one of whom is John.

The other three are pretty obscure men. Therefore, while it could be one of the other three, the idea that it is John is a very good suggestion. And it is the belief of the early church that it was John.

Now, another reason to think so is because this disciple whom Jesus loved is closely associated with Peter in a number of places, as we know John was. John and Peter were partners in business before they were disciples of Jesus. And even after they were disciples, they did things together.

And even in the book of Acts, we find Peter and John going into the temple together

when they heal the man who is lame there at the gate. Beautiful. We see Peter and John both being arrested together and standing trial over the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 4 and again in Acts chapter 5. These two men, James and Peter, excuse me, John, did I say James all this time? John, my mistake.

John and Peter are the ones who are together on all these occasions in the book of Acts. Apparently, you know, partners. And we find Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved connected pretty closely in some of the stories here in the Gospel of John.

In chapter 13, verse 24, it says, Simon Peter therefore motioned to him, meaning the disciple whom Jesus loved, to ask of whom he spoke. In chapter 20, verses 2-10, we find that when the report came to the disciples that Jesus' body was stolen, it says that Mary Magdalene, in John 20, verse 2, it says, Then she ran and came to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom Jesus loved and said to them, They have taken away the Lord from the tomb and we don't know where He laid Him. And so the two of them ran together to the tomb.

They were apparently found hanging out together by Mary Magdalene. And then, of course, in chapter 21, we have Jesus having a rather private conversation with Peter about His future and the disciple whom Jesus loved is trailing nearby too. Peter and this disciple seem to be mentioned together in a number of connections.

And as I said, Peter and John actually did associate closely with each other in the book of Acts and that would sort of tip the scales if it's one of the four apostles that are not otherwise named in the book. And John is one of those. The other three are really obscure men.

We don't have any record of Peter being closely associated with any of the others but with John. So in other words, we have really good reason to think that it's John. More than that, very few people doubt that this gospel was written by the same author who wrote three epistles, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John as we call them.

Now those epistles are anonymous so John's name is not on them. In fact, 1st John, the author makes no reference to himself by name at all. He assumes his readers know who's writing and he doesn't even identify himself.

2nd and 3rd John, which are clearly written by the same hand, the content and style is exactly the same. 2nd and 3rd John, he refers to himself as the elder. Some people think John, the apostle, would not call himself an elder.

And therefore they say since the same man clearly wrote those three epistles and wrote the gospel of John. Why clearly? Just read them. You can hardly miss it.

The style, the vocabulary, the themes, they're all, if it's not the same author, then someone is an incredible forger of style, an imitator. The tradition that all the gospel and

the three epistles of John came from the same man is very strong and very credible. But he called himself the elder at the beginning of 2nd John and 3rd John.

Would an apostle refer to himself by that kind of a title? The reason it's asked is because the word elder, although it can mean an older man, merely, it also had become sort of a technical term for church leaders in the local congregations. The apostles would appoint elders in the churches to oversee the churches. An elder was a much lower authoritative position than an apostle.

And so if it was the apostle John, why would he use the seemingly modest self-designation of elder? Well, before we rule that out, I'd like you to look over at the first epistle of Peter. First Peter chapter 5 and verse 1. Now this author is not anonymous. First Peter begins by the author identifying himself as Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

So there's not too many people that could that be. There's only one Peter who was ever an apostle of Jesus Christ. So it's that Peter and not another.

But he's writing in Acts, 1 Peter 5, 1. And he says, the elders who are among you, and he means the local church leaders. The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Now, Peter is undoubtedly an apostle and he's not ashamed to refer to himself as a fellow elder.

When he's writing to these local church officials who certainly were of a lesser authority than himself, he didn't mind saying, I'm like you, I'm an elder too. So if the apostle Peter could call himself an elder without embarrassment, the apostle John might readily do so as well. So there's good reason to say that John is the author.

Now there's another connector too and that is that most Christians agree that the same man who wrote this gospel and wrote three epistles also wrote the book of Revelation. The man who wrote Revelation four times identifies himself as someone named John. I, John was on Patmos.

I, John, John to the seven churches of Asia. Four times the author of Revelation is called John. Now he doesn't say the apostle John and there are indeed some people who believe it was a different John than the apostle wrote Revelation.

In fact, there are many scholars who feel that the Revelation was not written by the same man who wrote the gospel and the epistles attributed to John. There's all kinds of controversies but the early church believed that the same John wrote all five of these books. The gospel, the three epistles and the book of Revelation.

There's very good reason to think so. The book of Revelation contains quite a number of special terms that are not found elsewhere in the Bible except in John's gospel and John's epistles. Now the Greek style in Revelation is quite different than the other writings

attributed to John and that is in fact the main reason why some people dispute that the same man could have written all the books.

The Greek style of Revelation is choppy and grammatically poor. Revelation, it's very non-idiomatic. It's a poor literary production.

In fact, some scholars say it's the most unliterary production that has come down to us from antiquity. John's gospel and epistles however are very literary, very fine Greek and it's that fact alone really that has led some scholars to believe that the person who wrote Revelation could not also have written the gospel and the epistles. The Greek style is too different.

But if the gospel and the epistles were written through a secretary and John dictated and the secretary put down in good Greek what John said then that would remove that objection entirely. The choppy Greek of Revelation could be that of John himself. He didn't have an amanuensis or a secretary on the island of Patmos when he was seeing those visions.

So we could have an example of John's literary abilities in the poor Greek of Revelation and of somebody else's literary abilities in John's gospel and epistles which John could have dictated to somebody who could write better than he could. So no problems there. The thing is that Revelation, like I said, has terms in it that are found nowhere else except in John's other writings.

For example, Jesus, who is called the Lamb I think 27 times in the book of Revelation is not ever referred to as a lamb anywhere else in the Bible except in the gospel of John where John the Baptist says behold the Lamb of God twice. So that's one term. Jesus being called the Word is found in Revelation chapter 19.

The rider on the white horse says his name is called the Word of God. There's no one in scripture who refers to Jesus as the Word of God except the gospel of John and the first epistle of John. John 1-1 and the opening words of the epistle of John refer to Jesus as the Word.

So does Revelation, but no one else does. These are just a couple of examples. There's actually quite a list probably at least 10 terms that are found in Revelation that are only elsewhere found in John's writings which strikes me as a very strong connection of John's ideas being found in all the books and therefore the tradition that the John who wrote Revelation because the author calls himself John is also the apostle who wrote the gospel and epistles of John.

Now if we know that the disciple that Jesus loved is one of the twelve and he also wrote the book of Revelation and calls himself John that pretty much narrows it down to one guy. There's only one John among the disciples. There were two Simons and two Judases

and two Jameses but there's only one John among the twelve.

And so I think the tradition that John wrote it is very good. Very well established on the internal evidence from the collection of writings that have been attributed to him. I'm not trying to talk over anyone's head so I'm trying to make these things clear but these are the kinds of things that scholars debate about which you might think well I'm not interested in this stuff.

Well some people aren't. Too bad. Because if you're able to master this material you can talk intelligently to people who are doubters.

I've always found that to be helpful. Could be even helpful to the doubter. And so I think it's good to have some awareness of what wrong things people are hearing and why they're wrong.

Now what about the date of writing? Traditional date of writing is thought to be written in the 80s or the 90s of the first century. There's even the possibility that it was written after the book of Revelation was written. No one knows.

No one knows the exact date of writing really of any of John's writings or even of any of the Gospels. They don't have unambiguous indicators. Although there are some strong pointers in some places.

But most scholars believe that John was the last gospel written after Matthew, Mark, and Luke were already in circulation. And some think it was written decades later. John being the oldest surviving apostle in the 90s A.D. he himself would be in his 90s in his personal age.

John is after all according to the church traditions the only apostle who lived to be quite old. The others were all martyred at earlier ages than that. Probably more or less in their prime.

John didn't die a martyr. He's the only apostle who did not. But he was willing to.

The tradition of the early church is that he was condemned to die for his faith and he was dipped in boiling oil as the method of his execution. But it didn't hurt him. And his persecutors frustrated by the inability to kill him that way exiled him to Patmos where he was when he wrote the book of Revelation.

But in his later years a later emperor Nerva released him from Patmos and he spent his final years as an old man in the city of Ephesus. And it is believed that John was very much connected to the city of Ephesus in his later years and died peaceably there and that his grave was there. That's how the church tradition goes.

So of all the apostles he's the only one who didn't die some kind of horrible torturous

martyr's death. And yet it's not his fault he didn't die. He was actually subjected to what should have been his death but he was supernaturally preserved.

Is the story true? No one knows. It's an early tradition. It was apparently believed by Christians in the second century.

And there was a similar case known in the next generation because John's disciple Polycarp was sentenced to be burned at the stake as an old man in Smyrna. And the witnesses there say the flames wouldn't touch him. They built a fire around him he's standing at the stake and the flames leapt up around him and he was just singing hymns and unaffected by the flames.

And to the utter frustration of his persecutors there's a whole audience in the arena being martyred and everyone was upset because he wasn't burning. He was non-combustible. And so one of the soldiers stabbed him with a spear and his blood poured out.

He died. He bled to death. But the blood put out the fire.

And this is a fairly well attested story from his own church. He was the bishop of Smyrna and his own church preserved what we call the martyrdom of Polycarp. There's a document still available to read from their hand.

A very early church document. But Polycarp was a disciple of John and he apparently was able to I mean God didn't let the fires consume him. It's very possible that John was dipped in boiling oil and God didn't let that hurt him either.

We don't know. But the legend is or the story goes that John lived to be in his 90s and died in the late 90s and that John's gospel and the book of Revelation were very late. And there's even some reason to believe that Revelation was written earlier than the gospel of John.

The main reason I have for believing that and I do believe that is that we know the gospel of John begins by referring to Jesus as the Word. Where did John get the idea to call him that? Well, of course he could have got it by direct inspiration. Of course.

Actually he did. In the book of Revelation he saw a vision of Jesus and it was revealed to him that his name was called the Word of God. Now, John's the only writer of the Bible who mentioned Jesus being the Word of God.

It'd be quite coincidental if he'd already written the gospel of John and out of his own understanding or Revelation had called Jesus the Word of God and then later saw a vision that God gave him and found out oh yeah, he's called the Word of God there. To me it's more likely that seeing the vision of Christ and seeing him called the Word of God there is what informed the author. Oh, Jesus is the Word of God.

Then he later wrote the gospel of John and began with that idea. The Word was in the beginning and he's the Word who was made flesh. That's not an absolute proof but in my opinion that would suggest that the revelation was revealed to John before he wrote his gospel which would make the gospel of John and or the epistles of John the latest books written in the New Testament.

But no one knows what their exact date is and the tradition is 80s or 90s. That's the conservative tradition. Liberals want to put it a lot later.

I was just reading today something that made me think well, John might even be considerably earlier than that. The reason is in John chapter 5 this is where I found it John 5 verses 1 and 2 It says, After this there was a great feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there was in Jerusalem excuse me, there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool which is called in Hebrew Bethesda having five porticoes or five porches.

Now how is this important? The author says there is in Jerusalem this location with these five pools this pool and the porticoes and so forth. He speaks as if that spot is still there. He's telling a story in the past tense generally but as an explanation there is in Jerusalem.

He doesn't say there was. Now the city of Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 It was burned to the ground. There was no pool of Siloam.

There was no five porticoes of Solomon. These things that are described here were not there after AD 70. And yet the author speaks as if they are there at the time of writing.

And I don't think it's just a manner of speaking because he uses the past tense for the rest. He could have easily said there was a feast and there was in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool as if he's writing after the destruction of Jerusalem but remembering there was in those days a pool there. But instead he says there is as if at the time he's writing it's still there.

If it is so if that's what he intends to convey then he was writing before AD 70. And there are some few scholars who believe all the books of the New Testament were written before AD 70. Revelation, John, and others.

All of them written before AD 70. You might not care about that. That's of interest to me because it places it well within the generation of those who knew Jesus.

Now I want to say this. This question may have come to your mind or you may have even heard this objection. People sometimes say well if the Gospels, even the earliest of the Gospels weren't written until 20 or 30 years after Jesus died and went to heaven how can we expect the stories to still be accurate if they weren't even written down for 30 years afterwards? Only a young person could ask that.

Anyone who is 50, 60, or older can easily remember vividly things that happened 30 and 40 years ago. I can remember things that happened when I was 3 years old. That's 55 years ago.

And if you want to talk about things that are dear to my heart like the birth of my children, I remember explicitly everything that happened when my daughter was born 38 years ago. I remember lots of things from that. You talk to someone who has been married for 50 years and ask them how they met.

They remember. It's not hard to remember things for 30 years if they're important things. And frankly you know what? The things I remember from more than 30 years ago were not as memorable as the things the disciples recorded when they saw Jesus do.

I don't think I could forget those things. And I don't expect they would either. The fact that a few decades went by between the events and the telling of them is no issue.

If my parents who are now in their 80s if I said, would you please before you die, would you write down an account of how you met and how you courted and how your wedding went and so forth. And they wrote it down. I'd trust that it was essentially accurate even though it was over 60 years ago.

I don't think they'd forget. And so if you'd been with Jesus and heard and seen what they saw, I don't think you'd forget it even if you're very, very old and it happened when you were young. So if all the Gospels were written before AD 70, which is a real possibility, then they are very near to the time of Jesus.

Forty years or less from the time of the crucifixion. And of course if John was the last gospel written, as almost all scholars agree, then the other Gospels written may be considerably earlier than that. Strong evidence is that Luke was written before 60 AD.

And Mark and Matthew both are reputed to have been written before Luke. So we have really early testimony about the story of Jesus from people who really were there. Notwithstanding all the critics' claims to the contrary, you will find if you get around and listen to people, and you don't even have to be a Bible scholar, all you have to do is watch popular movies.

Like the Da Vinci Code or something. You will find that people generally are trying to circulate the idea that the Gospels are not reliable history, they're not written by anyone who knew Jesus, they're not even written in the first century, and that the Gnostic Gospels, which aren't in our Bible and were excluded from, somehow they were just as good records, but they were excluded for political reasons by Constantine, all this blah blah. None of that is true.

Constantine had nothing to do with deciding which Gospels were in the Bible. That was decided 150 years at least before he was born. Irenaeus in 170 named Matthew, Mark,

and Luke and John as he said, the only four Gospels are accepted by all the churches around the world.

That's in AD 170. The four Gospels that we have were already the only Gospels the church recognized. Constantine wasn't born yet for another 150 years.

He was born, but he wasn't an emperor, didn't have any influence until 150 years later. So, we definitely don't have any influence from Constantine deciding which Gospels are authentic. The ones that are excluded are ones that even the church fathers were familiar with and they wrote about them.

They wrote about the Gnostic Gospels and said they're Gnostic heretics. Gnosticism was a heresy which we'll say more about because it touches on the purpose of John's Gospel being written. Because in some ways John's Gospel appears to be a refutation of Gnosticism.

But anyway, traditionally it was written by John well within the first century and very possibly, indicators may indicate it was even before AD 70 and that would make all the other Gospels even before that pretty early. Now, what about its reliability? Just from reading it as a story of course, when you read the Gospels they obviously are claiming to tell a story that they say is true. Is it? Does it have the marks of a true story or does it have more of the marks of a fabricated story? A myth or a fiction? Well, many scholars feel and I'm not a scholar but I feel too as I read it I mean just trying to get a sense of the, it's got a sense of reality to it in many ways that it'd be hard to manufacture if you're making up the story from your imagination at a much later time.

For one thing, the characters in it are very distinguished from each other in their personalities and so forth. You've got consistent characterization of people not only in the book itself but in comparison with other Gospels that were written presumably independently of this. Arguably, the differences between this Gospel and the other Gospels mean that John was not really that acquainted with the other Gospels and yet depictions of people like Mary and Martha in the story of Lazarus very much the same two women that you read about in Luke.

Mary, the one who sat at Jesus' feet and Martha, the one who served in Luke. Those two women are in John and they have the same personalities they have the same characteristics. They were real people and the story is told by someone who apparently knew them because the nuances of the description and so forth are so vivid.

The conversations they had somebody was there and knew these people and could describe them even Nicodemus who's not known from outside of the Gospel of John is mentioned three times in the Gospel of John and he's kind of a timid but teachable fellow who ends up being a disciple of Jesus but not a real vocal one. But he comes to Jesus by night in chapter 3. He speaks up for Jesus rather timidly in John chapter 7 gets himself

rebuked and he kind of retires a little bit. And then he and Joseph of Arimathea in chapter 19 actually bury the body of Jesus somewhat under the cloak of darkness too.

The characterization of characters is very graphic, very realistic. The Samaritan woman's conversation with Jesus the man born blind and his conversations with his inquisitors and his parents I mean these are not there's just a ring of authenticity to these stories that these are real characters unless somebody who's a very good novelist was better than the average putting together a fiction and trying to make these people seem realistic. But then how they managed to make them seem the same as the other Gospels made them seem it's just easier to explain as these were really true stories.

These people really were known by the authors and they're described by people familiar with them. Also the author remembered trivial details such as an eyewitness would but which most people wouldn't think of. For example in the turning of water to wine it says there were six water pots of the Jews in chapter 2 verse 6 and it tells how much they held 20 to 30 gallons each.

It's inconsequential to the story how much they held or how many of them there were because we don't know how many guests there were or how much wine was needed but the person who wrote it remembers their size, their number and that they were particularly ceremonial water pots for washing like the Jews used. I mean this is the details that are given are like those of someone who remembers. The feeding of the 5,000 he specifically says they were barley loaves.

They weren't just loaves. They were barley loaves. Unnecessary detail but he remembered it because he was there.

When the disciples were rowing across the lake and they couldn't finish and Jesus came walking to them on the water it says they rowed about 3 or 4 miles. He remembered how far they were from the land when Jesus came walking and he could estimate. He couldn't get it quite exact.

He wasn't sure if it was 3 or 4 but it was something like 3 or 4 miles. I mean just like a person who was really there would say it. I mean if someone make it up they could just give a number.

They were 3 miles or 4 miles but it's told more like somebody would really tell it if they were a witness of it. In chapter 12 verse 3 where Mary broke the ointment over Jesus' feet and wiped it with her hair the author says and the fragrance filled the whole house. It stayed like a reminiscence of someone who remembers it.

It's not important. The important thing is this woman was anointing Jesus for his burial but the author says that smell just filled the whole place. I can remember it still as if I was still there.

He mentions there's 4 soldiers at the foot of the cross instead of just soldiers like the other gospels have. He also knows the weight of the myrrh and aloes that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea brought to involve Jesus. There was about 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes that they were using.

So there's these kinds of details. In consequence you wouldn't have to know those figures. You wouldn't have to know those details.

It's just the kind of stuff that someone who's telling a story to his friends, they're just the kind of details he'd remember and wouldn't even think that it was inconsequential. It's just part of his vivid memory. Maybe even more important is this.

Whoever it was was very familiar with the geography of Palestine. This is important to the idea that it was written before AD 70. Or at least that the author lived in Palestine before AD 70.

It might have been written later. But he was familiar with Israel before AD 70. This would not be true if, for example, the book was a theological production of the Church of Ephesus in the second century.

Which is where the book came from. John was in Ephesus at the end of his life. But if the Church of Ephesus had just produced it sort of as a fiction as a theological treatise about Jesus, as the liberals would like to say, these people would not be familiar with the details of pre AD 70 Palestine.

Because Palestine was devastated by the war and destroyed. The details that the author remembers are certainly those of a man who lived in or at least was extremely familiar with Palestine. For example, he knew that there were two Bethanias.

There were not after AD 70. But in chapter 1 and verse 28 in the New King James the word is Bethabara. But in the Alexandrian text it says Bethany.

It says these things were done in Bethany. Like I said, the New King James says Bethabara. But the Alexandrian text which is followed by most modern translations says these things were done in Bethany beyond the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Beyond the Jordan, that's not even in Palestine. That's on the other side. That's in Transjordan.

But the Bethany where Jesus spent his final week before his death was two miles outside of Jerusalem. There were two Bethanias. The author knew of it.

He knew of a Bethany beyond Jordan and he knew of Bethany two miles outside Jerusalem. After AD 70 that would not be evident because the one outside Jerusalem was no longer there. And somebody had to actually live in the area or know the area well to

make reference to these things.

The location of the Samaritan worship in chapter 4 verse 20 it mentions that the Samaritans worshipped in Mount Gerizim and the Jews in Jerusalem. Both of those shrines were destroyed in AD 70. Someone living in the next century wouldn't know probably about the Samaritans and their alternative shrine.

He mentions Sychar near Shechem as the city where Jesus met the woman at the well. That city was gone after AD 70. There's a mention of the sheep gate, the pool of Bethesda, and five covered colonnades in chapter 5 verse 2 which we just looked at a moment ago.

Those were gone after AD 70 but the author knew of them and knew in detail. The pool of Siloam was not there after AD 70 but the author knew of it. Jesus put mud in the man's eyes and said go wash in the pool of Siloam.

Solomon's porch, part of the temple would not be familiar to anyone who had not seen the temple before its destruction. The brook Kidron is a little tiny brook on the border of the Sea of Jerusalem which wouldn't be discussed very much except by locals in all likelihood. It might not be familiar to people from out of the country.

The pavement called Gabbatha again it is part of the temple complex and Golgotha being like a skull. Golgotha, this hill that Jesus was crucified on, actually looks like a skull. If you've been to Jerusalem you may have seen it.

If you've seen pictures of it taken at the right time of day with the shadows just right it literally looks like a skull. Golgotha means the place of the skull. The author knew that Jesus was crucified on a mountain that was called the place of the skull.

If they had never been in Jerusalem they wouldn't know that local color that there's a mountain in Jerusalem that they call that because it looks like a skull. The author then is familiar with Palestinian geography. Okay, quickly then.

Why do the liberals how do they argue against the authorship and date and so forth that's traditional? They say, well John was not literate enough to write such good Greek. He is referred to as an unschooled man in Acts chapter 4. It says the Sanhedrin looked at Peter and John and noted that they were unlettered, unschooled, uneducated men. Well, as I said, he may have had a secretary writing down this material.

We may not be reading John's own literary style. We may be reading somebody else's literary style as he dictated the story to them. The story is still good.

The story is still authoritative but it would not be necessary for John to have had to write it with his own hand. Many of the books of the New Testament were not written by the hand of the author including the book of Romans. Who wrote the book of Romans? Well,

it says Paul is the author but when you read in chapter 16 and Paul is closing out saying say hi to so and so apparently Paul took a breath or went to get a drink of water or do something and you see this verse I Tertius who wrote this letter also greet you.

I Tertius who wrote this letter? Who is Tertius? Well, he wrote the letter. I thought it was Paul's epistle. It was.

He dictated it to someone named Tertius and when Paul took a bathroom break Tertius decided I'm going to greet him too. Paul said greet so and so, greet so and so, greet so and so and then Tertius says and I also greet you. I Tertius who wrote this letter.

The actual scribe who wrote it for Paul identifies himself by name and Peter wrote 1 Peter by the hand of somebody named Silvanus as he says in chapter I think in the last verse of 1 Peter chapter 5 he says by Silvanus I have written to you this epistle. So it is very common for people in those days to have somebody else write down their stories and their dictated correspondence. So the fact that John might not be literate enough to write it could be true.

It wouldn't change the fact that John is basically the authority and the author behind it. Besides when it was said he was an uneducated man it was in 30 A.D. If this was written in 70 A.D. or thereabouts that is 40 years. He could have gotten much better in his writing of Greek.

So it is not really a strong argument. They say a Galilean like John because he was a fisherman from Galilee would not be familiar with Jerusalem. Obviously the author had a lot of familiarity with Jerusalem.

But who says he wouldn't? The Jews from all over the world went to Jerusalem three times a year from their childhood and spent a week there for three times a year. If you go to anywhere for vacation for a week at a time three times a year from childhood until your adult life when you are 25 years old you are going to know that place like a second home. This is a very weak argument.

John was a Galilean he wouldn't know Jerusalem as well as the others did. Who says? It does not follow. It is not a sensible argument.

They say a fisherman would not know the family of the high priest. Now this is because it says in chapter 18 that the disciple whom Jesus loved was well known by the family of the high priest. And it does seem strange that an aristocratic family like the high priest family would be acquainted with a peasant fisherman from Galilee.

This sounds like perhaps maybe the most formidable argument against John being the author. However, it is hard to know how any of Jesus' followers most of whom were peasants would have been familiar with the family of the high priest. We don't know the size of the high priest social circle.

We do know this. John and his brother James were cousins of Jesus. The way we figure that out is complex.

I can show you some other time. You have to compare passages from three different gospels. But John and James' mother was Salome and she was the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus.

So Jesus and these disciples, these two, were first cousins. Now we know that Jesus' mother was related to a woman named Elizabeth who was married into a priestly family. Because John the Baptist's parents were priests.

At least his dad was a priest and his wife was a daughter of Aaron. Also, they were from the priestly tribe and a priestly order. Now these were cousins of Jesus.

And John was a cousin of Jesus too. He might have even been more closely related to Elizabeth than now he'd be about the same, I guess. Depends on who his father was.

The point is a Galilean peasant like Jesus was connected, at least by marriage, to a priestly family. And who knows how many priests had connections with that family. It's just not impossible for a Galilean of any rank to have become acquainted with a priestly family.

Priests, after all, were living not only in Israel, and could have had neighbors and friends anywhere in the country. Then there's the argument that John would not speak of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. Well, who in the world would? What a strange way to speak of yourself.

Who can you imagine referring to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved? I have a hard time understanding why anyone would use that term. But John might, as well as anyone else. How do we know that he's not the type of guy who would do that? I'm not sure what type of guy would, but there's nothing about the term itself that makes John less likely to have used it of himself than someone else.

But they say, but it's not a very humble way to speak of himself. I don't possibly be more humble than that. Well, how humble is it? He didn't say that he was worthy of Jesus' special love.

He could have been marveling at the fact that Jesus loved him. He could have been saying it more or less as a self-degrading kind of a thing. Imagine, me, loved by Jesus.

That amplifies the love of Jesus maybe more than the status of the writer. We don't know exactly what the tone in the mind of the author was when he called himself by that term, but there's certainly no reason to believe that it couldn't have been John. It was somebody, and it was somebody close to Jesus, as close as an apostle, someone next to him at the Last Supper.

If not John, then who? Well, let me just say a few more things and then we'll be done here because I realize that I've run a little late. We started a little late, so give me a little bit of slack tonight. As far as the reliability, I mentioned earlier it's different in its content than the synoptic Gospels.

Very different. It doesn't have any birth narratives as Matthew and Luke do. There's no temptation story of Jesus being tempted by the devil as all the synoptics have.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have the temptation story of Jesus. There's no exorcisms. Very prominent in the synoptic Gospels is Jesus casting out demons.

Not one case in the Gospel of John. No parables. In the synoptics, Jesus hardly ever spoke without a parable.

There's not one parable in the Gospel of John despite all of Jesus' teaching. Unless the Good Shepherd or the I'm the Good Shepherd or I'm the True Vine. But these aren't true parables.

These are more like metaphors. They're different. They're not really what you call a parable.

But there's no Olivet Discourse. Now what's the Olivet Discourse? That's in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, but nowhere in John. It's the Discourse where Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the signs and so forth.

But some people think John had already written the book of Revelation, which is on the same subject. Why burden his document with a record of the Olivet Discourse when he had already given the longer version in Revelation and also Matthew, Mark, Luke had already covered all of that. There's no Last Supper.

That is, there's no institution of the body and the blood of Jesus in John. The other synoptics have him saying this bread is my body, this cup is my blood. Now John has five chapters dedicated to the upper room.

Well, let's see, 13, 14, 15, 16, maybe four chapters. Four chapters dedicated to what happened that night. He just skips over the institution of the Last Supper.

He has things the other Gospels don't mention, like the long discourse Jesus gave to his disciples in the upper room. It has Jesus washing their feet. The other Gospels don't mention that.

It's almost like he's writing a book about a different story. He doesn't even include that important, you know, this is my flesh and this is my blood. He just makes it so different.

And of course, it doesn't even mention the ascension of Christ. It mentions his resurrection, but it doesn't mention his ascension into heaven. So these are very peculiar

differences between John and the other Gospels.

Also I mentioned that it's mostly Jerusalem, not Galilee. It's a different style of his discourses. Very theological, very heady stuff in his discourses, but as opposed to simple peasant directed stuff in the others.

The cleansing of the temple and the crucifixion are recorded, but in different places chronologically. The cleansing of the temple in John is at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. In the other Gospels, it's at the end.

Now I personally believe there are two cleansings, and they're both correct. There's a slightly different problem in that John's Gospel seems to have Jesus crucifixion before the Passover. Excuse me.

Yeah, on the Passover. Whereas the Synoptics have it before the Passover, the day before. Some of these things have to be worked out as we talk about the relevant passages, but there are these differences.

For the most part, almost entirely, all the differences can be explained this way. If the other Gospels were already in circulation, they had covered all the same ground as each other. Why did John have to write a fourth Gospel covering the same ground? By the time he was an old man, he was the last surviving apostle, and he would of course have personal memories besides those that had come to be recorded in the Synoptic Gospels.

His church members would know that. It is thought that the elders of the church in Ephesus, where John spent his final years, thought, John, you're getting old. Don't die and leave those memories unrecorded.

Because the Synoptics had recorded a lot of things, but not everything. Do you know there's only 39 days of the life of Jesus recorded in the Gospels? Out of a ministry of three and a half years, 39 different days are recorded. That's a lot of days unrecorded, and a lot of stuff happened.

John knew a lot of that stuff, and it's believed that John wrote his book specifically to supplement what had been left out of the other Gospels, and it only makes sense. Because he focuses on ministry in places that the others don't talk about. Giving discourses the others don't record.

Even leaving out the Last Supper. How could that be justified unless he was aware that it already was covered in the others, and he's not trying to double up on what they said. The only things that are in all the Gospels, including John and the Synoptics, are the feeding of the 5,000.

It's the only miracle that all the Gospels record. And, of course, the death and resurrection of Jesus all the Gospels record. Apart from that, there's no overlap.

Now, what we do learn from John's Gospel is Jesus did a fair bit of ministry before John was put in prison. The Synoptic Gospels begin the record of Jesus' ministry when John was put in prison. They begin, when John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

That's how the Synoptics begin. But, by John chapter 4, no, John chapter 3, we read for John was not yet put in prison at this time. So John's recording things earlier before John was put in prison that are left out by the Synoptics.

He leaves out early things like the temptation of Jesus, but he includes other early things, the conversation with Nicodemus, the early cleanse in the temple, the turning of water into wine, the meeting of the woman at the well. These are not mentioned in the other Gospels, although they occurred before the events that are recorded in the Synoptics. And Jesus did ministry in both areas, apparently since the Synoptics focused on what Jesus did in Galilee, John wanted to focus on the other ministry Jesus did in Jerusalem.

But what about the differences in the content and style of his discourses? Real different stuff. Well, Jesus was versatile. The discourses of Jesus in Galilee were largely to peasants on the hillsides, uneducated people.

He was able to adjust his message to them. His conversations in Jerusalem were mainly with the chief priests and the Pharisees and his scholarly critics. And he could rise to their level easily to debate them.

It shouldn't be surprising that one man could have that much genius to be able to talk down at the level of uneducated people and then up at the level of the most educated people at the same time. C.S. Lewis did that. C.S. Lewis was a literary scholar.

He wrote textbooks and he also wrote children's books. And he wrote science fiction books. And he wrote all kinds of books, theological books.

One man can write lots of different styles if he's got sufficient genius. And Jesus would be most likely to have as much genius as anyone in that area. It would appear that the synoptics want us to know how Jesus talked to the peasants in Galilee, which was most of his ministry.

But he made frequent trips that the synoptics tell us little about to Jerusalem. John tells us about those. And the conversations he had with the scholars down there.

We know from the synoptic gospels in Luke that when Jesus was 12 years old, he was able to confound the scholars. We don't have record of anything he said to them at age 12, but we know that they were marveling at his wisdom and the way he spoke to them. In John's gospel, we get a little sample of the way he as an adult spoke to those men.

And it did baffle them when he was 30 as much as when he was 12. There's also one other point I want to point out about his teaching style. In Matthew and the parallels in the synoptics, there's an interesting statement of Jesus at the end of Matthew 11.

And those who say that this preaching style recorded in the gospel of John could not be the same Jesus as is recorded in the synoptics stumble over this. Because all the synoptics contain this statement of Jesus, and it sounds like it should be in the gospel of John, not the synoptics. Here's how it goes.

In Matthew's version, verse 25, Matthew 11, 25. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, have revealed them to babes, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight. Now look at this, verse 27.

All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal him. Now, I don't know how familiar you are with the four gospels. If you've read them multiple times, you certainly are aware of their flavor and their character.

This verse, especially verse 27, sounds exactly like something lifted out of John chapter 5 or John chapter 8 or some of the other places where Jesus is saying those strange things. No one knows the Father but the Son. No one knows the Son but the Father.

This kind of talk is what the gospel of John is all about that, and the discourses in John are worded just like this. What this tells us is that although the synoptics mainly focus on Jesus' other style of teaching to the peasants, even the synoptics bear witness to the fact that Jesus sometimes talked this way. And John's gospel gives us lots more examples of him talking this way.

But it's the same Jesus in all the gospels. There's plenty of reason to accept that. I won't go into everything else I was going to say.

You can see in the notes there's more, but one thing I cannot leave unsaid and then we'll be done. I mentioned there's not many miracles in the gospel of John, only seven. They are selected though.

They are the miracle of turning water into wine in chapter 2, of him healing the nobleman's son in chapter 4, of the healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda in chapter 5, the feeding of the five thousand in chapter 6, Jesus walking on water also in chapter 6, the man born blind healed in chapter 9, and the raising of Lazarus. All of these occur in the first half of the book. Those are the only miracles, besides of course Jesus' own resurrection, that are recorded in the ministry of Jesus in John.

But John also has seven unique sayings that are not found in the rest of the gospel,

where Jesus begins by saying, I am. I am the bread of life. John 6, 48.

I am the light of the world. John 8, 12. I am the door of the sheepfold.

John 10, 9. I am the good shepherd. John 10, 11. I am the resurrection and the life.

John 11, 25. I am the way, the truth, and the life. John 14, 6. I am the true vine.

John 15, 1. There are seven times that Jesus says, I am, fill in the blank. Now, I have not observed in any commentators what I'm about to say, but it seems to me unavoidable that John, who selected carefully what to include and what to exclude, gave the same number of miracles as he gave statements of Jesus saying, I am something. And, of course, all commentators note that some of them correspond to each other.

What I'd like to suggest is that each of them corresponds, that is, one miracle corresponds to one saying. Now, that's not obvious, but in some cases it is. For example, when Jesus said, I am the light of the world, we have him then healing the blind man.

So the man who had never seen light saw light for the first time. When Jesus says, I am the bread of life, it's right after he fed the multitudes with bread and fishes. And so there are some cases.

I am the resurrection and the life, he said just before he raised Lazarus from the dead. You see, there's like three of these or more where there's a direct and obvious connection, but some of them it's not so obvious. But my suggestion is that all of them are deliberately, in John's mind, corresponding to one of the miracles.

That what he's trying to tell us is that Jesus is certain things that Jesus claimed to be, which the other Gospels don't record. And demonstrates it by including a miracle in each case that illustrates that Jesus is that. He's the light of the world and he illustrates it by a miracle of healing a blind man.

The other Gospels record Jesus healing maybe half a dozen blind men. Only one in John is enough to illustrate the point. Jesus raised two other people from the dead in the synoptics besides Lazarus.

Only one is mentioned in John. It's enough. Jesus said I'm the resurrection and the life.

It's demonstrated by giving the story of him raising a dead man. The feeding of the five thousand is in all the Gospels, but only John has Jesus follow it by saying I'm the bread of life. What about the first miracle, turning water into wine? What does that correspond to? It corresponds to I am the true vine, of course.

That's what vines do, isn't it? They turn water into wine. You pour water on them and later you get wine out of them. That's what a vine does.

It's interesting that these the miracle and the statement are not found close to each other. In fact, the statement is the last of the statements made record and the miracles the first of the miracles are so they don't correspond in order. But certainly I am the true vine is illustrated by him saying turning water into wine.

That's how he proved he's the true vine. The healing of the nobleman's son. I'm not sure, but I think that would connect with the good shepherd.

In Scripture, God the shepherd, he binds up the wounded sheep and he carries them and he bears them and he heals them. In Ezekiel chapter 34 especially we see that and maybe even in Psalm 23. The impotent man at the sheep gate pool.

Jesus said, I am the door to the sheep fold. It's interesting that the sheep gate was the gate in Jerusalem where the sheep entered for sacrifice. They had different gates for different things and the sheep went through a gate called the sheep gate.

That's where Jesus healed the man who couldn't walk. John specifically mentions it was by the sheep gate. And later of course he's saying I am the gate or the door of the sheep fold.

Of course he fed the five thousand and said I'm the bread of life. He walked on the water and said I am the way. A way is a path.

Walk like he walks. Walk his way. He is the way.

And he walks as no one else can on water. And we are to walk not on water per se, but we're supposed to walk as he walked, which is distinctive. Other people don't walk the way Jesus did.

And he is the one whose life is the way to do that. The man born blind is followed by the statement or preceded by the statement I am the light of the world. And I mentioned the raising of Lazarus preceded by the statement I am the resurrection of the life.

So you've got these seven miracles really corresponding it seems to me to the seven I am sayings of Jesus. Which are all unique to John. The only thing in that list I just gave is the fact that the feeding of the five thousand is also in the synoptics.

But the statement he makes about being the bread of life is not. The other miracles, the other six miracles are not even found in the synoptics. There's hardly any overlap at all.

It's quite clear that John was written as a supplementary gospel apparently with the other gospels in mind. Almost with the determination not to cover anything they covered. But to fill in gaps that they left uncovered.

The last thing I would say is that John tells us the reason he wrote the gospel. We'd explore this more if I wasn't already so late. So we'll just show you this one verse in John

chapter 20 verses 30 and 31.

He said and truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book. Yeah a lot of them are written in the synoptics. And they're not written in this book.

But he acknowledges that. He doesn't claim he's given a thorough account. There's a lot more.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ. In other words, I recorded these few. I left out a lot.

But I recorded just enough so you'd believe that Jesus is who I say he is. That you'd believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And that believing you may have life in his name.

So this is an evangelistic document. So that the reader may have life by coming to faith in Christ. And to establish that by showing just a fair sample of Jesus' great miracles and how they illustrated not just that he had power but that that power testified to who he is.

These signs are recorded so that you'll know that he's the Christ, the Son of God. He turned water into wine so you'd know that he's the true vine. He fed the multitudes so you'd know he's the bread of life and so forth.

And so John tells us that he has been selective and that his selection has been intentional. He's recording the kinds of things that will illustrate and demonstrate to the reader that Jesus is somebody special and somebody specifically described in this gospel but not clearly described in those terms in other gospels. So as we study the gospel of John it provides a unique service different than Matthew, Mark, and Luke provide.

And so that's what we'll be doing in detail for these evening sessions.