

# OpenTheo

## John Overview



### **Bible Book Overviews** - Steve Gregg

In "John Overview", Steve Gregg presents a thorough examination of the Gospel of John, highlighting its differences from the other synoptic gospels, such as its philosophical and theological nature and emphasis on Jesus' divinity. While the author of the Gospel of John is not explicitly named, it is believed to be one of the twelve disciples and likely someone with connections to the high priestly family. The overall purpose of the gospel is to provide evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and to inspire belief in him as the way to eternal life.

### **Transcript**

The Book of John, which is obviously not just an ordinary book, but in many cases, people's favorite gospel. I know that many Christians say that if they were to give a new Christian just one book of the New Testament, it would be the Gospel of John. Now, that has never been my preference.

I would probably give the Gospel of Matthew first or something, but John's great. The thing about John, it's a little bit heavy, a little deep for a new Christian, it seems to me. I mean, the other gospels sort of tell the story of Jesus, which is engaging and you can kind of see him going from place to place and hear him talk and so forth.

But the Gospel of John is much more philosophical. For example, the other gospels begin with actual events in the life of Christ, or at least in John the Baptist's life. Matthew's gospel begins with the birth narratives of Jesus in Matthew chapters 1 and 2, and then with the ministry of John the Baptist in chapter 3, and then Jesus shows up as an adult in chapter 3, and then it's his story from that point on.

In Mark, it doesn't even give a birth narrative, just starts with the baptism of John the Baptist and Jesus, and then gives us essentially the same story that you find in Matthew, with some details different. Luke also has a birth narrative in the first two chapters, then it talks about John the Baptist, but before it talks about the birth of Jesus, it talks about the birth of John. But the point is that these other gospels all start within some point in the historical events of the life of Christ, where John does not.

If we would say that John is writing the life of Christ, we'd have to mean that in a different way than to say Matthew, Mark, and Luke have written the life of Christ. Because if we talk about the life of Christ in the sense that we find in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we're reading the events of a life, just like, frankly, the life of anyone else you'd read about. You'd expect a biography, and that's what you get.

John has that, too, has fewer of those events in the life of Jesus, but it talks about the life of Jesus as a quantitative thing, like the life that is in him, the life that we receive from him. His life. And it starts by introducing him before the creation of the universe, which is, of course, going back a lot further than the other gospels go to begin.

There is no birth narrative in John, but there is the prehistoric narrative of the preincarnate existence of Christ, and it talks about how in him was life, and that life was the light of men. Now, we're not talking about events of a life at that point. We're talking about the essence of life.

We're talking about divine life. And so when John talks about the life of Christ, it's a different kind of treatment of life. It's not so much just the events of his life, and John has much fewer of those than the other gospels have, but much more discussion of the nature of his life.

It's the life of God. It's divine life. It's the life that enlightens everyone who comes into the world, it says in John 1. And so we're getting more of a philosophical background, or you could say theological background, of the life of Christ.

And in the first 18 verses of John, it kind of leads us up to the point where we actually have some historical points introduced later on. Those first 18 verses are usually called John's prologue because he doesn't really begin telling the story in those 18 verses. He gives this background so that when the story begins, you've got some sense of what kind of being we are now discussing.

Now, John's gospel doesn't have anywhere near as many miracles. For example, only seven miracles of Jesus are found in the gospel of John. Other gospels probably record, if you combine them, 30 or so, maybe 40.

A lot of miracles, but only seven of them were selected to be in this gospel. And the ministry of Jesus is recorded in different venues in John than in the other gospels. In fact, the differences between John's gospel and the other three are so pronounced that people who are a little weak in their faith, or maybe let's just say aren't skeptical, have gone so far as to say the gospel of John is not really telling about the same person.

I mean, they might think there is some credibility in the stories of Jesus and Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but they'd say, John, that's not the same person. In fact, they would skeptical people who are not believers, and many Bible scholars are not believers, by the

way. That might surprise you, but that is true.

They often will say that the gospel of John is really more of a theological construct, which reflects the opinions or the insights of the later church, that it was not really written by a disciple of Jesus, not really written by anyone who knew him, but it reflects more the theological developments in the church's ideas about Jesus, maybe in the early second century, because they say there's just too much difference between Jesus in John and Jesus in the other gospels. What kind of difference are they talking about? For one thing, the other gospels, the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they tell, again, a lot more miracles than John does, but they also tell mostly of ministry that took place in Galilee. Now, Galilee was far from the Jewish capital of Jerusalem, at the other end of the country.

Jesus was a Galilean, and so were his disciples. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the ministry of Jesus begins to be recorded at the point where he begins what's called his great Galilean ministry, which was probably the first year or more of his whole ministry was in Galilee. Now, that ministry is left out almost entirely of John.

You almost have nothing about it. Instead, John has a lot of things about Jerusalem and Judah, Judea, the other end of the country, and conversations Jesus has there with the chief priests and the scribes and arguments and things he has there. So they'd say, well, first of all, there's hardly any overlap, even in the venues of his life in John.

And the way he talks is different in John. The way Jesus speaks in the Gospel of John is very deep, very philosophical. Having read the Gospel of John through over a hundred times myself, there are still passages I think I need to think about that more to try to figure out what he's trying to say there.

Whereas in the Gospels, the other Gospels, he's talking like in parables. There's no parables in John. Jesus' ministry was primarily characterized by teaching in parables in the other Gospels.

That was what seems to be the main feature of his teaching was his parables. We don't find any parables at all in John. When we do find, for example, the Sermon on the Mount or similar sermons in the other Gospels, Jesus is talking about ethics, how to live, how to love, how to be humble, how to not be a hypocrite, what kind of life pleases God.

And he has this is mostly in short sayings, relatively short sayings. And yet in John, we have these long discourses with long sentences, and they're all deep things. They're not about how to live.

They're about who he is and who his father is. And what the relationship between him and his father is. Really deep stuff, and it's really a different kind of a teaching than in the other Gospels.

And this is what makes some people who are always looking for reasons to be skeptical, to become skeptical about John's authenticity. They say, well, he's, everyone agrees, even the most conservative evangelical agrees that John is the last Gospel to be written chronologically. Matthew, Mark, and Luke were around in his circulation for some time before John's Gospel was written.

But the liberal skeptic would say John's Gospel is way out there in the future beyond the others. Maybe, maybe, you know, 70 years beyond or more. And that it's really kind of making stuff up.

Now, of course, there have always been people who have said that about the other Gospels too. They make stuff up. But there's no evidence that the others are made up.

There's actually no evidence that this is made up. And John, it's just the difference between John and the others that makes them think, well, one of these must be not the real Jesus. But you have to realize that these people are always grasping at any slight evidence they think they can find to make them have doubts about the Bible.

Having doubts about the Bible is their enterprise. It's their goal in life is to entertain as many doubts as possible so that they don't have to take Jesus seriously. Now, I've never been of that mind.

I've always figured that the early church knew pretty well who wrote these Gospels. Why wouldn't they? How would they forget? These Gospels were in the hands of the early church in the lifetime of the apostles. And the church received them from their hands.

It's really hard to know how the chain of custody would ever allow for a time to come where the church just forgot who wrote these. And mistakenly thought John wrote one and Matthew wrote another and so forth. It's obvious that all things being equal, that is to say without any evidence for or against, one is reasonable enough to say, well, the early church knew who wrote these Gospels and preserved it.

And unless someone can find reason for me to doubt it, I'm not going to doubt it. I think the burden of proof is on the innovator. This gospel, all four of the Gospels were recognized as being written by their traditional authors, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, before the end of the first century.

And the early church all knew who wrote them. And so did the rest of the church for the next, you know, 17, 1800 years. But it was in the 19th century that scholars in Germany and later in England and America began to develop all kinds of theories to try to question almost everything in the Bible.

And they took on a default skepticism. Now, if you have a default skepticism, you're going to be saying prove that it's true. Or we won't believe you.

And when they said, well, I'm not going to try to make you believe that's up to you. You prove me they're not true. Certainly for 1800 years, the people who knew them best thought they were true.

And you're saying they're not. Let me see your evidence. If it's what I just surveyed for you, the differences between John's gospel and the others, I think it's pretty weak.

I mean, the fact that Jesus ministered in Galilee and in Judea is testified to in all the Gospels. All four of the Gospels tell us that Jesus ministered in Galilee and in Judea. It's just that the synoptic Gospels cover his Galilean ministry more and John, his Judean ministry more.

OK, what's the problem with that? As far as the different kinds of ways that Jesus spoke, we know that in Galilee he spoke largely to the uneducated peasants on the hillsides. And he spoke in short aphorisms, in parables, in very practical ways. But in John, almost all the conversations he's debating with theologians.

Now, even Luke, one of the synoptic Gospels, tells us that Jesus was quite capable of debating theologians when he was 12 years old. Luke tells us when Jesus was 12, he was causing the theologians to marvel at the wisdom of his answers and so forth. So even the synoptics register that Jesus was more than a match for the theologians on their terms and on their turf.

But when he was on Galilean turf talking to peasants, he didn't talk over their heads. In fact, there's a very interesting verse that's in at least two of the synoptic Gospels that sounds almost entirely like it was lifted from the Gospel of John, though it was not. But anyone familiar with the Gospel of John would recognize that this verse I'm about to read sounds like it belongs to the Gospel of John.

Just the way it's worded, even the way the subject matter and so forth, it just sounds like it's lifted from the Gospel of John. But it's found in Matthew and in Luke, synoptic Gospels. But in Matthew chapter 11, in verse 6, verse 26, excuse me, and 27, he says, Now, that's not an exact quote from anything in John, but that's exactly the kind of statements spoken in exactly the kind of way that John represents Jesus is speaking.

Only that's not in John. So even the synoptic Gospels record that Jesus on occasion can talk the way he talks frequently in John. But apparently in Galilee, he didn't talk that way all the time.

That's fine. Any good, intelligent communicator can talk differently to different audiences. Think of C.S. Lewis writing, you know, the Chronicles of Narnia for children or the space trilogy for science fiction geeks or writing criticism of English literature for his classes at Oxford or, you know, his other philosophy works or apologetics for the average Brit in the pub in mere Christianity.

I mean, that's one author writing all these different styles with different audiences in view. That's, yeah, Jesus can talk differently to different people, and we have record that he talked both ways, even in both, in all the Gospels. Now, that Jesus talked more about who he was in John's Gospel than in the synoptics is not too surprising either.

Jesus really wasn't here to talk about who he was very much. That's one reason I don't turn people to the Gospel of John first, because it's rather uncharacteristic of the way he talked to common people. It's when he got into theological arguments with chief priests and Pharisees that he gets onto this deep stuff about himself and his father and so forth.

You hardly have any of that in, say, the Sermon on the Mount or most of the sermons or the sayings in the other Gospels. He's not usually talking about himself. He's talking about you and your father and what your father wants you to do.

He's talking to people about their relationship with God, whereas in John, he's talking more about his relationship with God. But that's because the theologians are asking about that very thing. They're asking him where he got his authority, and, you know, why should they believe that he has the prerogatives of God, which he claims for himself.

I mean, they take up stones to stone him several times in the Gospel of John because of his seemingly blaspheming by putting himself on a level with God. But that's because he's talking to theologians about theological things, and certainly the relationship of Jesus to the Father is a theological and deep subject. So in different Gospels, we have different things.

The thing that we should know is this. When you read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you're reading the story pretty similar in each case. I mean, each of the synoptic Gospels has some of its own unique material, but you're going to find certainly more than half of any of those Gospels is found in the other two synoptic Gospels, which isn't the case when you come to John.

And the understanding, I think, that most conservative scholars have is this, that John lived longer than any of the other apostles. And when he was old, the other three Gospels had been written and were in circulation for some time before that, and the other apostles were dead. And he was like the last living witness to these things, and he was in the Church of Ephesus after he'd been returned from the island Patmos.

He spent his final years in the Church of Ephesus, and the elders there asked him to tell them things about his life with Jesus that the other Gospels had not mentioned. John himself at the end of the Gospel says, if everything Jesus said and did were written down, I suppose the earth itself could not contain the books. That's how he kind of closes this Gospel.

And there's so many things Jesus said and did that are not recorded that everyone realized that, you know, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they recorded a lot of the same things, but there must be a lot of important things Jesus said and did that didn't get into any of those records. And they asked John to write his memoirs, not duplicating what's in the other Gospels, but more filling in the gaps. For example, the other Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all begin the public ministry of Jesus after his baptism, after his temptation of the wilderness, with his Galilean ministry.

That is, after he was baptized, after he went to the wilderness for 40 days, they say, when John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus came preaching in Galilee. And then they talk about his Galilean ministry. John, however, doesn't mention Jesus' Galilean ministry until chapter 4, at the end of chapter 4, actually.

And even then, he only has one story from it, and then he has Jesus coming back to Jerusalem at a feast to have some more conversations with the leaders down there. Hardly any mention. But before the Galilean ministry starts, it fills in several stories that we would not know about if we only had the Synoptic Gospels.

In fact, we would have the impression from the other Gospels that after the temptation, Jesus went right up to Galilee. But John tells us in John chapter 1 that after his temptation, Jesus came back to where John was baptizing and was hanging out in the crowd. And John saw him and said, that's the Lamb of God.

I baptized him not long ago. I saw the Spirit come down on him like a dove. I testify this is the Son of God.

And then a couple of John's disciples begin to follow Jesus. And so Jesus begins to collect disciples of his own. And then he goes to the wedding feast and turns water into wine.

And then he comes back to Jerusalem at Passover, and he cleanses the temple the first time. He did that again at the end of his ministry. And then he met with Nicodemus.

And then it says in chapter 4, at the beginning it says that Jesus heard that the Pharisees knew that he was baptizing more people than John. So he went to Galilee. Now, that's to start the Galilean ministry.

But it could be as much as a year after his baptism. And the other Gospels don't mention anything between his baptism or the temptation, I should say, which was right after his baptism. Between that and his Galilean ministry.

So John fills in like almost several months, possibly as much as a year of Jesus' ministry. That is not mentioned at the very beginning before his public Galilean ministry. So John fills in gaps.

And there's hardly any duplication. There's only one, no, there's two miracles of Jesus in

John's Gospel that can be found elsewhere. One of them is Jesus walking on water, which is found in John chapter 6, which is also found in Matthew.

Matthew covers Jesus walking on water, but Matthew adds that Peter walked on water for a little while too. John doesn't mention that part. But the walking on the water is one point of overlap.

And the other thing is the feeding of the 5,000. Now, the feeding of the 5,000 is also in John 6, but that's in all four Gospels. It's the only miracle, of course, besides the resurrection of Christ himself, that's in all four Gospels.

Which is kind of an amazing thing. All the Gospels have numerous miracles, but there's only one miracle that's in all four of them. And that's the feeding of the 5,000.

So we find a very sparse degree of overlap. Now, I want to say something about the author, because the author doesn't mention his name. Your Bible probably says the Gospel according to John, which is the traditional title.

In fact, all the titles of the Gospels as they are listed in our book are traditional, because the actual Greek text that they wrote did not mention their own names. Those who preserved their Gospels put the titles on, Gospel according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, according to John. But there's always been some, but mostly in modern times, people who say, well, I don't think this was written by John.

I think it was written by somebody else. He doesn't mention himself as John. Well, that's no surprise.

None of the Gospel writers mention themselves by name as the author. Matthew actually mentions himself in his Gospel, but he calls himself Levi, and he doesn't mention that he's the author. This is one way that the real Gospels differ from the gnostic, fake Gospels that were written in the second and third centuries, because those always claim, the author of those claims to be someone famous, but isn't.

Claims to be Thomas or Philip or Mary or Judas or Peter, but they're not really them. They're written long after the death of those people. Whereas in the real Gospels, the authors don't claim to be anybody.

They just tell the story. They don't mention themselves as the authors at all. It's just that the early church knew them, and that's how we know who they were.

But how would we deduce, let's say if we didn't have any tradition or if we didn't trust the tradition, how might we deduce who wrote this Gospel? Well, it's kind of an interesting inquiry, because the author does refer to himself, simply not by name. He refers to himself several times as the disciple whom Jesus loved. And so sometimes commentators will simply refer to him as the beloved disciple, but he refers to himself as



the disciple whom Jesus loved.

And it says this at the end of the book in John 21, 20, to the end of the book. Now, this is not the first time that expression is used. In fact, it's the last time it's used in the book, but he's been mentioned by that name earlier.

He's just reminding us that the disciple whom Jesus loved had done that at the last supper. Now, Peter sees him, and Peter says to Jesus, Now, the context of this is Jesus has just been telling Peter how he's going to die. And I don't know if Peter's thinking, well, I wonder if this guy's going to have any better than me.

I'm going to be crucified upside down. How about John? Is he going to get easier than that or not? And Jesus says, mind your own business. That's essentially what Jesus said.

Jesus said, if I will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me. Now, again, John's name is not mentioned, but only the disciple whom Jesus loved. And then it says in verse, if we'd skip down to verse 24, this is the disciple who testifies of these things and wrote these things.

And we know that his testimony is true. Now, notice the disciple whom Jesus loved is the one who testified of the things in this book and wrote them. But someone else is speaking about him when they say we know his testimony is true.

So I think the best we can understand is that somebody who calls himself the disciple whom Jesus loved wrote down these stories, perhaps not in their final arrangement, perhaps on many occasions. There were people taking notes when he was telling his stories about Jesus. But some group of people, probably the elders of the Church of Ephesus, where John spent his final years, collected them and said, now, we'll put our stamp of approval on it.

We know this is true. We know him. We know he tells the truth.

And he's the one who gave us this information. This comes from him. So that the gospel of John or this gospel is written by the disciple who Jesus loved.

Now, what do we know about him? Well, a number of things. But let me just say, first of all, before I tell you how we know who he is, I want to tell you who he isn't. And this, you may have never heard this theory, but being on the radio for 25 years and have people call on me and ask me questions, I've heard this many times, it's not a widely held view.

But some people say the disciple whom Jesus loved was Lazarus. And the book of John was written by not John, but Lazarus. Where do they get that from? Well, they get it from the fact that in chapter 11, when Lazarus is sick and his sisters come to Jesus, asking him to give attention to their brother's sickness, that they come to him saying, Lord, the one whom you love is sick.

They refer to their brother Lazarus as the one that you love. Now, it's not prior to that that we read the expression of the disciple whom Jesus loved. But after that, in chapter 12, and several times afterwards, there is reference to the disciple that Jesus loved.

So the argument is, okay, the book tells us who the disciple that Jesus loved is. Lazarus was the disciple that Jesus loved. We first have Lazarus spoken of as the one whom you love, Lord.

And then after that, immediately after that, we have references to the disciple that Jesus loved throughout the rest of the book. Now, this view is clever, but it has no value. There's nothing about it that speaks of authenticity to me.

For one thing, Lazarus is not the only disciple that is said to have been loved by Jesus. As a matter of fact, when the sisters sent their report to Jesus about Lazarus' sickness, the writer says, now Jesus loved Lazarus and Mary and Martha. Okay, so there's three disciples that Jesus loved right there.

More than that, in chapter 13, when he comes to the Last Supper, the 12 are all there. And it says in chapter 13, verse 1, the last line in chapter 13, verse 1, says, Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. He loved them all, his own, these disciples, all of them, he loved them to the end.

To say that Jesus loved Lazarus doesn't mean he's the only disciple that Jesus loved or that he would stand out as one who had that particular nickname. As a matter of fact, the disciple whom Jesus loved was in the upper room at the Last Supper, leaning on Jesus. In fact, sitting between Jesus and Peter, so that even Peter had to ask the disciple whom Jesus loved, ask him who it is that's going to betray him, and then the disciple whom Jesus loved asked Jesus.

So this man was closer to Jesus than the 12. And yet Lazarus isn't mentioned once in the Synoptic Gospels. There's no reason to believe that Lazarus traveled with them.

The Synoptic Gospels tell us that in the upper room was Jesus and his 12. And Lazarus was not one of the 12. So I think we have to rule out Lazarus.

There's not a good enough reason to even consider him. But how do we know which of the 12 it was? Certainly it's one of the 12 who was in the upper room. Well, one way we can eliminate some is that several other disciples of the 12 are mentioned by name throughout the book, as obviously other than the disciple whom Jesus loved.

So the author is one of the 12, but he's not one of these that are named. Peter, Andrew, Philip, Nathaniel, Thomas, Judas Iscariot, and Judas not Iscariot. If your name was Judas and you were one of the 12 after the whole thing happened with Judas Iscariot, wouldn't you always call yourself Judas not Iscariot? The writer actually refers to Judas not Iscariot, said this.

You know, once Judas Iscariot had become such a notorious scoundrel, if you were one of the disciples and your name was Judas, you might always say, yeah, I'm Judas not Iscariot. That was the other Judas. There are actually two Judases, two Jameses, and two Simons among the 12.

There were a limited number of names in those days that people were naming their kids, obviously. But we have then seven of the 12 are named as separate from the disciple whom Jesus loved. That leaves only five possibilities, John being one of them.

The other ones are fairly—one certainly can't be, and that is James, John's brother. And that's because James, John's brother, was killed in Acts chapter 12 very early, long before any Gospels were written, just within the first few years of the church. Before anyone was writing the Gospels, James, the son of Zebedee, was beheaded in Acts chapter 12.

So that brings down to four. And it wasn't Matthew, and it wasn't Thaddeus, and it wasn't—I'm not sure about Simon the Zealot. So, I mean, it might have been, but no one has ever thought it was.

The early church never thought it was them, and there's no reason to believe it was. Also, this particular disciple was kind of connected to Peter because you find, for example, that when Jesus was raised and Mary Magdalene comes back to the disciples, and his body's been moved, I don't know where it is, Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved leave and run to the tomb together. The other disciples don't, but Peter and this disciple do, the one who wrote this.

Now, in the book of Acts, we find in the early stories Peter and John continually together. In the stories in the first five chapters of Acts, Peter and John are like partners. And we note that they were also partners in business before they became disciples.

They were fishermen. James and John, Peter and Andrew, were all partners in the trade. So they were close affiliates before they were Christians and in the book of Acts.

And you find Peter speaking to the disciple whom Jesus loves at the Last Supper. We find him running to the tomb with them. There's just, there seems to be a connection there between the two.

So, I mean, if we had no other traditions, if the early church told us nothing about who wrote it, we could almost deduce from just the information in the book that it's either John or one of the other three very, you know, not very famous disciples. And John is the one that the church has always told us it was. Now, there are, again, the skeptics.

The skeptics always want to find fault. And they've said, no, there's no way John could have written this for a number of reasons. Let me tell you their reasons, and I'll refute them.

One, they say John wasn't learned enough to write it. The Gospel of John is written in pretty good Greek. And John and Peter were both said to be illiterate, or not illiterate, but untrained.

In Acts chapter 4, the Sanhedrin looked on these two men, Peter and John, and knew that they were untrained laymen, unschooled. And it is said, well, this book was written by somebody who was pretty good in Greek. So John probably wasn't one who could do that.

On the other hand, it is well known that most books were not written by the hand of their actual authors, but by an amanuensis. An amanuensis was a secretary who would take dictation and write things down in a literary form. Most people weren't very literary because most people didn't have writing instruments.

Even if they could read, they didn't have pens and paper and things like that. Only a few people wrote. And they were usually professionals, amanuensis, who you'd hire them, or if it was a Christian writer, there might be a Christian amanuensis who volunteered to write it, but they would take down the dictation.

A very notable case of this is in Romans, where in Romans 16, Paul is sending his greetings to several people he knows in Rome. He says, greet so and so, greet so and so, greet so and so. And then there's this weird little verse stuck in there called, I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, also greet you.

In Romans 16. Someone named Tertius says, I wrote this letter, and I'm greeting you too. Paul is the writer, he's the author.

Tertius was the amanuensis, and he said, I want to make sure you guys know I'm in on this, so I want to say hello too. And Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 5 that he wrote his letter through an amanuensis also. And so probably John told the stories, and someone very literate in Greek wrote them down.

He's still the author. Just like, I mean, an awful lot of books are written in partnership between somebody who's a big name and some professional writer who's not a big name. Of course, some are totally ghostwritten.

But, I mean, a lot of famous books were written by somebody famous, but it really says, with so and so. The big name is the famous person, under it says on the cover, with so and so. So and so really wrote the book.

They got the information from the author, and they wrote it for him. That's kind of how things were done a little bit in ancient times too. And so there could have been somebody else's literary skills reflected in John's gospel rather than his own.

Another argument that John couldn't have done it was that the person was too familiar

with Jerusalem, that whoever wrote it knew about a lot of geographical things in Jerusalem that no one would really know unless they lived there, we are told. Now what's interesting is that all these features were destroyed in 70 AD. So whoever wrote this lived there before 70 AD, which raises, that makes very clear that it's someone who really knew.

I mean, the pool at Bethesda, Solomon's porch with his ten courts and so forth. There's all kinds of physical features of Jerusalem that aren't there anymore. They were destroyed in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the place.

But whoever wrote this knew, knew them. Now they say, well, if he's a Galilean fisherman, why would he be so familiar with all these things in Jerusalem? Well, duh, Galileans went to Jerusalem three times a year and camped out there for a week each time for the three festivals every year. They had to.

After age 12, every male Jew went to Jerusalem three times a year and lived there for a week each time. If he was now in his 20s, he could have spent as many as 50 weeks in Jerusalem of his life up to that time. You can get to know a place pretty well if you spend that much time there.

Another objection they have is that a fisherman would not know the family of the high priest. Now, this comes from chapter 18, verses 15 through 16, when Peter and John or the author, Peter and the disciple of Jesus loved, followed Jesus to the court where he is being held on trial before Caiaphas. It says Peter warmed himself outside by the fire, which is where he got in trouble and denied Jesus three times.

But it says the disciple of Jesus loved because he was known to the high priest, went on in. Now, whoever wrote the gospel was known to the high priest. The high priest would be like the most powerful person in the religious country.

And, you know, how would a how would a peasant fisherman be acquainted with him? So they say probably he couldn't be a fisherman from Galilee and be acquainted with the high priest. But wait a minute. Jesus was a peasant from Galilee, too.

And his mother was related to Elizabeth, who was married to a priest. And therefore, there were priests in the family. Now, what's interesting is that John and James, the sons of Zebedee, they had a mother named Salome.

And there's evidence in Scripture that she was Mary's sister. There was James and John were first cousins of Jesus. And if Jesus was related through his mother to a priestly family, then James and John were related equally through their mother, who is the sister of Jesus' mother, to the same families.

They had the same connections. And therefore, there's every reason that they could have had connections. Well, certainly we know they'd have connections to some priest

families.

Whether they knew the high priest, we don't know. But how large the circle of acquaintances the high priest had is, we don't know. But we know that these people were connected by blood to other priestly families.

And there's no reason to believe that in the course of their lives, they had never met the high priest or someone from his family. It doesn't say they knew the high priest. They knew his family.

Don't know how big his family was, how big were the circles of his family's friends. It's just a ridiculous thing to argue that John couldn't be the author because of knowing the high priest's family. And then the other, the last thing is, well, why would John call himself the disciple whom Jesus loved? Isn't that kind of an arrogant thing to say? Well, I don't know.

Maybe it's saying more about Jesus than about himself. All the disciples, I'm sure, believed that Jesus loved them. In fact, it might have been actually a very humble thing to say, astonishment that Jesus would love me.

Why would Jesus love me? But he did. He loved me. He always had a special friend of his.

But more than that, why would anyone call himself that? I mean, why would John be less likely to than anybody else? Somebody wrote this. Somebody called himself that. Why couldn't it be John as much as anyone else? You see, the objections are all flimsy.

We have every reason to accept what the church has always said about this gospel. It's written by John. John was one of the inner circle of Jesus.

There were 12 apostles, but three of them were closer to Jesus than others, Peter, James, and John. They all happened to be partners in fishing beforehand too, and two of them happened to be Jesus' cousins. Maybe a little nepotism there.

I don't know. But whatever, Jesus, I'm sure, made his choices based on how his father led him. But we know that when it came to the Mount of Transfiguration, nine of the apostles had to stay at the foot of the mountain while Peter, James, and John went up on the mountain to see Moses Elijah with Jesus.

We know that also when Jesus went into the house of Jairus, whose daughter had died, he left nine of the apostles outside and took Peter, James, and John and the parents in with him to raise the girl. We also know that at the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus went in to pray, he left nine of the disciples at the gate and took with him three, Peter, James, and John, same ones, in to pray with him. They had more access than the others did.

That might seem strange. It might seem like if you were one of the others, you'd be jealous. But if you get to be an apostle, that should be good enough.

Everybody has some people they're closer to than others. And Jesus was closer to these three men than to others. But of the three, there was one who was closer than the others, and that would seem to be John.

Again, he sat nearest to Jesus at the last supper, nearer than Peter did. And so I think that we've got a pretty interesting source for this information, and that's important to know. I don't want to get into all the things in your notes because it would take too long.

I do want to point this out, though. And that is that because John's gospel has Jesus speaking more about himself than the other gospels have, him speaking about himself, especially about his importance, his relation with his father, and so forth, his uniqueness, there are seven statements in the gospel of John that are not found in the other gospels, and they are about Jesus himself. In fact, they begin with him saying, I am, and then he finishes the statement.

In at least one case, he just says, I am, with nothing at the end. He says, before Abraham was, I am. But he also has seven statements where he says, I am, and then he finishes off with a particular word.

For example, I am the true vine. Chapter 15, I am the good shepherd. In Chapter 10, I am the door to the sheepfold.

Also in Chapter 10, I am the bread of life. It's in Chapter 6. I am the way, the truth, and the life, John 14. I am the light of the world in John 8. And I am the resurrection and the life in Chapter 11.

Now, I gave those in a strange order, didn't I? Your notes have them in the proper order. These are statements where Jesus is saying something about himself in a very direct way. This is who I am.

This is what I am. Now, another interesting thing is there's the same number of miracles recorded in John's Gospel. Seven.

When he could have had a lot more or fewer. John wrote the book of Revelation also, and there's a bunch of sevens in there too. There's seven letters to seven churches, seven seals on the book, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven vials.

Seven of a whole bunch of things in the book of Revelation. Seven's, I guess, an important number in John's thinking. And he records seven, no more or less, miracles of Jesus.

And seven, no more or less, I am sayings of Jesus. But it would appear, and this cannot

be demonstrated to the point of absolute certainty. But it would appear that he chose to include the miracles that he did in order to correlate them with these I am sayings.

That is to say, there's one miracle for each of the I am sayings, and there's a correlation in them. Now, if you look at John chapter 20. In John chapter 20, verse 30.

John says, and truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. Now, he referred to the miracles he did as signs.

There's different words in the Greek that are used in the Bible to speak of miracles. One is *dunamis*, which means a power, but sometimes it's referring to a miracle. There's another word that simply means a miracle or a wonder.

And there's this one, *simion*, in the Greek, it means signs. Now, these are all different words for the miracles of Jesus. John uses the word signs repeatedly.

He sees the miracles of Jesus as signs. Now, why would something be called a sign? A sign communicates information. It tells you where the bathrooms are.

It tells you where the exits are. It tells you how far it is to your next offering. Signs convey information.

Now, the miracles of Jesus, John saw as signs. They communicate information about him. Now, Jesus himself, even in the synoptic gospels, sometimes indicated that this was the case with his miracles.

For example, when the man who was lowered by his four friends through a roof, the paralyzed man, was brought before him, Jesus said, Your sins are forgiven you. And when the Pharisees said, You can't forgive sins, you're not God. Jesus said, Well, so that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, get up and walk.

He said, I'm going to do this miracle so you'll know that I actually do have the competence to do this kind of thing that I'm saying. I have the power to forgive sins, and I'll show you right here. When Jesus cast out demons, he said, If I'm casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

The coming of the kingdom is invisible, but his casting demons out was a sign that it had come, he's saying. It's not unusual for Jesus to connect to one of his miracles a meaning, a message. Now, in John's gospel, there are seven miracles, signs, recorded.

And there are seven I am sayings. Now, I can't with certainty connect all of them to each other. I can with some tentativeness do so, but some of them are indisputably linked together.



For example, when Jesus said, I am the bread of life, that's linked with him breaking the bread and the fish and feeding the multitudes. It's connected. He fed the multitudes, and the next day they came for more.

He said, I'm the bread of life. You need to go for the bread of heaven, not the bread that doesn't last for eternal life. I'm the bread of life.

So, he did a miracle creating and manifesting and multiplying bread, and then I'm the true bread that you need. When he said, I am the light of the world, he said that in John chapter 8. But he said it in connection with the next miracle he did, which was a man who was born blind, having his eyes open for the first time and seeing light for the first time. He gave him light, who'd always been in darkness, and that's in the proximity with him saying, I'm the light of the world in the previous chapter.

He also said, I am the true vine. And what miracle showed that to be so? Well, he turned water into wine, which is what vines are for. We've got a lot of vineyards out where I live in Temecula.

A lot of vines out there. Every one of them has just one purpose, and that's turning water into wine. That's what vines do.

That's what they did in biblical times, that's what they do now. Jesus said, I am the true vine, and he proved it by a miracle of turning water into wine, like a vine does. And so you can see there's very close parallels here in some cases.

Now, not every case is it very obvious. For example, when he said, I am the door to the sheepfold. What miracle is that connected to? Well, maybe none, but I'll tell you, in chapter 5, where Jesus healed the impotent man, John goes out of his way to say, it was by the sheep gate.

This pool was over by the sheep gate. Jesus was over by the sheep gate. And he says, I'm the door of the sheepfold.

I'm the door of the sheep coming in and out of. The sheep gate was a gate in the walls of Jerusalem. They bring the sheep in for the sacrifices.

They had different gates for different things. And he's the sheep gate. He's the door of the sheepfold, he said.

So I think that that might be intentional. When Jesus walked on the water, what was that illustrating? Very possibly when he said, I am the way, the truth and the life. The way is a path.

Jesus walked a path. He walked a way that no one else walks. He is that way.

No one walks on water. That's his unique way. And he is the way.

If you want to walk like him, you're going to have to walk miraculously like he did. And it's very possible that that miracle connects with that, though they're not in proximity with each other. So it makes it a little more questionable.

Certainly when he said, I am the resurrection of the life, that's connected very clearly with the resurrection of Lazarus. He even said it on that occasion. He had come down to Bethany to raise Lazarus.

And Martha says, if you'd been here, my brother would not have died. And he said, Martha, your brother's going to live again. She said, I know in the resurrection of the last day he's going to live again.

And she said, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. So I'm the resurrection is connected with the raising of Lazarus.

I'm the true vine related to water and wine. I'm the light of the world related to opening a man's eyes who is blind. I'm the bread of life related to feeding the people, multiplying the loaves and so forth.

Now, I put a little chart in your notes kind of comparing those two side by side, but I'm not 100% sure about some of them. So I'm not going to try to shoehorn them in necessarily. But it is quite clear that more than half of the seven, at least four, are unmistakably connected, which makes me suspicious that the other three probably are intended to be connected.

It could be two, though it takes a little less. It takes a little more ingenuity to see it that way, but nonetheless, it's fine. Okay, so the purpose of John writing, what was his purpose in writing this book? We have some information about that.

One, he says, and we read this in chapter 20 and verse 30 through 31. He wrote it so that you would believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that you'd have life. Now, it's interesting, the word life is a very common word in John's gospel, much less so in the other gospels.

You know, in John's gospel, it actually takes the place of the term kingdom of God, which is in the other gospels. The term kingdom of God is only found, I think, five times in John, whereas life is in there scads of times. Eternal, sometimes called eternal life, sometimes simply life.

Just talk about divine life. Now, in the other gospels, the word life in that sense is used very, very sparsely, very rarely, but the term kingdom of God is throughout. It's very clear that the term kingdom of God in the synoptics has its parallel in John with the word life or eternal life in John.

Now, this shouldn't be too surprising. If you look over at Mark chapter 9, verse 43, if your hand makes you sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go to hell into the fire that shall not be quenched, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.

And if your foot makes you sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than having two feet to be cast into hell into the fire that shall never be quenched, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. And if your eye makes you to sin, pluck it out.

It's better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Notice there's three examples that are essentially almost exactly parallel. In the first three, it says it's better to enter into life without your hand or without your foot.

In the third, it says it's better to enter into the kingdom of God than with two eyes. In other words, he uses the terms interchangeably even in this synoptic gospel. However, the synoptics use the term kingdom of God principally and life more sparingly.

John, on the other hand, in his gospel, uses the term life continually and kingdom of God less so. In the synoptic gospels, we do read that the rich young ruler came running to Jesus saying, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life? Which is the term John uses so much, but this is the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. What must I do to have eternal life? And Jesus said, well, you know, do this and this and you'll be fine.

The man left, and Jesus said to his disciples, how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. In other words, the man wanted to enter life, but he failed to because it's hard for one like him to enter the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God, when you enter into the kingdom of God, you enter into eternal life.

How do you do that? By being born again. That's what Jesus told Nicodemus. Unless you're born of the spirit, of the water and the spirit, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.

But you also won't be alive spiritually. Being born again is what brings you to spiritual life and brings you into membership of the kingdom of God. Now, I'm going to go through the entire Gospel of John in one rapid survey, but I'm going to take a break first to let you get up.