

# ***“Bearing Witness to Christmas”***

John 21:24

December 21, 2014

**INTRO:** Video - Quick Christmas “Flash-Mob”

- What does this video reveal & represent?
- What’s “good” & what’s not so good?

**T/S:** The dark & dying world doesn’t need another flash mob...

No... they need faithful missionaries... who share:

- **Miracle**
  - John 1 - Miracle-Maker
  - John 3 - Miracle-Metamorphosis
  - John 4 - Miracle-Multiplier
- **MESSIAH**
  - John 6 - Messiah Provocation
  - John 9 - Messiah Demonstration
  - John 14 - Messiah Declaration
- **Mission**
  - John 15 - Missional Abiding
  - John 17 - Missional Anatomy
  - John 20 - Missional Ambassadors

**TEXT:**

**John 21:24**

*"This is  
the disciple  
who is **testifying**  
to **these things**  
and  
(who) wrote  
**these things**,  
and  
we know  
that his **testimony**  
is true."*

**TIMELESS TRUTH:**

Quote: John MacArthur

“In short, John presents Jesus as the eternal Word, Messiah, and Son of God who, through His death and resurrection, brings the gift of salvation to mankind. People respond by either accepting or rejecting the salvation that comes only through believing in Him.”

**John 20:31**

*...these (things) are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**PREVIEW:**

**T/S:**

\*\*\* New facility in our community

\*\*\* Graffiti Church (Baltimore)

\*\*\* Update on St. J (what a Monday... What a Thursday!)

\*\*\* Update on Uganda... (read Moses' email!)

\*\*\* IMB Lottie Moon ("Standing Together")

## Exegetical Outline:

### 1. “This is”

- A. John is taking ownership & responsibility...
- B. John is laying the groundwork of credibility
- C. John is linking that which follows to the previous verses

### 2. “the **disciple**”

#### Quote:

A "disciple" was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher; cp. [John 8:31](#); [John 15:8](#).

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

#### Quote:

In the New Testament 233 of the 261 instances of the word “disciple” occur in the Gospels, the other 28 being in Acts.

- Holman Bible Dictionary

This larger group of disciples/followers included men and women ([Luke 8:1-3](#); [23:49](#)) from all walks of life. (Even the twelve included a variety: fishermen, a tax collector, a Zealot.) Jesus was no doubt especially

popular among the socially outcast and religiously despised, but people of wealth and of theological training also followed ([Luke 8:1-3](#); [19:1-10](#); [John 3:1-3](#); [12:42](#); [19:38-39](#)).

### 3. “who is **testifying**” (mar-too-reh-0)

- A. “testifying” = “**bearing witness**” ( root word *MARTYR* )
- B. “True disciples testify to the truth.” – JDP
- C. “False teachers/disciples testify to lies.” – JDP
- D. “Testifying is an action & attitude of authenticity.” - JDP

➤ **VIDEO:** *IMB – Making Something Beautiful Together*

This is beautifully illustrated in [Ruth 4:9-11](#) where Boaz called on the elders of the city to be witnesses to his act of redemption. Witnesses were also expected to be involved in the judgment. Thus, in [Deuteronomy 17:7](#) the witness is the first to throw a stone. Joshua ([24:22](#)) called the people to awareness of their vow to serve the Lord their God by reminding them they were witnesses and thus accountable.

- Holman Bible Dictionary

This concept of one's person being involved in the witness informs the way witness is used to describe the early believers. Believers were challenged by Christ Himself to be His witnesses throughout the world ([Acts 1:8](#)). As Jesus had indicated earlier, this witness is informed and empowered by the Holy Spirit ([John 15:26-27](#)). Throughout the New Testament, believers are instructed that their witness is to be true and faithful, reflected both in speech and life-style ([Acts 4:33](#); [14:3](#); [Heb. 10:15-17](#); [1 Thess. 2:10](#)).

This high commitment to witness/testify exemplified by Christ resulted in His persecution and death. Likewise, with His followers there would be persecution for their witness ([John 15:20](#)).

- Holman Bible Dictionary

#### 4. “to **these things**” (90% unique to John's Gospel)

- A. Miracles (
- B. Messiah (“I Am” statements)
- C. Mission (The PROOF)
  - Power – “In the beginning”
  - Purpose – “

John discloses Jesus' identity with his very first words, "In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God" ([1:1, 2](#)); and the rest of the book continues the theme. John, the eyewitness, chose eight of Jesus' miracles (or miraculous signs, as he calls them) to reveal his divine/human nature and his life-giving mission. These signs are (1) turning water to wine ([2:1-11](#)), (2) healing the official's son ([4:46-54](#)), (3) healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda ([5:1-9](#)), (4) feeding the 5,000 with just a few loaves and fish ([6:1-14](#)), (5) walking on the water ([6:15-21](#)), (6) restoring sight to the blind man ([9:1-41](#)), (7) raising Lazarus from the dead ([11:1-44](#)), and, after the Resurrection, (8) giving the disciples an overwhelming catch of fish ([21:1-14](#)).

## 5. “and”

## 6. “(who) **wrote**”

- A. It's not the physical act of writing per se, but...
- B. It IS the principled act of SHARING the gospel
- C. How are YOU sharing the gospel?

7. “these (same) things”

8. “and”

9. “we **know**”

In the Gospel of John, knowledge is a key concept, although the noun “knowledge” itself never occurs in John’s Gospel. John instead frequently uses the verbs “to know.”

Knowledge of God is the greatest knowledge ([Prov. 9:10](#)) and is the chief duty of humankind ([Hos. 6:6](#)).



## **Quote:**

In John, knowledge is expressed in Christian witness which may evoke belief in Jesus ([John 1:7](#); [4:39](#); [12:17-18](#)) and in love ([John 17:26](#)). Whereas Jesus' knowledge of the Father is direct, the disciples' knowledge of Jesus is indirect, qualified by believing. The Christian's knowledge of Jesus is the perception of Jesus as the revelation of God which leads to obedience to His word of love. So the Christian is caught up into God's mission of love to the world in order that the world may come to know and believe in Jesus as the revelation of the Father's love for the world.      - **Roger L. Omanson**

This knowledge of God is not simply theoretical or factual knowledge; it includes experiencing the reality of God in one's life (compare [Phil. 3:10](#)) and living one's life in a manner that shows a respect for the power and majesty of God (compare [Jer. 22:15-16](#)).

In the New Testament one knows God through a knowledge of Jesus Christ ([John 8:19](#); [Col. 2:2-3](#)). The apostle Paul closely connected knowledge to faith. Knowledge gives direction, conviction, and assurance to faith ([2 Cor. 4:14](#)). Knowledge is a spiritual gift ([1 Cor. 12:8](#)) which can grow, increase, be filled, and abound ([Phil. 1:9](#); [Col. 1:9-10](#); [2 Cor. 8:7](#)). It consists in having a better understanding of

God's will in the ethical sense ([Col. 1:9-10](#); [Phil. 1:9](#)), of knowing that God desires to save people ([Eph. 1:8-9](#)), and of having a deeper insight into God's will given in Christ ([Eph. 1:17](#); [3:18-19](#)).

But though Paul recognized the importance of knowledge, he also knew that it could be a divisive factor in churches such as at Rome and Corinth where some Christians claimed to be more spiritual because of their knowledge of spiritual matters ([Rom. 14:1-15:6](#); [1 Cor. 8:1-13](#)). Paul argued that knowledge puffs up but love builds up...

## 10. "that his **testimony**"

➤ **VIDEO:** *IMB – Scripture Planting*

### QUOTE:

**Oswald Chambers'**  
*"The Right Kind of Help"*  
December 20, 2014

*And I, if I am lifted up...will draw all peoples to Myself.*

**—John 12:32**

Very few of us have any understanding of the reason why Jesus Christ died. If sympathy is all that human beings need, then the Cross of Christ is an absurdity and there is absolutely no need for it. What the world needs is not “a little bit of love,” but major surgery.

When you find yourself face to face with a person who is spiritually lost, remind yourself of Jesus Christ on the cross. If that person can get to God in any other way, then the Cross of Christ is unnecessary. If you think you are helping lost people with your sympathy and understanding, you are a traitor to Jesus Christ. You must have a right-standing relationship with Him yourself, and pour your life out in helping others in His way— not in a human way that ignores God. The theme of the world’s religion today is to serve in a pleasant, non-confrontational manner.

But our only priority must be to present Jesus Christ crucified— to lift Him up all the time (see 1 Corinthians 2:2). Every belief that is not firmly rooted in the Cross of Christ will lead people astray. If the worker himself believes in Jesus Christ and is trusting in the reality of redemption, his words will be compelling to others. What is extremely important is for the worker’s simple relationship with Jesus Christ to be strong and growing. His usefulness to God

depends on that, and that alone.

The calling of a New Testament worker is to expose sin and to reveal Jesus Christ as Savior. Consequently, he cannot always be charming and friendly, but must be willing to be stern to accomplish major surgery. We are sent by God to lift up Jesus Christ, not to give wonderfully beautiful speeches. We must be willing to examine others as deeply as God has examined us. We must also be sharply intent on sensing those Scripture passages that will drive the truth home, and then not be afraid to apply them.

## 11. “is **TRUE.**”

- A. Greek expansion of “TRUE”
- B. Do you believe John’s Gospel is TRUE?
- C. Do you...
  - Repent & Relent of your sins?
  - Believe & Receive Jesus as Lord, then Savior?
  - Abide & Obey God’s Word, Will, & Ways?
- D. For ALL of us who own & are owned by this Truth...
  - We won’t just believe in Christmas...
  - Together, we will BRING Christmas...
    - To our Neighbors... and...
    - To the Nations!

"*true*" = conforming to reality, cf. [John 4:18](#)

**T/S:** This is what ***BE-ing*** a New Testament, ***Acts 1:8***  
Church is all about

➤ **VIDEO:** IMB – *Standing Together*

**CLOSE:**

**Prayer & LOTTIE MOON OFFERING:**

- A. Brandon Heath - "Give Me Your Eyes" (mall)
- B. Christmas Flash Mob (A)
- C. Christmas Flash Mob (B)

# Strong's & Vine's Word Study:

## **Disciple:**

Greek Strong's Number: 3101

**Greek Word:** μαθητής

**Transliteration:** mathētēs

**Phonetic Pronunciation:** [math-ay-tes'](#)

**Root:** from [<G3129>](#)

**Cross Reference:** TDNT - 4:415,552

**Part of Speech:** n m

**Vine's Words:** [Disciple](#)

### **Usage Notes:**

English Words used in KJV:

disciple 268

vr disciple 1

[Total Count: 269]

from [<G3129>](#) (manthano); a *learner*, i.e. *pupil* :- disciple.

- Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

# Disciple

**Usage Number:** A-1

**Part Of Speech:** Noun

**Strong's Number:** <[G3101](#)>

**Original Word:** [μαθητής](#), *mathētēs*

**Usage Notes:** lit., "a learner" (from *manthanō*, "to learn," from a root *math---*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor), in contrast to *didaskalos*, "a teacher;" hence it denotes "one who follows one's teaching," as the "disciples" of John, [Matt. 9:14](#); of the Pharisees, [Matt. 22:16](#); of Moses, [John 9:28](#); it is used of the "disciples" of Jesus (a) in a wide sense, of Jews who became His adherents, [John 6:66](#); [Luke 6:17](#), some being secretly so, [John 19:38](#); (b) especially of the twelve Apostles, [Matt. 10:1](#); [Luke 22:11](#), e.g.; (c) of all who manifest that they are His "disciples" by abiding in His Word, [John 8:31](#); cp. [John 13:35](#); [John 15:8](#); (d) in the Acts, of those who believed upon Him and confessed Him, [John 6:1, 2, 7](#); [John 14:20, 22, 28](#); [John 15:10](#); [John 19:1](#), etc.

A "disciple" was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher; cp. [John 8:31](#); [John 15:8](#).

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

## **DISCIPLES; APOSTLES**

Followers of Jesus Christ, especially the commissioned twelve who followed Jesus during His earthly ministry.

**Background of Apostle** The English word “apostle” comes from the Greek term *apostolos*, which means a messenger, envoy, or ambassador. Related to the verb, “to send,” it refers to one who is “sent” on behalf of another. The conceptual background of the New Testament term *apostolos* has been variously represented. Many scholars believe that the rabbinic office of the *shaliach*—attested by 150 A.D.—constitutes the proper background for understanding the New Testament term “apostle.” The *shaliach* was established as a legal institution in rabbinic Judaism to insure that an appointed “messenger” was given due regard as the legal representative of his sender. The *shaliach* functioned with the full authority of the one who commissioned him. According to Jewish tradition, “A man’s agent (*shaliach*) is like to himself” (Mishnah Berakoth [5:5](#); Rosh ha-Shanah [4:9](#); compare [1 Sam. 25:40-41](#); [2 Sam. 10:1-19](#)). It is not certain that the legal rabbinic notion of a *shaliach* was established before the time of Christ. Moreover, even if it were in use by that time, the differences between the rabbinic of *shaliach* and that of the New Testament term *apostolos* are significant enough to urge caution in relating the two terms too closely. The *shaliach*, for example, had a function that was more legal than religious (to serve documents, collect money, carry information), was applied generally to human representation (whether individuals or groups), and lasted for only a limited period. The New Testament apostle, on the other hand, emerges as a divinely appointed, lifetime witness to the saving acts of God, specifically, the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Old Testament notion of a *shaliach* also differs from the rabbinic conceptions of that term and appears to be of more significance for understanding the New Testament term “apostle.” The “sending” and commissioning of the great prophetic figures Moses and Isaiah ([Ex. 3:10](#); [Isa. 6:8](#) where the Hebrew verb for sending, *shalach*, is translated by *apostello* in the *Septuagint*, the Greek Old Testament, as divine spokesmen surely influenced the New Testament word, “apostle.” We may also note that the same “sending” terminology is applied to other noteworthy characters such as Elijah ([2 Kings 2:2,4,6](#)), Jeremiah ([Jer. 1:7](#)), and Ezekiel ([Ezek. 2:3,4](#)). As a reference to a divine spokesman,



Old Testament ideas of a “sent one” are certainly in line with the New Testament term “apostle.” Compare [Jeremiah 7:25](#).

**Apostle in the New Testament** The term “apostle” in the New Testament is used primarily to designate that group of leaders within the early church(es) who were historical witnesses of the resurrected Lord and proclaimers of God’s saving mercies enacted through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus originally gave the title to His closest circle of friends, the twelve ([Luke 6:13](#)). He especially indicated their status as emissaries He had set apart to announce (as He had done) the good news of the kingdom ([Matt. 10:1-23](#); [Luke 8:1](#); [9:1-6](#)). After the first Easter, the term was expanded by the early church to refer not only to the twelve, but to a wider circle of authoritative preachers and witnesses of the resurrected Lord ([Acts 14:4,14](#); [Rom. 16:7](#); [1 Cor. 4:9](#); [15:5-9](#); [2 Cor. 11:13](#); [Gal. 1:19](#); [2:7-9](#)).

The early church’s expansion of the term was certainly justified given both the self-understanding of Jesus as One sent from God ([Matt. 5:17](#); [10:34](#); [Mark 2:17](#); [10:45](#); [Luke 4:18](#); [9:48](#); [John 5:19-47](#); [6:29-57](#); [8:14-42](#); compare [Heb. 3:1](#)) and His designation of His followers as those who, as His representatives, carried on His work ([Matt. 28:16-20](#); [Luke 24:44-49](#); [John 20:21](#); [Acts 1:6](#)). Those facts coupled with the early church’s actual sense of continuity with the person and mission of the historical Jesus made rather natural their extended application of the term “apostle” to more than the original twelve, though not, as we shall see, to all Christian witnesses. Thus, the choice, meaning, and ongoing use by the early church of the term “apostle” as a reference to a unique class of witnesses is in large measure derived from its actual use by Jesus.

The term “apostle” did not, however, have limitless application in the New Testament period. It extended to gospel witnesses other than the twelve but not to all proclaimers of the gospel. It was never so broad in New Testament use as to be an ancient equivalent to the modern term “missionary.” The term “apostle,” most immediately brought to mind its

central function: to preach the gospel; but all those who preached the gospel were not designated “apostles.” There is, for example, a striking absence of the term with reference to Timothy ([2 Cor. 1:1](#); [Phil. 1:1](#); [Col. 1:1](#); [1 Thess. 1:1](#); [2 Thess. 1:1](#)), Sosthenes ([1 Cor. 1:1](#)), and Silas ([1 Thess. 1:1](#), [2 Thess. 1:1](#)), who were certainly not only Paul’s fellow workers but also preachers of the gospel (compare [2 Cor. 1:19](#)). Thus, others in the Pauline missionary party were called, for example, “brother,” “fellow worker,” or “bond servant” ([Rom. 16:3](#); [Phil. 2:25](#); [Col. 4:7-14](#); [1 Thess. 3:1](#)); but the term “apostle” had a more exclusive, and thus more restricted, meaning.

The decisive criterion for the term’s application seems to have been the eyewitness status of some with respect to the resurrected Lord. Though the criteria employed for replacing Judas among the twelve ([Acts 1:12-22](#)) included being an eyewitness not only of the resurrected Jesus but also of the ministry of Jesus from the days of His baptism by John, there developed in the early church a slightly broader application of the term “apostle” which did not demand an eyewitness knowledge of Jesus’ ministry. James the brother of Jesus ([Matt. 13:55](#)) was certainly no follower of his Brother during His ministry ([Mark 3:21,31-35](#); [John 7:3-5](#)). He still became an “apostle” and leader of the Jerusalem church ([Acts 15:1-21](#); [Gal. 1:18,19](#)) following his encounter with the resurrected Lord ([1 Cor. 15:7](#)). In a similar way, Paul’s vision of, and calling by, the resurrected Lord won for him the designation “apostle” ([1 Cor. 9:1](#); [15:8-11](#); [Gal. 1:11-2:10](#)); though this distinction was apparently not conceded by all ([2 Cor. 3:1](#); [12:11-13](#)). We may presume that Barnabas ([Acts 14:4,14](#)), Apollos ([1 Cor. 4:6-13](#)), and also Andronicus and Junias ([Rom. 16:7](#)) were likewise witnesses of the resurrected Lord.

To be sure, Paul did speak of certain others as “apostles” who likely were not eyewitnesses of the risen Lord ([2 Cor. 8:23](#) NAS and RSV notes; [Phil. 2:25](#)); but such passages are only apparent exceptions, for the helpers in question are called “apostles” (normally translated “representatives” or “messengers”) *of the churches*, clearly suggesting a

status different from that of the “apostle of *Jesus Christ*.” Therefore, because it referred to a specific set of historical witnesses, the New Testament office of apostle, by definition, died with its first representatives. The New Testament certainly speaks of a succession of witnesses to the apostolic *tradition* ([1 Tim. 6:20](#); [2 Tim. 1:14](#)), so that the gospel they preached—the apostolic *theology*—has been handed on (the New Testament itself being the inspired, literary remains of that theology). No true personal or ecclesiastical succession of apostles continues in any New Testament sense of that term.

**Background of Disciple** The term “disciple” comes to us in English from a Latin root. Its basic meaning is “learner” or “pupil.” The term is virtually absent from the Old Testament, though there are two related references ([1 Chron. 25:8](#); [Isa. 8:16](#)).

In the Greek world the word “disciple” normally referred to an adherent of a particular teacher or religious/philosophical school. It was the task of the disciple to learn, study, and pass along the sayings and teachings of the master. In rabbinic Judaism the term “disciple” referred to one who was committed to the interpretations of Scripture and religious tradition given him by the master or rabbi. Through a process of learning which would include a set meeting time and such pedagogical methods as question and answer, instruction, repetition, and memorization, the disciple would become increasingly devoted to the master and the master’s teachings. In time, the disciple would, likewise, pass on the traditions to others.

**Jesus’ Disciples** In the New Testament 233 of the 261 instances of the word “disciple” occur in the Gospels, the other 28 being in Acts. Usually the word refers to disciples of Jesus, but there are also references to disciples of the Pharisees ([Matt. 22:16](#); [Mark 2:18](#)), disciples of John the Baptist ([Mark 2:18](#); [Luke 11:1](#); [John 1:35](#)), and even disciples of Moses ([John 9:28](#)).

The Gospels often refer to Jesus as “Rabbi” ([Matt. 26:25,49](#); [Mark 9:5](#); [10:51](#); [11:21](#); [John 1:38,49](#); [3:2,26](#); [6:25](#); [20:16](#) NIV). One can assume

that Jesus used traditional rabbinic teaching techniques (question and answer, discussion, memorization) to instruct His disciples. In many respects Jesus differed from the rabbis. He called His disciples to “Follow me” ([Luke 5:27](#)). Disciples of the rabbis could select their teachers. Jesus oftentimes demanded extreme levels of personal renunciation (loss of family, property, etc.; [Matt. 4:18-22](#); [10:24-42](#); [Luke 5:27-28](#); [14:25-27](#); [18:28-30](#)). He asked for lifelong allegiance ([Luke 9:57-62](#)) as the essential means of doing the will of God ([Matt. 12:49-50](#); [John 7:16-18](#)). He taught more as a bearer of divine revelation than a link in the chain of Jewish tradition ([Matt. 5:21-48](#); [7:28-29](#); [Mark 4:10-11](#)). In so doing Jesus announced the end of the age and the long-awaited reign of God ([Matt. 4:17](#); [Luke 4:14-21, 42-44](#)).

**The Twelve** As the messianic Proclaimer of the reign of God, Jesus gathered about Himself a special circle of twelve disciples, clearly a symbolic representation of the twelve tribes ([Matt. 19:28](#)). He was reestablishing Jewish social identity based upon discipleship to Jesus. The twelve represented a unique band, making the word “disciple” (as a reference to the twelve) an exact equivalent to “apostle” in those contexts where the latter word was also restricted to the twelve. The four lists of the twelve in the New Testament ([Matt. 10:1-4](#); [Mark 3:16-19](#); [Luke 6:12-16](#); [Acts 1:13,26](#)) also imply from their contexts the synonymous use of the terms “disciples”/“apostles” when used to refer to the twelve.

**A Larger Group of Followers** The Gospels clearly show that the word “disciple” can refer to others besides the twelve. The verb “follow” became something of a technical term Jesus used to call His disciples, who were then called “followers,” ([Mark 4:10](#)). These “followers” included a larger company of people from whom He selected the twelve ([Mark 3:7-19](#); [Luke 6:13-17](#)). This larger group of disciples/followers included men and women ([Luke 8:1-3](#); [23:49](#)) from all walks of life. (Even the twelve included a variety: fishermen, a tax collector, a Zealot.) Jesus was no doubt especially popular among the socially outcast and religiously despised, but people of wealth and of theological training also followed ([Luke 8:1-3](#); [19:1-10](#); [John 3:1-3](#); [12:42](#); [19:38-39](#)).

The twelve were sent out as representatives of Jesus, commissioned to preach the coming of the kingdom, to cast out demons, and to heal diseases ([Matt. 10:1,5-15](#); [Mark 6:7-13](#); [Luke 9:1-6](#)). Such tasks were not limited to the twelve ([Luke 10:1-24](#)). Apparently Jesus' disciples first included "a great multitude of disciples" ([Luke 6:17](#)). He formed certain smaller and more specifically defined groups within that "great multitude." These smaller groups would include a group of "seventy" ([Luke 10:1,17](#)), the "twelve" ([Matt. 11:1](#); [Mark 6:7](#); [Luke 9:1](#)), and perhaps an even smaller, inner group within the twelve, consisting especially of Peter, James, and John—whose names (with Andrew) always figure first in the lists of the twelve ([Matt. 10:2](#); [Mark 3:16-17](#); [Luke 6:14](#); [Acts 1:13](#)), whose stories of calling are especially highlighted ([Matt. 4:18-22](#); [John 1:35-42](#) and the tradition that John is the "Other"/"Beloved Disciple" of the Gospel of [John—13:23](#); [19:26](#); [20:2](#); [21:20](#)), and who alone accompanied Jesus on certain significant occasions of healing and revelation ([Matt. 17:1](#); [Mark 13:3](#); [Luke 8:51](#)).

**All Followers of Jesus** The Book of Acts frequently uses the term "disciple" to refer generally to all those who believe in the risen Lord ([6:1-2,7](#); [9:1,10,19,26,38](#); [11:26,29](#)). In addition, the verb form "to disciple" as it appears in the final commissioning scene of Matthew's Gospel ([28:19-20](#)) also suggests a use in the early church of the term "disciple" as a more generalized name for all those who come to Jesus in faith, having heard and believed the gospel.

**Conclusion** We have seen that, as references to the twelve, the words "apostle" and "disciple" could be synonymous. However, just as the term "disciple" could mean other followers of Jesus than the twelve in the time of His ministry, so also after His resurrection the term "disciple" had a wider meaning as well, being clearly applied to all His followers. Whereas the term "apostle" retained a more specific meaning, being tied to certain historical eyewitnesses of the resurrected Lord, the word "disciple" tended to lose its narrower associations with the twelve, and/or those who followed the historical Jesus, or who saw the risen Lord, and became a virtual equivalent to "Christian" ([Acts 11:26](#)). In

every case, however, the common bond of meaning for the various applications of the word “disciple” was allegiance to Jesus.

- Holman Bible Dictionary.

## Testifying:

Greek Strong's Number: 3140

**Greek Word:** μαρτυρέω

**Transliteration:** martyreō

**Phonetic Pronunciation:** [mar-too-reh'-o](#)

**Root:** from [<G3144>](#)

**Cross Reference:** TDNT - 4:474,564

**Part of Speech:** v

**Vine's Words:** [Report](#), [Testify](#), [Witness](#)

### Usage Notes:

English Words used in KJV:

bear witness 25

testify 19

bear record 13

witness 5

be a witness 2

give testimony 2

have a good report 2

*miscellaneous translations* 11

[Total Count: 79]

from [<G3144>](#) (martus); to *be a witness*, i.e. *testify* (literal or figurative) :- charge, give [*evidence*], bear record, have (obtain, of) good (honest) report, be well reported of, testify, give (have) testimony, (be, bear, give, obtain) witness.

- Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

## Testify (ing)

**Usage Number:** 1

**Strong's Number:** [<G3140>](#)

**Original Word:** [μαρτυρέω](#), *martyreō*

**Usage Notes:** for which see [WITNESS](#), is frequently rendered "to bear witness, to witness," in the RV, where AV renders it "to testify," [John 2:25](#); [John 3:11](#), [32](#); [John 5:39](#); [John 15:26](#); [John 21:24](#); [1 Cor. 15:15](#); [Heb. 7:17](#); [Heb. 11:4](#); [1 John 4:14](#); [1 John 5:9](#); [3 John 1:3](#). In the following, however, the RV, like the AV, has the rendering "to testify," [John 4:39](#), [44](#); [John 7:7](#); [John 13:21](#); [Acts 26:5](#); [Rev. 22:16](#), [18](#), [20](#).

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

## **WITNESS, MARTYR**

(a.k.a. Testify)

The testimony of a person, or something which bears testimony to a person or an event. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *moed* is used to refer to the “meeting” place of God and His people. This meeting is



testimony to a particular person or event, such as God or the giving of the covenant, and provides a place of testimony. See [Tent of Meeting](#).

The second Hebrew word, *ed* refers to the legal element of witness. One rendered testimony based on observation which was to be true and faithful. This is beautifully illustrated in [Ruth 4:9-11](#) where Boaz called on the elders of the city to be witnesses to his act of redemption. Witnesses were also expected to be involved in the judgment. Thus, in [Deuteronomy 17:7](#) the witness is the first to throw a stone. Joshua ([24:22](#)) called the people to awareness of their vow to serve the Lord their God by reminding them they were witnesses and thus accountable.

In this last chapter of Joshua, Joshua also set up a memorial, *edah*, to the commitment. This act of memorializing is also a witness and is commonly practiced in the Old Testament. See [Stone](#). The memorial is a witness response to both present and future generations of God's activity. In [Psalm 119](#), the law is the supreme "testimony" or monument to God. God established the law and gave it to people as a true and faithful witness for righteous living.

The legal concept of witness found in the Old Testament is continued in the New Testament. This aspect of witness, as well as new ones, is covered by only one Greek word, *martureo*, and its many derivatives. The legal sense of witness/testimony occurs in the synoptics during the trial of Jesus ([Matt. 26:65](#); [Mark 14:63](#); [Luke 22:71](#)). Paul employed this legal concept when he bore witness to the Galatians of their care for him ([Gal. 4:15](#)). In a more technical sense of witness, he reminded Timothy not to act too hastily in accusing an elder without at least two or three witnesses ([1 Tim. 5:19](#)). Nowhere is this sense of witness more developed than in John's writings. Jesus is the supreme witness to God and His love. In [John 1](#), John the Baptist bore testimony to the truth of Jesus' witness. In [John 5](#), Jesus argued pointedly that John the Baptist, the Father, and the Scripture all bear witness to Him. In [John 8](#), Jesus reminded His hearers that according to the law the testimony of two people is true. Thus His hearers needed to respond to the truth of His



witness. For John, Jesus's message as witness was inseparable from His very personhood. Jesus is true and faithful, and so is His message. A response is demanded.

This concept of one's person being involved in the witness informs the way witness is used to describe the early believers. Believers were challenged by Christ Himself to be His witnesses throughout the world ([Acts 1:8](#)). As Jesus had indicated earlier, this witness is informed and empowered by the Holy Spirit ([John 15:26-27](#)). Throughout the New Testament, believers are instructed that their witness is to be true and faithful, reflected both in speech and life-style ([Acts 4:33](#); [14:3](#); [Heb. 10:15-17](#); [1 Thess. 2:10](#)).

This high commitment to witness/testify exemplified by Christ resulted in His persecution and death. Likewise, with His followers there would be persecution for their witness ([John 15:20](#)). Thus, early in the Book of Acts (ch. 7), Stephen became the first martyr. That very word comes from *martureo* and really states that Stephen was first and foremost a witness, giving testimony. Ironically, the witness was put to death by witnesses to his testimony ([7:58](#)).

The death of Stephen serves as a stark reminder that true and faithful testimony to Christ requires total commitment, even one's life. As Christ is the faithful and true witness ([Rev. 3:14](#)) who clearly presented God to the world, so may believers be.

- *Holman Bible Dictionary.*

**“these things”**

Greek Strong's Number: 5130

**Greek Word:** [τούτων](#)

**Transliteration:** toutōn

**Phonetic Pronunciation:** [too'-tone](#)

**Root:** genitive case plural masculine or neuter of [<G3778>](#)

**Cross Reference:**

**Part of Speech:** pron

**Vine's Words:** None

### Usage Notes:

English Words used in KJV:

these 38

these things 21

such 2

these matters 1

such matters 1

those 1

not tr 1

*miscellaneous translations* 4

[Total Count: 69]

genitive plural masculine or neuter of [<G3778>](#) (houtos); *of (from or concerning) these* (persons or things) :- such, their, these (things), they, this sort, those.

- Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

## “wrote”

Greek Strong's Number: 1125

**Greek Word:** [γράφω](#)

**Transliteration:** graphō

**Phonetic Pronunciation:** [graf'-o](#)

**Root:** a root word

**Cross Reference:** TDNT - 1:742,128

**Part of Speech:** v

**Vine's Words:** [Describe](#), [Write](#), [Wrote](#), [Written](#)

### Usage Notes:

English Words used in KJV:

write 206

writing 1

describe 1

vr write 1

[Total Count: 209]

a primary verb; to “grave”, especially to *write*; figurative to *describe* :- describe, write (-ing, -ten).

- Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

## Describe / Wrote

**Usage Number:** 1

**Strong's Number:** [<G1125>](#)

**Original Word:** [γράφω](#), *graphō*

**Usage Notes:** "to write," is rendered "describeth" in [Rom. 10:5](#), AV, "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the Law ...;" this the RV corrects to "For Moses writeth that the man that doeth the righteousness which is of the Law ... " See [WRITE](#).

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

## “know”

Greek Strong's Number: 1492

**Greek Word:** [εἶδω](#)

**Transliteration:** eidō

**Phonetic Pronunciation:** [i'-do](#)

**Greek Word:** [οἶδα](#)

**Transliteration:** oida

**Phonetic Pronunciation:** oy'-da

**Root:** a root word

**Cross Reference:** TDNT - 5:116, 673

**Part of Speech:** v

**Vine's Words:** [Can](#), [Canst](#), [Could](#), [Cannot](#), [Know](#), [Known](#), [Knowledge](#), [Unknown](#)

**Usage Notes:**

English Words used in KJV:

know 281  
cannot tell + [<G3756>](#) 8  
know how 7  
wist 6  
*miscellaneous translations* 19  
see 314  
behold 17  
look 6  
perceive 5  
vr see 3  
vr know 1  
[Total Count: 667]

a primary verb; used only in certain past tenses, the others being borrowed from the equivalent [<G3700>](#) (optanomai) and [<G3708>](#) (horao); properly to *see* (literal or figurative); by implication (in the perf. only) to *know* :- be aware, behold, × can (+ not tell), consider, (have) know (-ledge), look (on), perceive, see, be sure, tell, understand, wish, wot. Compare [<G3700>](#) (optanomai).

- Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

### **“know”** *(per the KJV translation)*

**Strong's Number:** [<G1492>](#)

**Original Word:** [οἶδα](#), *oida*

**Usage Notes:** "to know by perception," is the word in Pilate's remark "make it as sure as ye can" (marg. "sure, as ye know"), [Matt. 27:65](#). The phrases "cannot tell," "canst not tell," etc. are in the RV rendered "know

not," etc., [Matt. 21:27](#); [Mark 11:33](#); [Luke 20:7](#); [John 3:8](#); [John 8:14](#); [John 16:18](#); [2 Cor. 12:2, 3](#). See [KNOW](#).

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

## **KNOWLEDGE**

Translation of several Hebrew and Greek words covering a wide range of meanings: intellectual understanding, personal experience, emotion, and personal relationship (including sexual intercourse, [Gen. 4:1](#), etc.). Knowledge is attributed both to God and to human beings.

God's knowledge is said to be omniscient. He knows all things ([Job 21:22](#); [Ps. 139:1-18](#)); His understanding is beyond measure ([Ps. 147:5](#)). He knows the thoughts of our minds and the secrets of our hearts ([Ps. 44:21](#); [94:11](#)). He knows past events ([Gen. 30:22](#)), present happenings ([Job 31:4](#)), and future events ([Zech. 13:1](#); [Luke 1:33](#)).

The knowledge which God has of nations and human beings indicates that He has a personal interest—not merely an awareness—of people ([Ps. 144:3](#)). To be known by God may mean that a nation or individual is chosen by God to play a part in God's purposes in the world ([Jer. 1:5](#); [Amos 3:2](#); [Gal. 4:9](#)).

The Bible speaks often about human knowledge. Knowledge of God is the greatest knowledge ([Prov. 9:10](#)) and is the chief duty of humankind ([Hos. 6:6](#)). In the Old Testament, the Israelites know God through what He does for His people ([Ex. 9:29](#); [Lev. 23:43](#); [Deut. 4:32-39](#); [Ps. 9:10](#); [59:13](#); [78:16](#); [Hos. 2:19-20](#)). This knowledge of God is not simply theoretical or factual knowledge; it includes experiencing the reality of God in one's life (compare [Phil. 3:10](#)) and living one's life in a manner

that shows a respect for the power and majesty of God (compare [Jer. 22:15-16](#)).

In the New Testament one knows God through a knowledge of Jesus Christ ([John 8:19](#); [Col. 2:2-3](#)). The apostle Paul closely connected knowledge to faith. Knowledge gives direction, conviction, and assurance to faith ([2 Cor. 4:14](#)). Knowledge is a spiritual gift ([1 Cor. 12:8](#)) which can grow, increase, be filled, and abound ([Phil. 1:9](#); [Col. 1:9-10](#); [2 Cor. 8:7](#)). It consists in having a better understanding of God's will in the ethical sense ([Col. 1:9-10](#); [Phil. 1:9](#)), of knowing that God desires to save people ([Eph. 1:8-9](#)), and of having a deeper insight into God's will given in Christ ([Eph. 1:17](#); [3:18-19](#)).

But though Paul recognized the importance of knowledge, he also knew that it could be a divisive factor in churches such as at Rome and Corinth where some Christians claimed to be more spiritual because of their knowledge of spiritual matters ([Rom. 14:1-15:6](#); [1 Cor. 8:1-13](#)). Paul argued that knowledge puffs up but love builds up, and the knowledge exercised by the "strong" in faith could cause the "weak" in faith to go against their Christian conscience and lead to their spiritual ruin. Knowledge can be misused ([1 Cor. 8](#)). Love is more important than knowledge ([1 Cor. 13](#)), yet knowledge is still a gift, necessary for Christian teaching ([1 Cor. 14:6](#)) and for Christian growth toward a mature faith ([1 Cor. 8:7](#); [2 Pet. 1:5-6](#); [3:18](#)).

In the Gospel of John, knowledge is a key concept, although the noun "knowledge" itself never occurs in John's Gospel. John instead frequently uses the verbs "to know." Jesus and the Father have a mutual knowledge ([John 10:14-15](#)), and Jesus' knowledge of God is perfect ([John 3:11](#); [4:22](#); [7:28-29](#), for example). Jesus brings to lost humankind the knowledge of God which is necessary for salvation ([John 7:28-29](#); [8:19](#)), but which humankind has distorted through sin ([John 1:10](#)). God's knowledge of Jesus consists of giving Jesus His mission and the power to perform it ([John 10:18](#)). Jesus' knowledge of the Father consists of His hearing God's word and obediently expressing it to the world.

Knowledge of God is closely related to faith, expressing the perception and understanding of faith. Full knowledge is possible only after Jesus' glorification, since the disciples sometimes failed to understand Jesus ([John 4:32](#); [10:6](#); [12:16](#)). In John, knowledge is expressed in Christian witness which may evoke belief in Jesus ([John 1:7](#); [4:39](#); [12:17-18](#)) and in love ([John 17:26](#)). Whereas Jesus' knowledge of the Father is direct, the disciples' knowledge of Jesus is indirect, qualified by believing. The Christian's knowledge of Jesus is the perception of Jesus as the revelation of God which leads to obedience to His word of love. So the Christian is caught up into God's mission of love to the world in order that the world may come to know and believe in Jesus as the revelation of the Father's love for the world.

- Roger L. Omanson  
- Holman Bible Dictionary.

## "testimony"

**Greek Strong's Number:** 3141

**Greek Word:** [μαρτυρία](#)

**Transliteration:** martyria

**Phonetic Pronunciation:** [mar-too-ree'-ah](#)

**Root:** from [<G3144>](#)

**Cross Reference:** TDNT - 4:474,564

**Part of Speech:** n f

**Vine's Words:** [Testimony](#), [Witness](#)

**Usage Notes:**



English Words used in KJV:

witness 15  
testimony 14  
record 7  
report 1  
[Total Count: 37]

from [<G3144>](#) (martus); *evidence* given (judicially or generic) :- record, report, testimony, witness.

- Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

## Testimony

**Usage Number:** 1

**Strong's Number:** [<G3142>](#)

**Original Word:** [μαρτύριον](#), *martyrion*

**Usage Notes:** "a testimony, witness," is almost entirely translated "testimony" in both AV and RV. The only place where both have "witness" is [Acts 4:33](#). In [Acts 7:44](#); [Jas. 5:3](#), the RV has "testimony" (AV, "witness").

In [2 Thess. 1:10](#), "our testimony unto you," RV, refers to the fact that the missionaries, besides proclaiming the truths of the gospel, had borne witness to the power of these truths. *Kērygma*, "the thing preached, the message," is objective, having especially to do with the effect on the hearers; *martyrion* is mainly subjective, having to do especially with the preacher's personal experience. In [1 Tim. 2:6](#) the RV is important, "the testimony (i.e., of the gospel) to be borne in its own times," i.e., in the times Divinely appointed for it, namely, the present age, from Pentecost till the church is complete. In [Rev. 15:5](#), in the phrase, "the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in Heaven," the "testimony" is the witness to the rights of God, denied and refused on earth, but about to be vindicated by the exercise of the judgments under the pouring forth of the seven bowls or vials of Divine retribution. See [WITNESS](#).

**Usage Number:** 2

**Strong's Number:** [<G3141>](#)

**Original Word:** [μαρτυρία](#), *martyria*

**Usage Notes:** "witness, evidence, testimony," is almost always rendered "witness" in the RV (for AV, "testimony" in [John 3:32, 33](#); [John 5:34](#); [John 8:17](#); [John 21:24](#), and always for AV, "record," e.g., [1 John 5:10, 11](#)), except in [Acts 22:18](#) and in the Apocalypse, where both, with one exception, have "testimony," [Acts 1:2](#), is objective, the "testimony" or witness given to Him (cp. [Acts 1:2, 9](#); as to those who will bear it, see [Rev. 12:17](#), RV). The statement "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," is to be understood in the light, e.g., of the "testimony" concerning Christ and Israel in the Psalms, which will be used by the godly Jewish remnant in the coming time of "Jacob's Trouble." All such "testimony" centers in and points to Christ. See [WITNESS](#).

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

## "TRUE"

Greek Strong's Number: 227

Greek Word: [ἀληθής](#)

Transliteration: alēthēs

Phonetic Pronunciation: [al-ay-thace'](#)

Root: from [<G1>](#) (as a negative particle) and [<G2990>](#)

Cross Reference: TDNT - 1:247,37

Part of Speech: adj

Vine's Words: [Indeed](#), [True](#), [Truly](#), [Truth](#)

## Usage Notes:

English Words used in KJV:

true 23

truly 1

truth 1

[Total Count: 25]

from [<G1>](#) (a) (as a negative particle) and [<G2990>](#) (lanthano);  
*true* (as *not concealing*) :- true, truly, truth.

- Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary.

## True

**Usage Number:** A-1

**Part Of Speech:** Adjective

**Strong's Number:** [<G227>](#)

**Original Word:** [ἀληθής](#), *alēthēs*

**Usage Notes:** primarily, "unconcealed, manifest" (*a*, negative, *letho*, "to forget," = *lanthanō*, "to escape notice"), hence, actual, "true to fact," is used (a) of persons, "truthful," [Matt. 22:16](#); [Mark 12:14](#); [John 3:33](#); [John 7:18](#); [John 8:26](#); [Rom. 3:4](#); [2 Cor. 6:8](#); (b) of things, "true," conforming to reality, [John 4:18](#), "truly," lit., "true;" [John 5:31, 32](#); in the best texts, [John 6:55](#) (twice), "indeed;" [John 8:13, 14](#) (ver. 16 in some texts: see

No. 2),17; [John 10:41](#); [John 19:35](#); [John 21:24](#); [Acts 12:9](#); [Phil. 4:8](#); [Titus 1:13](#); [1 Pet. 5:12](#); [2 Pet. 2:22](#); [1 John 2:8, 27](#); [3 John 1:12](#).

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

## **Overview of John = “*these things*”**

### **Introduction to John**

John is unique among the gospels. The first three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are known as the Synoptics (from a Greek word meaning "to see together") because of their similarities to each other. Although each has its own distinctive emphases and themes, the Synoptics have much in common. They follow the same general outline of Christ's life and are similar in contents, structure, and perspective.

But even a cursory reading of John's gospel reveals it to be strikingly different from the first three. All four contain a mixture of narrative history and discourses of Jesus. John's gospel, however, contains a higher proportion of discourse in relation to narrative than do the Synoptics. Unlike the Synoptics, John contains no narrative parables, no eschatological discourses, no accounts of Jesus exorcising demons or healing lepers, no list of the twelve apostles, and no formal institution of the Lord's Supper. John also does not record Jesus' birth, baptism, transfiguration, temptation, agony in Gethsemane, or ascension.

On the other hand, John includes a large amount of material (more than 90 percent of the gospel) not found in the Synoptics, such as the prologue describing Christ's preexistence and incarnation ([1:1-18](#)); Jesus' early ministry in Judea and Samaria (chaps. 2-3); His first miracle

([2:1-11](#)); His dialogue with Nicodemus ([3:1-21](#)); His encounter with a Samaritan woman ([4:5-42](#)); His healing of a lame man ([5:1-15](#)) and a blind man ([9:1-41](#)); both at Jerusalem; His Bread of Life discourse ([6:22-71](#)); His claim to be the living water ([7:37-38](#)); His taking for Himself the name of God (see the discussion of [8:24](#) in chapter 29 of this volume); His discourse presenting Himself as the Good Shepherd and its aftermath ([10:1-39](#)); the resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-416); the washing of the disciples' feet ([13:1-15](#)); the Upper Room Discourse (chaps. 13-16); Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (chap. 17); the miraculous catch of fish ([21:1-6](#)); and Jesus' recommissioning of Peter and prediction of His martyrdom ([21:15-19](#)). John also contains more teaching on the Holy Spirit than is found in the Synoptics.

Two things must be borne in mind concerning the differences between John and the Synoptic Gospels. First, those differences are not contradictions; nothing in John contradicts the Synoptics, and vice versa. Second, the differences between John and the Synoptics must not be exaggerated. Both John and the Synoptics present Jesus Christ as the Son of Man, Israel's Messiah ([Mark 2:10](#); [John 1:51](#)), and the Son of God, God in human flesh ([Mark 1:1](#); [John 1:34](#)). All four gospels picture Him as the Savior, who came to "save His people from their sins" ([Matt. 1:21](#); cf. [John 3:16](#)), died a sacrificial death on the cross, and rose from the dead.

John and the Synoptics were designed by the divine Spirit to supplement each other. They "represent an *interlocking* tradition, that is,... they mutually reinforce or explain each other" (D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 161. Italics in original.). For example, at His trial ([Mark 14:58](#)) and while He was on the cross ([Mark 15:29](#)), Jesus' enemies accused Him of having claimed that He would destroy the temple. The Synoptics do not record the basis for that false allegation, but John does ([2:19](#)). The Synoptics do not explain why the Jews had to bring Jesus before Pilate; John explains that the Romans had withheld from them the right of capital punishment ([18:31](#)). The Synoptics place

Peter in the high priest's courtyard ([Matt. 26:58](#); [Mark 14:54](#); [Luke 22:54-55](#)); John explains how he gained access ([John 18:15-16](#)). The call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John ([Matt. 4:18-22](#)) becomes more understandable in light of [John 1:35-42](#), which reveals that they had already spent time with Jesus. The Synoptics record that immediately after the feeding of the five thousand Jesus sent the crowds away ([Matt. 14:22](#); [Mark 6:45](#)); John reveals why He did that: They intended to try to make Him king ([John 6:15](#)). From John's gospel it is evident that when the Sanhedrin met on Wednesday of Passion Week to plot Jesus' arrest ([Mark 14:1-2](#)) they were merely implementing a decision made earlier, after the raising of Lazarus ([John 11:47-53](#)).

Not only does John's background information make passages in the Synoptics more understandable; the opposite is also true. John, writing decades after the others, assumed his readers were familiar with the events recorded in the Synoptics. The birth narratives in Matthew and Luke reveal how the eternally preexistent Word ([John 1:1](#)) came to have a human family ([John 2:12](#)). In [1:40](#) John introduced Andrew as Peter's brother, although he had not yet mentioned Peter. John's explanatory footnote that "John [the Baptist] had not yet been thrown into prison" ([John 3:24](#)) assumes that his readers knew he eventually would be. Yet the gospel of John does not record the Baptist's imprisonment, which is described in the Synoptics ([Matt. 4:12](#); [14:3](#); [Mark 6:17](#); [Luke 3:20](#)). John noted that "Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country" ([John 4:44](#)), yet that statement is not found in his gospel. It is, however, recorded in the Synoptics ([Matt. 13:57](#); [Mark 6:4](#); [Luke 4:24](#)). [John 6:67, 70-71](#) refers to the twelve apostles; but as noted above, John's gospel, unlike the Synoptics ([Matt. 10:2-4](#); [Mark 3:14-19](#); [Luke 6:13-16](#)), does not have a list of the twelve apostles. From the way they are introduced, John evidently expected his readers to know who Mary and Martha were ([11:1](#)), even though he had not previously referred to them. They are, however, mentioned in Luke's gospel ([10:38-42](#)). In that same connection, John noted that Mary was the one who anointed the Lord's feet ([11:2](#)). He would not relate that story until chapter 12, but assumed his readers would be familiar with it from the

synoptic accounts ([Matt. 26:6-13](#); [Mark 14:3-9](#)). John's account of Philip's hesitancy to bring the Greeks to Jesus until after he consulted first with Andrew ([12:21-22](#)) may have been motivated by the readers' familiarity with Jesus' command, "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles" ([Matt. 10:5](#)).

## **Date and Place of Writing**

There is nothing specific in the gospel itself to indicate when it was written. Dates given by conservative scholars range from before the fall of Jerusalem to the last decade of the first century. (As noted above, a date in the second century is ruled out by the discovery of the papyrus fragments p<sup>52</sup> and Egerton Papyrus 2.) Several considerations favor a date toward the end of that range (c. a.d. 80-90). The gospel of John was written long enough after Peter's death (c. a.d. 67-68) for the rumor that John would live to see the second coming to have developed ([John 21:22-23](#)). That rumor would have had more plausibility when John was an old man. John does not mention the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (a.d. 70). If his gospel were written a decade or more after that event, it may no longer have been an issue to his readers. (The temple's destruction in any case would have been less significant to Gentiles and Jews of the Diaspora than to Palestinian Jews.) Finally, although not dependent on them, John was aware of the Synoptic Gospels. The later date allows time for them to have been written and circulated among John's readers. The testimony of the church fathers further confirms that John was the last of the four gospels to be written (e.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.24, 6.14).

According to the uniform tradition of the early church, John wrote his gospel while living in Ephesus.

## **Purpose**

John is the only one of the gospels that contains a precise statement of the author's purpose: "But these have been written so that you may

believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (20:31). John's objective was both apologetic ("that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God") and evangelistic ("and that believing you may have life in His name"). In keeping with his evangelistic purpose, John used the verb "to believe" nearly one hundred times—more than twice as much as the Synoptics, emphasizing that those who savingly believe in Jesus will receive eternal life (3:15-16, 36; 4:14; 5:24, 39-40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47-48, 54, 63, 68; 10:10, 28; 12:50; 14:6; 17:2-3; 20:31).

John's apologetic purpose, which is inseparable from his evangelistic purpose, was to convince his readers of Jesus' true identity. He presents Him as God incarnate (1:1, 14; 8:23, 58; 10:30; 20:28), the Messiah (1:41; 4:25-26), and the Savior of the world (4:42). To that end, John repeatedly stressed Jesus' miraculous signs (e.g., 3:2; 6:2, 14; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 12:18; 20:30), including eight specific ones: turning water into wine (2:1-11), healing a royal official's son (4:46-54), healing a lame man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-18), feeding the five thousand (6:1-15), walking on the Sea of Galilee (6:16-21), healing a man born blind (9:1-41), raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-45), and providing a miraculous catch of fish (21:6-11). In addition to those signs was the most convincing sign of all—Jesus' own resurrection (20:1-29).

In short, John presents Jesus as the eternal Word, Messiah, and Son of God who, through His death and resurrection, brings the gift of salvation to mankind. People respond by either accepting or rejecting the salvation that comes only through believing in Him.

## **Outline**

- I. The Incarnation of the Son of God ([1:1-18](#))
  - A. His Deity ([1:1-2](#))
  - B. His Pre-incarnate Work ([1:3-5](#))
  - C. His Forerunner ([1:6-8](#))
  - D. His Rejection ([1:9-11](#))



- E. His Reception ([1:12-13](#))
- F. His Becoming Flesh ([1:14-18](#))
- II. The Presentation of the Son of God ([1:19-4:54](#))
  - A. Presentation by John the Baptist ([1:19-34](#))
    - 1. To the religious leaders ([1:19-28](#))
    - 2. At Christ's baptism ([1:29-34](#))
  - B. Presentation to His First Disciples ([1:35-51](#))
    - 1. Andrew and Peter ([1:35-42](#))
    - 2. Philip and Nathanael ([1:43-51](#))
  - C. Presentation in Galilee ([2:1-12](#))
    - 1. First sign: water to wine ([2:1-10](#))
    - 2. Disciples believe ([2:11-12](#))
  - D. Presentation in Judea ([2:13-3:36](#))
    - 1. Cleansing the temple ([2:13-25](#))
    - 2. Teaching Nicodemus ([3:1-21](#))
    - 3. Preaching by John the Baptist ([3:22-36](#))
  - E. Presentation in Samaria ([4:1-42](#))
    - 1. Witness to the Samaritan woman ([4:1-26](#))
    - 2. Witness to the disciples ([4:27-38](#))
    - 3. Witness to the Samaritans ([4:39-42](#))
  - F. Presentation in Galilee ([4:43-54](#))
    - 1. Reception by the Galileans ([4:43-45](#))
    - 2. Second sign: healing the nobleman's son ([4:46-54](#))
- III. The Opposition to the Son of God ([5:1-12:50](#))
  - A. Opposition at the Feast in Jerusalem ([5:1-47](#))
    - 1. Third sign: healing the paralytic ([5:1-9](#))
    - 2. Rejection by the Jews ([5:10-47](#))
  - B. Opposition in Galilee ([6:1-71](#))
    - 1. Fourth sign: feeding the 5,000 ([6:1-14](#))
    - 2. Fifth sign: walking on water ([6:15-21](#))
    - 3. Bread of Life discourse ([6:22-71](#))
  - C. Opposition at the Feast of Tabernacles ([7:1-10:21](#))
  - D. Opposition at the Feast of Dedication ([10:22-42](#))
  - E. Opposition at Bethany ([11:1-12:11](#))

1. Seventh sign: raising of Lazarus ([11:1-44](#))
2. The Sanhedrin plots to kill Christ ([11:45-57](#))
3. Mary anoints Christ ([12:1-11](#))
- F. Opposition in Jerusalem ([12:12-50](#))
  1. The triumphal entry ([12:12-22](#))
  2. The discourse on faith and rejection ([12:23-50](#))
- IV. The Preparation of the Disciples by the Son of God ([13:1-17:26](#))
  - A. In the Upper Room ([13:1-14:31](#))
    1. Washing feet ([13:1-20](#))
    2. Announcing the betrayal ([13:21-30](#))
    3. Teaching on His departure ([13:31-14:31](#))
  - B. On the Way to the Garden ([15:1-17:26](#))
    1. Instructing the disciples ([15:1-16:33](#))
    2. Interceding with the Father ([17:1-26](#))
- V. The Execution of the Son of God ([18:1-19:37](#))
  - A. The Rejection of Christ ([18:1-19:16](#))
    1. His arrest ([18:1-11](#))
    2. His trials ([18:12-19:16](#))
  - B. The Crucifixion of Christ ([19:17-37](#))
- VI. The Resurrection of the Son of God ([19:38-21:23](#))
  - A. The Burial of Christ ([19:38-42](#))
  - B. The Resurrection of Christ ([20:1-10](#))
  - C. The Appearances of Christ ([20:11-21:23](#))
    1. To Mary Magdalene ([20:11-18](#))
    2. To the disciples without Thomas ([20:19-25](#))
    3. To the disciples with Thomas ([20:26-29](#))
    4. Parenthesis: John's purpose in writing his gospel ([20:30-31](#))
    5. To the disciples ([21:1-23](#))
- VII. Conclusion ([21:24-25](#))

HE SPOKE, and galaxies whirled into place, stars burned the heavens, and planets began orbiting their suns—words of awesome, unlimited, unleashed power. He spoke again, and the waters and lands were filled with plants and creatures, running, swimming, growing, and multiplying—words of animating, breathing, pulsing life. Again he spoke, and man and woman were formed, thinking, speaking, and loving—words of personal and creative glory. Eternal, infinite, unlimited—he was, is, and always will be the Maker and Lord of all that exists.

And then he came in the flesh to a speck in the universe called planet Earth. The mighty Creator became a part of the creation, limited by time and space and susceptible to aging, sickness, and death. But love propelled him, and so he came to rescue and save those who were lost and to give them the gift of eternity. He is the Word; he is Jesus, the Messiah.

It is this truth that the apostle John brings to us in this book. John's Gospel is not a life of Christ; it is a powerful argument for the incarnation, a conclusive demonstration that Jesus was, and is, the very heaven-sent Son of God and the only source of eternal life.

John discloses Jesus' identity with his very first words, "In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God" ([1:1, 2](#)); and the rest of the book continues the theme. John, the eyewitness, chose eight of Jesus' miracles (or miraculous signs, as he calls them) to reveal his divine/human nature and his life-giving mission. These signs are (1) turning water to wine ([2:1-11](#)), (2) healing the official's son ([4:46-54](#)), (3)

healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda ([5:1-9](#)), (4) feeding the 5,000 with just a few loaves and fish ([6:1-14](#)), (5) walking on the water ([6:15-21](#)), (6) restoring sight to the blind man ([9:1-41](#)), (7) raising Lazarus from the dead ([11:1-44](#)), and, after the Resurrection, (8) giving the disciples an overwhelming catch of fish ([21:1-14](#)).

In every chapter Jesus' deity is revealed. And Jesus' true identity is underscored through the titles he is given—the Word, the only Son, Lamb of God, Son of God, true bread, life, resurrection, vine. And the formula is "I am." When Jesus uses this phrase, he affirms his preexistence and eternal deity. Jesus says, *I am* the bread of life ([6:35](#)); *I am* the light of the world ([8:12](#); [9:5](#)); *I am* the gate ([10:7](#)); *I am* the good shepherd ([10:11](#), [14](#)); *I am* the resurrection and the life ([11:25](#)); *I am* the way, the truth, and the life ([14:6](#)); and *I am* the true vine ([15:1](#)).

The greatest sign, of course, is the Resurrection, and John provides a stirring eyewitness account of finding the empty tomb. Then he records various post-Resurrection appearances by Jesus.

John, the devoted follower of Christ, has given us a personal and powerful look at Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. As you read his story, commit yourself to believe in and follow him.

## **Vital Statistics**

### **Purpose:**

To prove conclusively that Jesus is the Son of God and that all who believe in him will have eternal life

### **Author:**

John the apostle, son of Zebedee, brother of James, called a "Son of Thunder"

### **Original Audience:**

New Christians and searching non-Christians

**Date Written:**

Probably A.D. 85-90

**Setting:**

Written after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and before John's exile to the island of Patmos

**Key Verses:**

"The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name" ([20:30](#), [31](#)).

**Key People:**

Jesus, John the Baptist, the disciples, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Jesus' mother, Pilate, Mary Magdalene

**Key Places:**

Judean countryside, Samaria, Galilee, Bethany, Jerusalem

**Special Features:**

Of the eight miracles recorded, six are unique (among the Gospels) to John, as is the "Upper Room Discourse" ([chapters 14-17](#)). Over 90 percent of John is unique to his Gospel—John does not contain a genealogy or any record of Jesus' birth, childhood, temptation, transfiguration, appointment of the disciples, nor any account of Jesus' parables, ascension, or great commission.

**Key Places in John**

*The Broken Lines (-----) Indicate Modern Boundaries.*

John's story begins as John the Baptist ministers near Bethany east of the Jordan ([1:28ff](#)). Jesus also begins his ministry, talking to some of the men who would later become his 12 disciples. Jesus' ministry in Galilee began with a visit to a wedding in Cana ([2:1ff](#)). Then he went to Capernaum, which became his new home ([2:12](#)). He journeyed to Jerusalem for the special festivals ([2:13](#)) and there met with Nicodemus, a religious leader ([3:1ff](#)). When Jesus left Judea, he traveled through Samaria and ministered to the Samaritans ([4:1ff](#)). Jesus did miracles in Galilee ([4:46ff](#)) and in Judea and Jerusalem ([5:1ff](#)). We follow him as he fed 5,000 near Bethsaida beside the Sea of Galilee (Sea of Tiberias) ([6:1ff](#)), walked on the water to his frightened disciples ([6:16ff](#)), preached through Galilee ([7:1](#)), returned to Jerusalem ([7:2ff](#)), preached beyond the Jordan in Perea ([10:40](#)), raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany ([11:1ff](#)), and finally entered Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate the Passover with his disciples and give them key teachings about what was to come and how they should act. His last hours before his crucifixion were spent in the city ([13:1ff](#)), in a grove of olive trees (the Garden of Gethsemane) ([18:1ff](#)), and finally in various buildings in Jerusalem during his trial ([18:12ff](#)). He would be crucified, but he would rise again as he had promised.

## **The Blueprint**

### **A. BIRTH AND PREPARATION OF JESUS, THE SON OF GOD ([1:1-2:12](#))**

John makes it clear that Jesus is not just a man; he is the eternal Son of God. He is the light of the world because he offers this gift of eternal life to all people. How blind and foolish to call Jesus nothing more than an unusually good man or moral teacher. Yet we sometimes act as if this were true when we casually toss around his words and go about living our own way. If Jesus is the eternal

Son of God, we should pay attention to his divine identity and life-giving message.

## B. MESSAGE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS, THE SON OF GOD ([2:13-12:50](#))

1. Jesus encounters belief and unbelief from the people
2. Jesus encounters conflict with the religious leaders
3. Jesus encounters crucial events in Jerusalem

Jesus meets with individuals, preaches to great crowds, trains his disciples, and debates with the religious leaders. The message that he is the Son of God receives a mixed reaction. Some worship him, some are puzzled, some shrink back, and some move to silence him. We see the same varied reactions today. Times have changed, but people's hearts remain hard. May we see ourselves in these encounters Jesus had with people, and may our response be to worship and follow him.

## C. DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS, THE SON OF GOD ([13:1-21:25](#))

1. Jesus teaches his disciples
2. Jesus completes his mission

Jesus carefully instructed the disciples how to continue to believe even after his death, yet they could not take it in. After he died and the first reports came back that Jesus was alive, the disciples could not believe it. Thomas is especially remembered as one who refused to believe even when he heard the eyewitness accounts from other disciples. May we not be like Thomas, demanding a physical face-to-face encounter, but may we accept the eyewitness testimony of the disciples that John has recorded in this Gospel.

### MEGATHEMES

**THEME**

**EXPLANATION**

**IMPORTANCE**

*Jesus Christ,  
Son of God*

John shows us that Jesus is unique as God's special Son, yet he is fully God. Because he is fully God, Jesus is able to reveal God to us clearly and accurately.

Because Jesus is God's Son, we can perfectly trust what he says. By trusting him, we can gain an open mind to understand God's message and fulfill his purpose in our lives.

*Eternal Life*

Because Jesus is God, he lives forever. Before the world began, he lived with God, and he will reign forever with him. In John we see Jesus revealed in power and magnificence even before his resurrection.

Jesus offers eternal life to us. We are invited to begin living in a personal, eternal relationship with him now. Although we must grow old and die, by trusting him we can have a new life that lasts forever.

*Belief*

John records eight specific signs, or miracles, that show the nature of Jesus' power and love. We see his power over everything created, and we see his love of all people. These signs encourage us to believe in him.

Believing is active, living, and continuous trust in Jesus as God. When we believe in his life, his words, his death, and his resurrection, we are cleansed from sin and receive power to follow him. But we must respond to him by believing.

*Holy Spirit*

Jesus taught his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come after he ascended from earth. The Holy Spirit would then indwell, guide, counsel, and

Through God's Holy Spirit, we are drawn to him in faith. We must know the Holy Spirit to understand all Jesus taught. We can



comfort those who follow Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ's presence and power are multiplied in all who believe.

experience Jesus' love and guidance as we allow the Holy Spirit to do his work in us.

*Resurrection* On the third day after he died, Jesus rose from the dead. This was verified by his disciples and many eyewitnesses. This reality changed the disciples from frightened deserters to dynamic leaders in the new church. This fact is the foundation of the Christian faith.

We can be changed as the disciples were and have confidence that our bodies will one day be raised to live with Christ forever. The same power that raised Christ to life can give us the ability to follow Christ each day.

- Life Application Study Bible.

## Introduction

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that over 90 percent of its material is unique. John's Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to His teachings.

### **Circumstances of Writing**

**Author:** A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle ([1:14](#); cp. [2:11](#); [19:35](#)); one of the Twelve ("the disciple Jesus loved": [13:23](#); [19:26](#); [20:2](#); [21:20](#); cp. [21:24-25](#)); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of "the disciple Jesus loved" with Peter in [13:23-24](#); [18:15-16](#); [20:2-9](#); [21](#); and in [Lk 22:8](#); [Ac 1:13](#); [3-4](#); [8:14-25](#); [Gal 2:9](#)). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church ([Ac 2:42](#); [Eph 2:20](#)), the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness ([Jn 15:27](#); [1Jn 1:1-4](#)).

**Background:** The most plausible date of writing is the period between A.D. 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John's lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in [6:1](#) and [21:1](#) (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas's confession of Jesus as "my Lord and my God" in [20:28](#) (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter's martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 ([21:19](#)); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God ([1:1,14,18](#); [10:30](#); [20:28](#)).

The testimony of the early church also favors a date after A.D. 70. Clement of Alexandria (cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 6.14.7) stated, "Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain [in the other canonical Gospels]... composed a spiritual gospel." The most likely place of writing is Ephesus (Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 3.1.2; cp. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.1.1), one of the most important urban centers of the Roman Empire at the time, though the envisioned readership of John's Gospel transcends any one historical setting.

John's original audience was probably composed of people in the larger Greco-Roman world in Ephesus and beyond toward the close of the first

century A.D. Hence John frequently explained Jewish customs and Palestinian geography and translated Aramaic terms into Greek.

## Message and Purpose

The purpose statement in [20:30-31](#) indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God's people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

The deity of Jesus: John emphasized the deity of Jesus from the beginning of his Gospel. The prologue affirms that He is the eternal Word (Gk *logos*) who was with God and was God. Jesus used the significant phrase "I am" seven times in John, claiming the personal name of God as His own. In John, Jesus is always in charge and knows what will happen in advance.

Know and believe: Eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ ([17:3](#)). Further knowledge of God comes from believing and knowing Jesus. "Knowing" and "believing" are key terms for John. Both occur over 90 times in this Gospel and are always used as verbs. Jesus' teaching in John reminds us that knowing God and believing in Jesus are expressed in action.

## Contribution to the Bible

Of all the Gospels and any of the New Testament books, the Gospel of John most clearly teaches the deity and preexistence of Christ ([1:1-2,18](#); [8:58](#); [17:5,24](#); [20:28](#)). Together with the Gospel of Matthew, it provides the most striking proofs of Jesus' messiahship. It does so by narrating seven messianic signs (see note at [2:11](#)), by seven "I am" statements of Jesus (see note at [6:35,48](#)), by specific fulfillment quotations, especially at Jesus' passion, and by showing how Jesus fulfilled the symbolism inherent in a variety of Jewish festivals and institutions. Jesus' messianic

mission is shown to originate with God the Father, "the One who sent" Jesus ([7:16,18,28,33](#); [8:26,29](#); [15:21](#)), and to culminate in His commissioning of His new messianic community in the power of His Spirit ([20:21-22](#)). John's Trinitarian teaching is among the most overt presentations of the tri-unity of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Spirit—in the entire NT and has provided much of the material for early Trinitarian and Christological formulations in the history of the church.

## Structure

John is divided into two main parts. In the first section (chaps. 2-11) the focus is on both Jesus' ministry to "the world" and the signs He performed. Jesus performs seven signs that meet with varying responses. The second major section (chaps. 12-21) reveals Jesus' teaching to His disciples and the triumphant "hour" of His passion. John's record of the passion focuses on Jesus' control of the events. He had to instruct His adversaries on how to arrest Him ([18:4-8](#)). Pilate struggled with his decision, but Jesus knew what would happen. Jesus died as the Lamb and was sacrificed at the very time lambs were being sacrificed for Passover ([19:14](#)).

## Outline

- I. Prologue: Christ as the Eternal Word ([1:1-18](#))
  - A. The Word ([1:1](#))
  - B. The Word and creation ([1:2-5](#))
  - C. The Word and the world ([1:6-18](#))
- II. Presentation of Christ as the Son of God ([1:19-12:50](#))
  - A. By John the Baptist ([1:19-34](#))
  - B. To His disciples ([1:35-51](#))
  - C. Through miraculous signs ([2:1-12:50](#))
- III. Instruction of the Twelve by the Son of God ([13:1-17:26](#))
  - A. The Last Supper ([13:1-38](#))
  - B. The way to the Father ([14:1-31](#))
  - C. The true vine ([15:1-27](#))

- D. The gift of the Spirit ([16:1-33](#))
- E. Jesus' high-priestly prayer ([17:1-26](#))
- IV. Suffering of Christ as the Son of God ([18:1-20:31](#))
  - A. His arrest, trial, and death ([18:1-19:42](#))
  - B. His triumph over death ([20:1-31](#))
- V. Epilogue: The Continuing Work of the Son of God ([21:1-25](#))
  - A. Appearances to His disciples ([21:1-14](#))
  - B. Assignment to His disciples ([21:15-25](#))

## Timeline

A.D.18-29	A.D. 30-33	A.D. 33	A.D. 33
Caiaphas is high priest. <a href="#">18-36</a>	Jesus cleanses the temple at Passover. <a href="#">30</a>	Jesus raises Lazarus from death. <a href="#">Winter 33</a>	Judas bargains with the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus. <a href="#">Tuesday evening, Nisan 11, 33</a>
Pontius Pilate is prefect of Judea. <a href="#">26-36</a>	Jesus' ministry in Galilee <a href="#">Autumn 30 to Spring 32</a>	Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem by way of Samaria and Galilee <a href="#">late Winter 33</a>	Jesus celebrates Passover with His disciples. <a href="#">Thursday evening, Nisan 13, 33</a>
John the Baptist's ministry begins. <a href="#">29</a>	Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 during Passover <a href="#">32</a>	Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem <a href="#">Sunday, Nisan 9, 33</a>	Jesus' trials and crucifixion <a href="#">Friday, Nisan 14, 33</a>
Jesus' baptism <a href="#">29</a>	Jesus' teachings at the Festival of Tabernacles <a href="#">Autumn 32</a>	Jesus' second cleansing of the temple <a href="#">Monday, Nisan 10, 33</a>	Jesus' resurrection <a href="#">Sunday, Nisan 16, 33</a>
Jesus' wilderness temptations <a href="#">29</a>	Growing opposition to Jesus at the Festival of	Jesus teaches in the	Jesus' ascension;

Jesus' call of His first disciples <a href="#">29</a>	Dedication <a href="#">Winter 32/33</a>	temple and prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem. <a href="#">Tuesday, Nisan 11,</a> <a href="#">33</a>	forty days after His resurrection <a href="#">33</a>  Day of Pentecost; seven weeks following Jesus' resurrection <a href="#">Sivan</a> <a href="#">4, 33</a>
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## logos

**Greek Pronunciation** [LAH gahss]

**HCSB Translation** Word

**Uses in John's Gospel** [40](#)

**Uses in the NT** [330](#)

**Focus Passage** [John 1:1,14](#)

Like the related verb *lego* (*to speak*), the noun *logos* most often refers to either oral or written communication. It means *statement* or *report* in some contexts, but most often in John's Gospel (and in the NT in general) *logos* refers to God's *Word* (that is, the Old Testament) or to Jesus' *words*. Thus, the primary use of *logos* is to denote divine revelation in some form or another. John used the term in its most exalted sense when he personified *logos* to refer to Christ. The *Logos* eternally existed as God (the Son) and with God (the Father)—He was in fact the Creator ([Jn 1:1-3](#))—but He became a human being ([v. 14](#)), Jesus of Nazareth, so that He could reveal the Father and His will for humanity ([v. 18](#)).

- HCSB Study Bible.

## **Introduction**

### **Author**

Despite doubts from various quarters, a good case can be made that the fourth Gospel was written by John, the "one Jesus loved" (as he referred to himself throughout his book), brother of James and son of Zebedee, just as early church tradition suggests. That same tradition places John in and around Ephesus, ministering to the churches of Asia Minor, until his death as an elderly man at roughly the end of the first century. The author would thus have been an eyewitness of much of the material he recounted and in a position to provide accurate information. The Gospel appears to be the first of five books he wrote in the a.d. 90s, the next ones being the three NT letters that bear his name and the book of Revelation.

It is possible that John relied on earlier written sources for some of the information in his Gospel, especially for the miracles of Jesus, where a different style and vocabulary at times intrude. In particular, it is possible that he knew one or more of the first three (Synoptic) Gospels. John's Gospel seems to be literarily independent of them, however. More likely he was aware of their contents more from oral tradition and an active preaching ministry and wanted to supplement them by focusing on different information in his account.

Without question, John's writing style, like his selection of content and themes, differs noticeably from that of the Synoptics. As was perfectly acceptable in his day, he would have written his account of what others said in his own distinctive style, being faithful to their meaning if not to their exact wording. His sense of being led by the Holy Spirit ([14:26](#); [15:26](#); [16:13](#)) would have given him the freedom to couch things in his own words, believing he was being faithful to history at the same time.

### **Themes**

A list of themes that receive distinctive emphasis in John, as compared with the Synoptics, includes a strong belief in the full deity of Jesus as well as His full humanity, an emphasis on the availability of eternal life to all who believe in Jesus (beginning already in this life), miracles as signs meant to elicit faith in Christ, the beginnings of Trinitarian thought, the unity of disciples, the election and security of the believer, the death of Christ as exaltation and glorification, the Holy Spirit as Comforter (Counselor, Advocate), a playing down of the role of John the Baptist and of the baptism and the Lord's Supper and a strong polemic against unbelieving Judaism.

Many of these themes can be explained by the situation in which John's churches found themselves. The minority of believers from Jewish backgrounds by this time were largely ostracized by the local synagogues and may have begun to wonder if they had made the right choice in following Jesus. John's Gospel provided them with much "ammunition" in their quest to evangelize their non-Christian Jewish friends and family and encouraged them in the belief that Jesus is the true fulfillment of all of the central hopes and aspirations of Judaism. Ephesus, however, was also being infiltrated by the early Gnostic teacher Cerinthus, who taught a form of docetism—the belief that Christ only "seemed" (from the Gk *dokeo*) to be human. Hence, John emphasized Jesus' full deity and His full humanity.

### **Differences Between John's Gospel and the Synoptics**

The apologist will probably be most interested in the numerous differences between John and the Synoptics and how they can be explained in detail. John includes no parables, few kingdom teachings, no exorcisms, and no pronouncement stories (short debates with hostile questioners ending in climactic pronouncements). But the parable seems to have been a distinctively Jewish form of teaching not known to the Greeks. The kingdom was an OT theocratic concept that likewise could have misled a largely Gentile church. Exorcisms were viewed almost



magically in the Greco-Roman world, and John does include plenty of more extended controversies with Jewish leaders.

More telling are examples of "interlocking" between John and the Synoptics—places where details in one Gospel help explain what might have remained mysterious in another. For example, John refers to the imprisonment of John the Baptist ever so briefly ([Jn 3:24](#)), but only the Synoptics narrate the actual story ([Mk 6:14-29](#)). [John 11:2](#) distinguishes Mary the sister of Lazarus from Mary the mother of Jesus by alluding to a story John has not yet narrated but that Mark said would be recounted whenever the gospel is preached ([Mk 14:9](#)). And the references to Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ([Jn 18:24, 28](#)) are so short as to presuppose the fuller detail known from the first three Gospels ([Mk 14:53-65](#)).

In other instances John clarifies something the Synoptics leave puzzling. Why did the garbled charges against Jesus at His trial claim that He had predicted He would destroy the temple ([Mk 14:58-59](#))? Presumably, because of what He said two years earlier about destroying the temple, when His audience didn't understand He was talking about His own body ([Jn 2:19](#)). Why did the Jewish Sanhedrin involve the Roman authorities with Jesus' execution in the first place, since their law prescribed stoning for blasphemy ([Mk 15:1-3](#))? Most probably, it was because Rome prevented the Jews from carrying out capital punishment in most instances ([Jn 18:31](#)). How could the Synoptics describe Jesus as often wanting to gather the children of Jerusalem together ([Mt 23:37](#)) when they narrate only one trip the adult Jesus took to the holy city—that of His final Passover? Doubtless because He did in fact go there regularly at festival times, as John repeatedly indicates (chaps. 2; 5; 7-9; 10). Indeed, it is only from John that we learn that Jesus' ministry lasted for roughly three years, a claim most scholars accept as accurate. Plenty of additional examples of interlocking in each direction could be given.

A key feature of John's literary genre provides further explanation of the book's distinctives. John was less literal in his reporting than the authors of the Synoptics, in large measure due to writing in a style somewhat

akin to ancient Greco-Roman drama. But his recurring emphasis on themes like truth and witness shows that he believed he was faithfully reproducing the life and times of Jesus even through this genre.

A detailed analysis of the historical reliability of John proceeds through the Gospel, verse by verse, looking for compatibility with the Synoptic data and applying standard historical criteria for authenticity to each text in turn. The most helpful criterion is what has been called *double similarity and dissimilarity*. When a teaching or event from Jesus' life fits plausibly into the Jewish world of Israel during the first third of the first century but differs in some respect from most conventional Judaism of the day, it is not likely to have been invented by some Jew other than Jesus. When that same teaching or event also shows some continuity with later Christian belief or practice and yet likewise proves distinctive at some telling point, it is not likely to have been manufactured by any later Christian. Usually at least one central element, if not several, emerge in each passage in John to satisfy this four-part criterion.

Much scholarship today continues to dismiss John as not nearly as valuable for recovering the "historical Jesus" as the Synoptics, but this scholarship rarely interacts in detail with the studies that demonstrate the points briefly summarized in this introduction.

None of this suggests that historical research can "prove" the reliability of every last detail in John (or any other portion of Scripture). But when writers prove repeatedly reliable where they can be tested, they should be given the benefit of the doubt where they cannot be checked. Christian belief in the full trustworthiness, authority, and inspiration or inerrancy of the text requires a leap of faith beyond what historical evidence alone can demonstrate. But it is not a leap in the dark, flying in the face of the evidence. It is a conscious choice consistent with the evidence that does exist.

- The Apologetics Study Bible: Understanding Why You Believe.

## **Introduction To The Gospel According to John**

### **Author and Title**

The title says that the Gospel was written by John, and other evidence identifies this John as the son of Zebedee. The internal evidence indicates that the author was (1) an apostle ([1:14](#); cf. [2:11](#); [19:35](#)), (2) one of the 12 disciples (“the disciple whom Jesus loved”; [13:23](#); [19:26](#); [20:2](#); [21:20](#); cf. [21:24-25](#)), and, still more specifically, (3) John the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” with Peter in [13:23-24](#); [18:15-16](#); [20:2-9](#); [21:2-23](#); cf. [Luke 22:8](#); [Acts 1:13](#); [3:1-4:37](#); [8:14-25](#); [Gal. 2:9](#)). The external evidence from the church fathers supports this identification (e.g., Irenaeus, [Against Heresies 3.1.2](#)).

### **Date and Place of Writing**

The most likely date of writing is the period between A.D. 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and A.D. 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), but there is not enough evidence to be much more precise. A date subsequent to A.D. 70 is suggested, among other things, by the references in [6:1](#) and [21:1](#) to the Sea of Tiberias (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the 1st century), the reference in [21:19](#) to Peter’s martyrdom (which according to patristic evidence occurred in A.D. 65 or 66), and the lack of reference to the Sadducees (who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after A.D. 70). The testimony of the early church also favors a date after A.D. 70. Thus Clement of Alexandria stated, “Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain [in the other canonical Gospels]... composed a spiritual gospel” (cited in Eusebius, [Ecclesiastical History 6.14.7](#)).

The most likely place of writing is Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), which was one of the most important urban centers of the Roman Empire at the time (Irenaeus, [Against Heresies 3.1.2](#); cf. Eusebius, [Ecclesiastical History 3.1.1](#)). However, the readership envisioned by John's Gospel transcends any one historical setting.

## **Theme**

The theme of John's Gospel is that Jesus is the promised Messiah and Son of God. By believing in Jesus, people can have eternal life (cf. [20:30-31](#)).

## **Purpose, Occasion, and Background**

The Gospel of John was written by the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, a Palestinian Jew and a member of Jesus' inner apostolic circle during his earthly ministry. John's original audience consisted of both Jews and Gentiles living in the larger Greco-Roman world in Ephesus and beyond toward the close of the first century A.D. He frequently explains Jewish customs and Palestinian geography and translates Aramaic terms into Greek (see note on [1:38](#)), thus showing awareness of non-Jewish readers. He also presents Jesus as the Word become flesh against the backdrop of Greek thought that included Stoicism and early Gnosticism. But John also shows awareness of Jewish readers as he demonstrates Jesus to be the Jewish Messiah, the fulfillment of many OT themes, and the Son of God who was sent by God the Father to reveal the only true God and to provide redemption for humanity.

The purpose statement in [20:30-31](#) makes it appear that John wrote with an evangelistic intent. However, his depth of teaching shows that he wanted readers not only to come to initial saving faith in Jesus but also to grow into a rich, well-informed faith. John's central contention is that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and Son of God, and that by believing in him people may have eternal life. To this end, he marshals the evidence of several selected messianic signs performed by Jesus and of a series of witnesses to Jesus—including the Scriptures, John the Baptist,

Jesus himself, God the Father, Jesus' works, the Spirit, and John himself. It is also likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God's people, a concept that would be especially forceful if the date of composition (as seems likely) was subsequent to A.D. 70 (the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple).

## Key Themes

1. Jesus is God. [1:1-2, 18](#); [5:17-18](#); [8:58-59](#); [10:30-33](#); [20:28](#)
2. Jesus existed before the creation of the world. [1:1-2](#); [8:58](#); [17:5, 24](#)  
[1:48](#); [2:4, 19, 23-25](#); [3:14](#); [4:17-18](#); [6:51, 70](#); [8:28](#); [9:3](#); [10:15, 17-18](#); [11:4, 14](#); [12:24, 32](#); [13:10-11, 38](#); [21:18-19](#)
3. Jesus has supernatural knowledge. [1:36, 41, 49](#); [3:18](#); [4:25, 29](#); [5:25](#); [7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42](#); [9:22](#); [10:24, 36](#); [11:4, 27](#); [12:34](#); [19:7](#); [20:30-31](#)  
[4:26](#); [6:20, 35, 48, 51](#); [8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58](#); [9:5](#); [10:7, 9, 11, 14](#); [11:25](#); [13:19](#); [14:6](#); [15:1](#); [18:5-6](#) (cf. [Ex. 3:14-15](#); [Isa. 41:4](#); [43:10-13, 25](#); [45:18](#); [51:12](#); [52:6](#))
4. Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. [3:17, 35-36](#); [5:19-26](#); [6:40](#); [8:35-36](#); [14:13](#); [17:1](#)
5. Jesus is the "I am." [1:29, 36](#); [2:14-22](#), esp. v. 21; [4:23-24](#); [8:12](#); [9:5](#); [19:14](#)
6. Jesus, the sent Son, reflects the sender. [1:4](#); [3:15-16, 36](#); [4:14, 36](#); [5:24, 26, 39-40](#); [6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47-48, 51, 53-54, 68](#); [8:12](#); [10:10, 25, 28](#);
7. Jesus is the fulfillment of Jewish festivals and institutions (including the temple).
8. Jesus is the giver of eternal life.

[11:25](#); [12:25, 50](#); [14:6](#); [17:2-3](#);  
[20:31](#)

9. The signs of Jesus show that he is the Messiah (cf. also Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, above). [2:1-11, 13-22](#); [4:46-54](#); [5:1-15](#); [6:1-15](#); [9:1-41](#); [11:1-44](#)

10. The witnesses to Jesus testify that he is the Messiah. [1:7-8, 15, 19, 32, 34](#); [3:11, 32-33](#); [4:39](#); [5:31-39](#); [8:14, 18](#); [10:25](#); [15:26-27](#); [18:37](#); [19:35](#); [21:24](#)

11. Father, Son, and Spirit are united in their work of revelation and redemption. [14:17-18, 23, 26](#); [15:26](#); [20:21-22](#)

12. Jesus' death is the basis of salvation. [1:29](#); [3:14-15](#); [6:51-58](#); [10:15](#); [11:50-52](#); [12:24](#); [15:13](#)

13. God is sovereign in salvation. [3:21](#); [5:21](#); [6:37-45, 64-65](#); [10:16, 26-30](#); [15:16](#); [17:2, 6, 9](#)

14. Salvation is obtained through believing in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. [1:12](#); [3:15, 16](#); [5:24](#); [6:29, 35](#); [8:24](#); [11:25-27, 42](#); [12:44](#); [17:8, 21](#); [20:31](#)

15. Believers can experience the benefits of salvation already in the here and now, during this present evil age. [3:18, 36](#); [4:23](#); [5:24](#); [6:39-40](#); [10:10, 26-29](#); [11:25-26](#)

16. Believers are called to continue Jesus' mission (cf. also Jesus as the sent Son, above). [4:38](#); [15:16](#); [17:18](#); [20:21-22](#)

## **History of Salvation Summary**

Jesus comes as God in the flesh ([1:14](#)), the revealer of the Father ([14:9](#)), and the messianic King ([1:41, 49](#); [4:25](#); [6:15](#)). He fulfills the OT and its symbols, especially its promises of everlasting salvation. The ultimate fulfillment comes with his crucifixion and resurrection. (For an

explanation of the “History of Salvation,” see the [Overview of the Bible](#).)

## Literary Features

The main genre is gospel, which combines three ingredients—what Jesus did, what Jesus said (discourse and dialogue), and people’s responses to Jesus. Within this format the usual gospel subgenres are found: calling stories, recognition stories, witness stories, conflict stories, encounter stories, miracle stories, discourses, proverbs or sayings, passion stories, resurrection stories, and post-resurrection appearances.

Balancing the narrative richness are expanded discourses by Jesus. The Gospel of John also frequently employs symbolism, especially with reference to Christ, who is portrayed by images such as light, bread, water, and a shepherd. As an extension of this, the first half of the book is built around seven great “signs” that Jesus performed as proof of his messianic identity (see [2:1-11](#); [4:46-54](#); [5:1-15](#); [6:5-13](#); [6:16-21](#); [9:1-7](#); [11:1-44](#)). Then, in a further intricacy, John often links a “sign” or other great symbol with a corresponding statement made by Jesus in the form of either a conversation or full-fledged discourse. For example, Jesus feeds 5,000 ([6:1-13](#)), which is followed a few verses later by Jesus’ discourse on being the bread of life ([6:25-40](#)).

Literary motifs include: (1) statements that are misunderstood—in which Jesus makes a pronouncement, a bystander expresses an unduly literal understanding of Jesus’ words, and Jesus explains the true, spiritual meaning of his original statement (nine instances: [3:3-8](#); [4:10-15](#); [4:31-38](#); [6:47-58](#); [7:33-36](#); [8:21-30](#); [8:31-47](#); [8:56-58](#); [11:11-15](#)), (2) events or statements that occur in threes (e.g., three denials of Jesus; three utterances from the cross) and statements that occur in sevens (including seven great signs and seven “I am” statements by Jesus; see notes on [2:11](#); [6:35](#)), and (3) heightened contrasts scattered throughout the book (e.g., light vs. darkness; life vs. death; the fleeting vs. the eternal; disease vs. health; love vs. hate).

## The Setting of John

The events of the Gospel of John take place in Palestine, incorporated into the Roman Empire in 63 B.C. Appointed by the Romans as king over the Jews in 37 B.C., Herod the Great ruled until his death in 4 B.C. The Romans divided his kingdom among his descendants. The predominantly Gentile region of the Decapolis, or “Ten Cities,” was a loose confederation of semiautonomous cities administered by the Roman legate of Syria.

## Outline

1. Prologue: The Incarnate Word ([1:1-18](#))
2. The Signs of the Messiah ([1:19-12:50](#))
  1. John the Baptist’s witness and the first week of Jesus’ ministry ([1:19-2:11](#))
  2. Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to Gentiles ([2:12-4:54](#))
  3. Mounting Jewish opposition, additional signs ([5:1-10:42](#))
  4. The final Passover: the ultimate sign and the aftermath ([11:1-12:19](#))
  5. The approaching Gentiles and the Messiah’s rejection by the Jews ([12:20-50](#))
3. The Farewell Discourse and the Passion Narrative ([13:1-20:31](#))
  1. The cleansing and instruction of the new messianic community and Jesus’ final prayer ([13:1-17:26](#))
  2. Jesus’ arrest, trials, death, and burial ([18:1-19:42](#))
  3. Jesus’ resurrection, appearances, and sending of his disciples ([20:1-29](#))
  4. Purpose statement: Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God ([20:30-31](#))



#### 4. Epilogue: The Roles of Peter and of the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved ([21:1-25](#))

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#### **Warren Wiersbe Quote:**

As John came to the close of his book, he affirmed again the credibility of his witness. (Remember, **witness is a key theme in the Gospel of John. The word is used forty-seven times.**) John witnessed these events himself and wrote them for us as he was led by the Holy Spirit. He could have included so much more, but he wrote only what the Spirit told him to write.

The book ends with Peter and John together following Jesus, and He led them right into the Book of Acts! What an exciting thing it was to receive the power of the Spirit and to bear witness of Jesus Christ! Had they not trusted Him, been transformed by Him, and followed Him, they would have remained successful fishermen on the Sea of Galilee; and the world would never have heard of them.

**Jesus Christ is transforming lives today. Wherever He finds a believer who is willing to yield to His will, listen to His Word, and follow His way, He begins to transform that believer and accomplish remarkable things in that life. He also begins to do wonderful things through that life.**

Peter and John have been off the scene (except for their books) for centuries, but you and I are still here. We are taking His place and taking their place. What a responsibility! What a privilege!

We can succeed only as we permit Him to transform us.

**- Bible Exposition Commentary**