

St. John - Evangelists, Elder, Seer

Part 1 - "the disciple whom Jesus loved"



Some interesting myths and legends about St. John (some are actually true)

- 1) He is the only disciple of the original 12 to die a natural death (all others martyred)
- 2) He survived being given poisoned wine
 - When he blessed the cup the poison turned into a snake and crawled away
 - The serpentine cup (formerly a symbol of Hygenia, daughter of Aesculapius) is his symbol
- 3) Depicted as an Eagle, especially missally (the missal book)
 - **Revelation 4:7** speaks of the 4 living creatures; the last of which is an eagle
 - These would come to represent the 4 Gospel writers (tetramorph)
 - * Matthew was depicted as a man or angel (God sent message)
 - * Mark is the Lion (fierceness and power of God's Gospel)
 - * Luke is the Ox (slow and steady, yet full of power)
 - * John is the soaring Eagle (His account soars higher than others in imagery)
 - Some argue **Revelation 12:14** also speaks of John as he was given charge to take care of Mary at the Crucifixion (John 19:26-27) - It's a stretch, but plausible
- 4) After he was buried, many saw the earth atop his grave move up and down, as though John was still breathing (he wasn't), this gave rise to John being in a sleep until Christ's return
- 5) According to **Mark 10:39**, John said he could drink the cup Jesus was to drink. During one of the many anti-Christian riots in Ephesus, he was cast into boiling oil and emerged unharmed, being protected by God. This is a much later (ca. 1000 AD) legend
- 6) Miracles and transformations attributed to him
 - in one account, he could turn sticks and stones into golden rods and jewels
 - in another, he could take broken gems and restore them to wholeness
- 7) He is both the youngest and the oldest of Jesus' disciples
 - Perhaps as young as 14 when Jesus called him (certainly still a teenager)
 - Revelation was written around 95 AD (emperor Domitian), making John 80+ years old
 - * Anything over "three score and ten" years (Psalm 90:10) was unusual
 - * Lifespan in John's day in Palestine was typically about 50 to maybe 60 years.

Part 1: John's early years

A) "Typical" 1st Century Jewish life cycle

- 1) Circumcised / named on the 8th day
- 2) 3-4 years old, begin Hebrew school; learning to read Scripture in synagogue
- 3) 6-10 years old, begin learning the family trade (take you kids to work day?)
- 4) 8-10 years old, family will begin searching for a bride (all marriages arranged)
- 5) 12-14. Bar Mitzvah (Son of the Covenant), passage into adulthood
- 6) 14-16, get married once "Bride price" / dowry is set - certainly "betrothed" by now
 - * If didn't have first child by 18, something was amiss
- 7) early teens (12-15) - apprenticeship years in family business
 - * unless you were becoming a scribe or rabbi, you did what your father did
- 8) late teens (16-18) - begin practicing trade on your own (often part of nuptial contract)
- 9) Age 30 - now you're a man. (could become Rabbi, master of trade, etc.)
- 10) Age 50 - "May you live to see your children's children"; considered "old age"
- 11) 50-70; No retirement (modern concept), legacy formation, convalescence
- 12) 50-70; death and burial (if not sooner due to war, famine, disease, etc.)

B) "Come, follow me" - John's call as a disciple of Jesus

- 1) The particulars of John's call vary according to which Gospel is being read
- 2) **Matthew 4:21-22**
 - * James and John were with their father in the boat preparing the nets (apprentices)
 - * Don't know if John was older than James or vice versa (they aren't twins)
 - * If still "with their father" both of them would have been 12-16 years old / unmarried
- 3) **Mark 1:19-20** - same details as in Matthew
 - * **Mark 3:17** gives John a different name - what is it?
 - * What would this name / title refer to?
 - * Why is "Son of _____" such a common way of stating a name / nickname?
- 4) **Luke 5:1-11**
 - * Partners (independent of father Zebedee) with Simon Peter & Andrew
 - * If he was an independent partner, then he would have been late teens or early 20's
 - * Becoming "Fishers of men" occurs only here in Luke's account
- 5) **John**
 - * John is not mentioned in John, nor is there a list of Jesus' disciples
 - * John refers to himself as "The disciple whom Jesus loved" (13:23, 19:26 et alia)
 - * Sometimes refers to himself as "the other disciple" (20:3 et alia)
 - * **John 1:35-37** John could be the unnamed of the pair, but this would make him a Disciple of John the Baptist, not a Galileean fisherman - highly speculative

C) Witness of Jesus' ministry

- 1) A few background questions:
 - What does it mean to be part of the "in group"?
 - Did Jesus "play favorites" among the disciples?
 - What does it mean to be "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? (Historical vs. LGBTQ!+)

- 2) The wedding at Cana - **John 2:1-12**
 - How do we know that John was witness to this?
 - What term does John use (throughout his gospel) for miracles? Why?
 - What, exactly, did His disciples believe about Him at this point?
- 3) Raising of Jairus' daughter - **Luke 8:49-56**
 - How do we see John as being part of the "inner circle" here?
 - Why didn't Jesus let *all* the disciples come witness this miracle?
 - Do you think this influenced John's frequent use of the metaphor of "life"?
- 4) The Transfiguration - **Matthew 17:1-9**
 - Also in **Mark 9:2**, and **Luke 9:28-36**, but no record of it in John's gospel
 - If John was the only disciple at the crucifixion, why was he at the Transfiguration?
 - minority opinion of merit; Revelation came *before* John's Gospel, thus the omission
- 5) Are you with us or against us - **Mark 9:38-41** and **Luke 9:49-50**
 - This is the first time we see John speaking / acting on his own (not part of the 3)
 - Why would this "get his knickers in a twist"?
 - Is Jesus saying that the following is inconsequential?
- 6) Raining fire from heaven - **Luke 9:51-56**
 - Why did the Samaritans not want to show hospitality to Jesus?
 - *Could* James and John (sons of thunder) call down fire from heaven?
 - Why would Jesus rebuke them for this?
- 7) A Mother's request - **Matthew 20:17-28** / **Mark 10:32-45**
 - Was mom following her boys around (helicopter parent)?
 - What had Jesus just finished describing to His disciples?
 - What does it mean to sit at the right and left of a King?
 - How would James and John "drink of the cup"?
 - How would they "be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with"?
 - What affect did this have on the other 10 dsciples?
 - How does Jesus turn it into "a teachable moment"?
- 8) Signs of the end - **Mark 13:3-13**
 - Why does Andrew join the "inner 3" here?
 - Do any of these "signs" appear later in John's revelation?
 - How did verses 9-11 play out in John's life?
- 9) Passover Preparations - **Luke 22:7-9**
 - In Mark 14:12 and Matthew 26:17, it is the disciples as a whole who ask Jesus
 - Here we see John and Peter being selected and these two will "team up" in Acts
 - What would they need to do to prepare the Passover meal?
- 10) The footwashing - **John 13:1-20**
 - Why would washing *feet* (not hands) before dinner be important?
 - Only the weathiest would have the ability to *recline* at the table (space / couches)
 - How does washing figure prominently in John's writings?
- 11) At table with Jesus - **John 13:21-30**
 - This title "the one whom Jesus loved" occurs also in 19:26, 20:2, 20:7, and 21:20
 - Does this mean Jesus didn't love the other 11? (OK, not loving Judas I get)
 - Who prompts John to ask Jesus, "Lord, who is it?"

12) In the garden- **Mark 14:32-42**

- Why does Jesus pull these three disciples from the others?
- What are they to do? Do they do a good job of it?
- How would the dichotomy of flesh vs. spirit run throughout John's writings

D) Jesus' crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension

1) Access to the courtyard - **John 18:15-16**

- We have no clear indication that this "other disciple" is John, though John does go by that title in the resurrection appearances.
- What "special access" did this "other disciple" have and why?
- How does this fit with John being a Galilean fisherman?

2) Take care of mom - **John 19:25-27**

- With James (and other brothers) being alive, why would Jesus make provisions for the care of His mother?
- John is the only disciple to have witnessed the crucifixion first hand
 - * only 2 of the "words from the cross" are recorded in John
 - * He is the only one to have "It is finished"
- How did John fulfil his charge?

3) Witness to the resurrection - **John 20:1-10**

- John has the most detailed account of the resurrection
- How did John outrun Peter? Wasn't Peter older, stronger, more impetuous?
- Why did John not go in to the tomb?
- According to verses 8-9, what did John believe?
- Why did they "not yet understand the Scripture"?
- What does it mean when it says, "they went back to their homes"? Where's home?

4) Jesus' post resurrection appearances - **John 20:19-31**

- How many disciples were gathered with the doors locked for fear of the Jews?
- How did Jesus back up His greeting?
- Are verses 21-23 John's version of the Great Commission?
- Why did John write his book?

5) Breakfast on the beach - **John 21:1-14**

- Who is missing from "the team" on the boat? Where are they?
- How do we know this is a first hand account?
- What is significant about this appearance?

6) How will John die? - **John 21:20-25**

- What did Jesus say about John's death?
- How was it interpreted? (See legend 4 above)
- How does John close his Gospel? Why?

7) At the Ascension - **Acts 1:6-14**

- How did the disciples still have Jesus' ministry all wrong?
- What instructions does Jesus give them before His ascension?
- How did the disciples spend their time between Ascension and Pentecost?

Next Time: St. John the Apostle and Evangelist

The Life of St. John - part 2 Apostle & Evangelist

We should talk:

- 1) What does it mean to be a “pillar” (community, church, group)
- 2) How do you “fill in the gaps” in a story, memory, sentence, etc.
- 3) What is “guilt by association”?

II.) John in the Acts of the Apostles (33-68 AD)

A) I’m feeling sort of left out (How we complete John’s story)

- 1) Who are the two main “players” in the book of Acts?
- 2) Why doesn’t Luke mention the other Apostles very much?

3) What are our “sources” for when Scripture is silent

A) Note: As these are non-Biblical we do not consider them inspired or infallible

B) Testimony of the Church Fathers (Especially the Pre-Nicene Fathers)

- Polycarp (69-155) from Smyrna and a direct disciple of John the Apostle
- Ignatius [of Antioch] (108 - 140); convert through Polycarp
- Irenaeus (130-202) Born in Smyrna, bishop to southern Gaul (France)
- Tertullian (155-220) Carthage, church historian
- Clement of Alexandria (150-215) Taught in Catechetical school of Alexandria
- Origen (185-254) Student of Clement, carried on work against the gnostics
- Eusebius (?? - 339) Church historian, much of our knowledge of 2nd / 3rd Centuries

Church life comes from him (was secretary for Nicea)

- Chrysostom (347 - 407) Archbishop / Patriarch of Constantinople / liturgist
- Photius (810-891) Wrote biographies of many, including St. Timothy of Ephesus
 - mentions John taking over for Timothy around 68 AD

* All these authors, scholars, historians, theologians agree that John came to Ephesus shortly after the Jewish revolt in Judea in 66 AD

* All agree (there are no authors suggesting anything else), it is plausible, and we have no reason to think it is simply “made up”

C) Testimony of non church and / or ecclesiastical sources (pagans, councils, etc.)

- Synodical epistle from the council of Ephesus to the clergy of Constantinople (431)
 - * speaks of John having dwelt with the Virgin Mary at Ephesus in late 1st Cent.
- Josephus (37-100); mentions John as being in Jerusalem for Pentecost & beyond
- Tacitus (56-120) wrote chronicles of Domitian’s reign and John’s exile to Patmos

D) Christian mythology and legendarium

- Stories concerning the saints which may or may not be true (unverified)
- The cup of venom, burial myth, and some others are from this “camp”
- some of these have the backing of the Church to qualify for John’s 3 miracles

E) Silly stories (medieval myths and legends) - anything after 1,100 AD is fiction

- the high middle ages was a very superstitious time with fanciful stories
- many of these “legends” go against revealed Scripture
- St. John getting into a boxing match with satan in Spain is one such example

B) On the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:12-2:12)

- 1) Who was missing after the Ascension?
- 2) Who does Luke mention in 1:14? Why is this significant?
- 3) How do we know John cast his lot in the choosing of Matthias?
- 4) Which “tongue” do you think John received? (pure speculation)
- 5) While Peter addressed the crowd, what do you think John and the others were doing?

C) In the temple courts with Peter (Acts 3:1-11)

- 1) Why do Peter and John form the “dynamic duo”?
- 2) What post-Pentecost miracle is recorded here?
- 3) What was John’s role in this? (See verse 11)

D) Busted! (Acts 4:1-7, 13, 19-23)

- 1) What was John apprehended for?
- 2) Why doesn’t Luke record John’s answer to the charges?
- 3) How do we know that John also spoke? (13)
- 4) Who spoke in verse 19?
- 5) Where did they go upon their release
- 6) Acts chapter 5 repeatedly uses the pronoun “them” (plural) and would include John

E) Trip to Samaria (Acts 8:4-5, 14-17, 25)

- 1) Who was this Philip who went up to Samaria? (6:5)
- 2) Why would the Apostles in Jerusalem send Peter and John?
- 3) Why had the Holy Spirit not yet come on the believers in Samaria?
- 4) How could they have faith in Jesus if they hadn’t yet received the Holy Spirit?
- 5) What did Peter and John then do?
- 6) Why return to Jerusalem?

F) The Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15)

- 1) What was the controversy in the early church?
- 2) How do we know John took part in this council?
- 3) Nothing else is mentioned of John (or Peter) in the rest of the book of Acts

G) Paul's "hints" (**Galatians**)

- 1) Whom did Paul see in Galatians 1:18-19?
- 2) Where was John at this time?
- 3) Whom did Paul meet with 14 years later (**2:2**)
- 4) What is John called in 2:9? Why?
- 5) What did John (along with James, the Lord's brother and Peter) do?
- 6) To whom would John devote the bulk of his ministry?
- 7) How did their admonition to "remember the poor" manifest in **Acts 11:27-30**

H) Radio silence and a minority perspective

- 1) After the Jerusalem Council and meeting with Paul, John is not mentioned
- 2) The next time we see him is as the author of 3 letters to those under his care
- 3) The span of time between Acts 4&5 and John's time in Ephesus is about 28 - 30 years
- 4) We know he stayed in Jerusalem until the Jewish rebellion of 67AD
- 5) Certainly he would have left Jerusalem by its fall in 70AD
- 6) There is no record of his activity during this time, apart from Jerusalem council
- 7) Could John have wandered down to Qumran and become an Essene?
 - * Qumran is close enough to Jerusalem to be considered "at" Jerusalem
 - * He could have easily made the journey back to Jerusalem for church business
 - * Explains how John learned Semitic Greek (as opposed to common Koine Greek)
 - * Many of the images / motifs (bread of life, water, Word, Light / darkness) were commonly used by the Qumran community
 - * Much of Revelation's imagery is rooted in Daniel and other apocalyptic OT texts
 - * Qumran was an apocalyptic community (living in the end times)
 - * Can be neither proven nor disproven, but it is at least plausible

Next week: St. John as Elder of Ephesus (the three letters / late 1st century)

ST. JOHN - THE ELDER

Biography of John part 3

Let's talk about it:

- 1) What is / are the advantage(s) to getting older?
- 2) How does society view old age?
 - * Have you seen the old movie "Logan's Run"?
 - * Why are there mandatory retirement ages in many professions?
 - * Do "old people" still have value?
- 3) Why *were* children taught to "respect your elders"?
- 4) How were elders viewed in the Old Testament?
- 5) How were they viewed in New Testament times?
- 6) What's the difference between:
 - * presbyterus (elder) =
 - * episcopas (bishop / overseer) =
 - * poimayn (shepherd) =
 - * deaconus (deacon) =
 - * kyrios (lord) =
- 7) How is the term "elder" understood in the Church today?

III) St. John, Elder of Ephesus

- A) What did Elders do as Church leaders in the 1st century? (Until AD 326)
 - 1) See **I Timothy 4:17-20**. What tasks does Paul list as "Elders' duties"?
 - 2) See **Titus 1:5-9**.
 - * Why was Titus left on Crete? (Last I heard he was in Dalmatia)
 - * What are the "qualifications" for Elder?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- * How does this list compare with that for overseers in **I Timothy 3:1-17**?

3) **James 5:14.** What are the Elders doing here (Jerusalem)?

* Who was usually in charge of anointing with oil?

4) **I Peter 5:1-5**

* How does Peter describe himself?

* How does Peter use the 4 terms for the pastoral office?

* What is different about Peter's list of qualifications?

* What is to be the chief trait of a "professional church worker"?

5) Can anyone live up to all these qualifications?

* Are we under the Law (an Elder must be...) or under Grace?

* What then should we make of these lists of qualifiers?

6) What is the current "job description" for the office of Pastor? (Synod Constitution)

7) What things not in the "job description" are expectations of church leaders?

B) How did John go from Jerusalem to Ephesus

1) There is no mention of Ephesus in any of John's letters

2) Iraneus and Clement of Alexandria first mention John as elder at Ephesus

3) Ephesus could be seen from the island of Patmos (John's exilic home)

4) Ephesus was under the charge of Timothy as Paul wrote his letters to him (63-65 AD)

5) There's no mention of John as one of the "elders of Ephesus" in Acts 20

6) Ephesus was the chief city of the province of Asia

- the other cities / churches of Revelation 1-3 were all "suburbs" of Ephesus

7) Thus we must make "an educated guess" as to John's arrival

- John likely stayed in and around Jerusalem for most of his ministry

- In 66 AD the "Jewish Revolt" (Josephus) began and **Luke 21:20-24** fulfilled

- In 70 AD the Temple and much of Jerusalem destroyed by General Titus

- 73AD Masada and Qumran besieged and taken by the Romans

- the Virgin Mary is also, according to legend, to have gone there with him

C) John's 1st letter (a "catholic" or "universal" epistle)

1) This is John's first (chronologically) writing

2) Many of the themes which we find in his Gospel and Revelation are in this letter

3) What, according to John, is "Light"? / What is "Darkness"?

4) How do faith and obedience go together in I John 2?

5) Chapter 3 gives us the first mention of the term *antichrist*. What does this mean?

6) What is love?

7) How does one "test the spirits"?

8) What is John's view of the world?

9) How does he end his letter? What does this mean?

D) John's 2nd letter (a personal epistle?)

- 1) Who is "the chosen lady"?
- 2) What seems to be going on with this lady and her children?
- 3) How does John define *love* in this epistle?
- 4) What do we call the heretics described in verse 7?
- 5) How are Christians to treat non-Trinitarian church bodies?
- 6) What does verse 12 tell us about John's present situation?
- 7) Who are "the children of your chosen sister"?

E) John's 3rd letter - to my dear friend Gaius

- 1) This is the only book in the New Testament that does not mention Jesus by name
- 2) There are 4 men named Gaius mentioned in Acts - *this* Gaius is probably NOT one.
- 3) What do we learn of this Gaius from John's letter?
- 4) What is the "problem" at Gaius' church?
- 5) What do we learn of Diotrephes?
- 6) Who is this Demetrius? (Demetrius the gladiator?)
- 7) Again, what does this letter reveal of John's situation and plans?

Next week: John the Prophet; an overview of Revelation