



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Gospel According to St. John

An Introduction

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# Introduction

In this introduction to the Gospel of St. John we will discuss:

- Life of the Apostle John
- Authorship of the Gospel
- Time and Where the Gospel Was Written
- The Purpose of Writing This Gospel
- Contents and Characteristics of the Gospel



# The Author

- The word John means Jehovah is tender
- From the Gospels we know that St. John was the son of Zebedee and Salome from the house of Sidon in Galilee
- The father is mentioned only once, Matthew 4:21-22; Mark 1:19-20
- But the name occurs frequently as distinguishing the sons
- It seems that he was relatively well off as his father used to hire men to handle his boats, Mark 1:20
- Moreover, the high priest knew who John was, John 18:16





# The Author

- His mother, Salome was a righteous woman who always followed the Lord, Mark 15:40
- Salome was also one of the women who ministered unto the Lord of their substance, Matthew 27:56; Luke 8:3; and this falls in with the general impression which the narrative gives of the position of the family
- She participated with the other women in buying expensive spices for the body of Jesus
- Most probably she is the sister of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, John 19:25



# The Author

- Another member of the household is known to us is James, who is usually mentioned first, and was the elder
- At the time of his death he was, however, known to St. Luke as “James the brother of John”, Acts 12:2
- Herod Agrippas, the First, killed James in the year 44 B.C.
- St. John became a fisherman by trade
- He and his brother James were fishing partners with Simon, Luke 5:10



# The Author

- John and his brother James were preparing their nets in a boat when Jesus called them
- Both James and John left the boat and their father to follow Jesus, Matthew 4:21-22
- St. Ireneaus reports that John was twenty-five years old when the Lord Jesus called him to be His disciple
- The Lord Jesus Christ chose Simon, Andrew, John, and James to be His first disciples





# The Author

- The Lord named John and his brother 'Boanerges' which means the 'sons of thunder' Mark 3:17
- John became the apostle of love
- He was extremely gentle and his gospel, letters, and revelation all revolve round 'love'
- He continued to preach about love till his old age



# The Author

- Jesus often took Peter, James, and John aside defining them as an inner circle of disciples as at the Transfiguration, Matthew 17:1; the raising of the daughter of Jarius, Mark 5:37; in the Garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26:37; and at the time the Lord predicted the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, Mark 13:3
- The Lord entrusted him and Peter to prepare the place where He would hold the Passover with the disciples, Luke 22:8
- He also refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, John 13:23, 20:2, 21:7, 20





# The Author

- He accompanied the Lord and stood at the foot of the Cross where he received St. Mary as his mother, John 19:26-27
- After the resurrection of Jesus, John continued to play an instrumental role in the early church
- St. Paul referred to Peter, James, and John as the pillars of the church in Jerusalem, Galatians 2:9
- John and Peter were friends and very close
- As we read in John 13:25, Peter and John were sitting next to each other and next to Jesus



# The Author

- Peter had asked John to ask Jesus who will betray Him
- And in John 20:2, they were together and ran to the tomb after Mary Magdalene told them that the tomb is empty
- In the last chapter of the Gospel we read this beautiful dialogue between Jesus, Peter and John
- In Acts we see both of them together a lot
- John was with Peter when Peter healed the crippled man, Acts 3:1-11
- As a result both men went before the Sanhedrin, Acts 4:1-23



# The Author

- Peter and John later traveled up to Samaria to confirm the work that was going on there, Acts 8:14-24
- John preached in Asia Minor, namely in Ephesus
- He was tortured under Dematious and was exiled to the Island of Patmos
- There he enjoyed the revelations concerning the Day of the Lord: The book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ
- He remained in exile until his death





# The Author

- According to St. Jerome, St. John lived sixty-eight years after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ
- Based on that, he lived for two or more years into the second century A.D.
- This means that he lived to be almost one hundred, for he was a few years younger than the Lord
- Others believe that he died in the year 98 A.D. during the reign of Trojan (98 - 117 A.D.)



# Authorship

- The evidence for the authorship of any writing consists of two distinct branches
  1. Traces the external history of the writing
  2. The contents of the writing itself
- From the last quarter of the second century the writing was received with almost one consent, as the authentic witness of the Apostle John
- The author had to have been an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus, John 1:14, 13:23, 19:26, 19:35, 20:2, 21:7, 21:20, and 21:24



# Authorship

- He would have also had a decent familiarity with Palestine before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, and would have been familiar with the Jewish way of life
- John the Apostle does fit the description
- Early traditions help to identify the author as John
- Irenaeus, a disciple of John's disciple Polycarp, is of the earliest extant sources to associate John with the fourth Gospel
- Like the other Gospels, the title "According to John" (KATA IWANNHN) is found in the earliest manuscripts





# Authorship

- He incorporates details not mentioned in the other three Gospels
- These could not have been included by anyone unless he has been an eyewitness and is acquainted with the people and their names, for example:
  1. The detailed report about Nicodemus (Ch3)
  2. The report about Mary and Martha (Ch 11)
  3. The incident with Malchus (18:10)
  4. The report about Annas and Caiaphas (18:19-32)
  5. The report about the women at the Lord's tomb (20:15-17)



# Authorship

6. The report about the Lord's delivery of His mother to St. John's care while He was on the Cross (19:27)
  7. The report about St. Peter and John himself after the Resurrection (21:5-23)
- St. John also records fine details about events that can be presented only by an eyewitness
  - For example: he states that there were six water-pots (2:6); the distance the disciples had rowed away from the coast was two hundred cubits approximately (21:8); and the number of fishes they caught, (21:11)



# Authorship

- He also mentions that the loaves were made of barley (6:9)
- The odor of the oil of spikenard filled the house (12:3)
- The emotions of the officers when the Lord was arrested (18)
- The weight of the spices used for the Lord's body (19:39)
- Note also the accurate description of the reactions of the disciples (2:11 etc..; 4:27, 6:19, 12:16, 13:22, etc...); and the Lord's sympathy and reaction (13:1; 6:15,24, 2:11)
- The above examples and many other details confirm that St. John is an eyewitness to all he has written in his Gospel





# Authorship

- Unfortunately today many modern Biblical scholars do not accept that John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, brother of James the Greater, and Bishop of Ephesus is the author of the fourth Gospel despite the fact that the Fathers of the Church unanimously identified the Apostle John as the inspired writer
- They could not believe that the son of the fisherman Zebedee could have authored such a deeply theological text



# Authorship

## First argument:

- The most often quoted argument against St. John's authorship is that so much of the synoptic Gospel (Matthew, Mark and Luke) portrait of Jesus is missing from the fourth Gospel account
- This argument does not address the fact that John may have had good theological and/or literary reasons for omitting what was covered in the other Gospels and ignores or dismisses the testimony of early Church Fathers like the great Biblical scholar, theologian, and head of the catechetical school in Alexandria, Egypt, St. Clement of Alexandria



# Authorship

- St. Clement wrote: *"John, last of all, seeing that the plain facts had been clearly set forth in the Gospels, and being urged by his acquaintances, composed a spiritual Gospel under the divine inspiration of the Spirit."*
- The inspired writer of the fourth Gospel may also be addressing these differences when he records in John 20:30,31, *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."*





# Authorship

## Second Argument:

- That the fourth Gospel's themes of love and unity could not have been produced by one of the Apostles to whom Jesus gave the name "Sons of Thunder" in Mark 3:17
- According to this argument James and his brother John were wrathful, emotional, and ambitious men who wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans, Luke 9:54 and desired to secure a place of honor at Jesus' right hand in His coming kingdom, Mark 10:35-45



# Authorship

- This argument offers only a one-dimensional view at the sons of Zebedee
- Surely decades of suffering for Christ and years of growing in faith and understanding yielded a much more mature man of Christian faith
- By the time the fourth Gospel was written John Zebedee, the Bishop of Ephesus, was no longer the impulsive youth described in the synoptic Gospels
- John became the apostle of love
- In his old age, when unable to do more, he was carried into the assembly of the Church at Ephesus, and his sole exhortation was, "Little children, love one another."



# Place and Date of Writing

- John's Gospel is generally considered to be the last of the four canonical Gospels to be written
- According to the testimony of St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon (177-200 A.D. approximately), who is a disciple of St. Policarpus, St. John delivered his Gospel to the bishops of Asia where he lived with them until the reign of Emperor Trajan
- He had it published in Ephesus
- This testimony continues to be accepted in both the Eastern and Western Churches with hardly any opposition





# Place and Date of Writing

- However, some critics have recently raised doubts concerning the authority of St. John and consequently questioned the place and date of his writings
- Concerning the place of writing, some think it to be Antioch or Syria
- They base their assumption on the information given in the Acts of Ignatius<sup>7</sup> - (which is a document with uncertain date) - and which mentions that St. John was closely bound to Antioch



# Place and Date of Writing

- The response to this is that St. John did stay in Antioch for a short time, but then he went to Ephesus where he resided for a long time
- Other critics believe it was written in Alexandria and their claim to that is that the oldest manuscripts of St. John's Gospel have been found in Egypt
- They also explain that the writing reflects a Hellenic style that corresponds to the thought of the School of Alexandria and that had been inspired by Philo, the Jewish Alexandrian thinker



# Place and Date of Writing

- The response to this theory is that the academic climate of Egypt led the School to have it in its possession at a very early date
- By having it at the School, the Gospel could play a significant role in the life of her church and its fathers
- This does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that it was written in Egypt





# Place and Date of Writing

- Some critics rejected that the Gospel was written in Ephesus believing that the style of writing is Gnostic and Hellenic which is not consistent with the First Century after Christ but belongs rather to the Second Century
- In 1947, the Manuscripts of the Dead Sea were discovered, as well as the complete Gnostic library found at almost the same time in Naga Hamadi in Upper Egypt
- These confirmed the opposite of what these critics insisted upon



# Place and Date of Writing

- Consequently, scholars withdrew and believed in the authenticity of ecclesiastic tradition
- Most of them became convinced that the Gospel of St. John was written in the First Century and that St. John most probably is the one who wrote it while he lived in Ephesus
- Some claimed that the saint was martyred with his brother by Herod Agrippa the First in Jerusalem in the year 44 A.D
- They have presented evidence that can be refuted



# Place and Date of Writing

- In St. Mark's Gospel, chapter 10:39, the verse says that James and John would drink of the same cup as the Lord Jesus Christ
- They claim that this means that John must have been martyred with his brother; otherwise St. Mark would have changed his version
- The response to that is that St. Mark was obligated to report the exact words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and had no right to alter any of them
- The Lord used the cup as a symbol to prophecy the sufferings that the two disciples were to undergo





# Place and Date of Writing

- It does not necessarily indicate martyrdom
- Besides, if Herod had killed the two brothers together, St. Luke would not have mentioned the death of James only (Book of the Acts of the Apostles)
- He would have mentioned both brothers, Acts 12:2,3
- The critics relied on a brief expression that occurs in the writings of two later authors: namely, Philip of Sidea, a writer of the Fifth Century; and George Hamartolus, who wrote in the Ninth Century



# Place and Date of Writing

- In their writings, they referred to Papayas who stated that the Jews had killed John and James
- The response to their statements regarding that matter cannot be taken seriously since these two writers are known to be inaccurate historians
- C.K. Barrett states that Ireneaus and Eusebius are acquainted with the writings of Papayas and that he does not mention anything about the martyrdom of St. John



# Place and Date of Writing

- St. John is mentioned as one of the pillars of the Church in Galatians 2:9 and the date to that is after 44 A.D.
- The archaeological finds of the grave of St. John in Ephesus by Austrian scholars support the traditional ecclesiastic thought
- According to Polycrates, the Bishop of Ephesus had written to Victorinus, the Bishop of Rome, in the year 190 A.D. approximately, to confirm that John the Apostle had lived in Ephesus and had died there





# Place and Date of Writing

- Concerning the date of the writing of the Gospel of St. John, it was around the end of the apostle's life
- It is based on church tradition
- It is clear that it was written after the destruction of the temple of the Jews in Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D. John 2:19,20, 4:21
- Thus the writing took place probably during the period after the believers had been banned from the gatherings of the Jews around the years 85 to 90 A.D. John 9:22, 16:2



# Purpose, Theme, & Audience

- *“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”*  
John 20:30-31
- The purpose of the Gospel according to St. John is to confirm the believers in their faith that Jesus is the Christ Son of God, and through Him we will have life



# Purpose, Theme, & Audience

- To support this John also uses John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*
- And John 8:24, *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*
- The word ‘believe’ occurs in Greek as ‘písteonte’ and it is used in the present tense and not in the past tense to indicate that the Gospel has been written to reinforce a faith that is established already





# Purpose, Theme, & Audience

- He is not presenting a new faith, but rather he seeks to support the faith of the church, and which she already enjoys, and seeks to prevent anyone from drawing away from it
- Origen says: [None of the evangelists announced the Lord's divinity as clearly as St. John. He is the one through whom the Lord says: "*I am the Light of the world*", "*I am the Way, the Truth, the Life*", "*I am the Resurrection*", "*I am the Door*", "*I am the Good Shepherd*"]. Moreover, we find in Revelations: "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last*"



# Purpose, Theme, & Audience

- Some of the Church fathers, like St. Iraneaus- Bishop of Lyon<sup>1</sup>, St. Jerome, and Victorinus of Pattau, as well as others, find that the goal of St. John's Gospel is to respond to contemporary heresies and inventions and to the hostile Jews who resisted the Church
- The predominant theme in the book of John is the revelation of God to man through his living illustration—Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh
- The opening verses beautifully describe Jesus as the Word



# Purpose, Theme, & Audience

- He is God revealed to man—the expression of God—so that we might *see him* and believe
- Through this Gospel we witness the everlasting power and nature of the Creator God, offering eternal life to us through His Son, Jesus Christ
- In every chapter, Christ's deity is unveiled
- How important then to all of us to study it really well in order to know how to respond to all the attacks nowadays happening on Christ Divinity and the Trinity and the Church Sacraments?





# Purpose, Theme, & Audience

- The eight miracles recorded by John reveal His divine power and love
- They are signs that inspire us to trust and believe in Him
- The Holy Spirit is a theme in the Gospel according to St. John as well
- We are drawn to faith in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit; our belief is established through the indwelling, guiding, counseling, comforting presence of the Holy Spirit



# Purpose, Theme, & Audience

- The specific recipients are not clearly spelled out in the Gospel
- Conjecture, along with the Muratorian Canon, would suggest that it was written for the disciples in Asia Minor, but there is no certainty in this
- This Gospel was, in general, written to believers in the whole world



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- The fourth living creature that is like a flying eagle in Revelation 4:6-9 symbolizes the Gospel according to St. John
- It declares to the whole world the Lord Christ the Divine Incarnate Word
- It is a Gospel of Divine Holiness
- This Gospel reveals to us God's holiness in a marvelous and joyful way
- The word 'holiness' in Greek is 'ayios' and means non-terrestrial





# Characteristics of the Gospel

- Holiness is a name that pertains to God alone and St. John uses it to proclaim matters beyond our comprehension
- In the past, God's holiness was associated with fear, Exodus 19:12-25, 33:20, and Isaiah 6:5
- The Gospel of St. John announces that the Heavenly has descended on earth and His holiness is associated with glory and not with fear, John 1:14



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- The Gospel of John varies from the Synoptic Gospels in the style and content of Jesus' teaching and in the chronology and structure of Jesus' ministry
- Another characteristic that set John apart, is his writing style
- Concerning this, Clement of Alexandria stated that John was concerned with details and wrote a "spiritual gospel"
- Chapter 21 is commonly called the epilogue
- On the surface this section 21:1-25 seems a bit out of place because the last couple of verses in the twentieth chapter seem to bring the Gospel to a close



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- This has led some to believe that the epilogue was a later addition by John or one of his disciples
- There is, however, no reason to think that John did not write it
- There are 28 words in the last chapter that are not found elsewhere in the Gospel, but most of these are caused by the subject-matter in the first 14 verses
- It is also composed in classic Johannine style and there are no complete manuscripts of John that do not contain the epilogue





# Characteristics of the Gospel

- The Gospel according to John is highly literary and symbolic
- It does not follow the same order or reproduce the same stories as the synoptic gospels
- To a much greater degree, it is the product of a developed theological reflection
- The Gospel begins with a magnificent prologue, which states many of the major themes and motifs of the gospel
- The prologue proclaims Jesus as the preexistent and incarnate Word of God who has revealed the Father to us



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- The rest of the first chapter forms the introduction to the gospel proper and consists of the Baptist's testimony about Jesus (there is no baptism of Jesus in this gospel—John simply points him out as the Lamb of God), followed by stories of the call of the first disciples, in which various titles predicated of Jesus in the early church are presented
- **Seven statements and seven signs** : John carefully selected seven statements and seven signs to answer the question, "Who is Jesus and how can we be certain that his claims are true?"



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- These statements each begin with the declaration “I am:”
  - “I am the bread of life” (6:35,41, 48-51)
  - “I am the light of the world” (8:12, 9:5)
  - “I am the door of the sheep” (10:7,9)
  - “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep” (10:11,14)
  - “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25)
  - “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6)
  - “I am the true vine” (15:1,5)





# Characteristics of the Gospel

- In the Bible, no other person but Jesus spoke in this manner
- Jesus claims what only God Himself can claim
- He is the source of life itself, and He has power not only to create, but to sustain, and restore life as well
- Jesus' "I am" statements echo the very name which God revealed to Moses in the burning bush at the foot of Mount Horeb
- John singles out seven signs which Jesus performed because they reveal his glory and point to a deeper spiritual reality of who Jesus claims to be – "the Christ (the Anointed Messiah), the Son of God" (John 20:30)



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- He chooses them out of countless miracles and wonders
- They were not mentioned in the other gospels
- An exception to that is the Lord's walking on the waters; and the feeding of the crowds, which he records as an introduction to his words about the Eucharist
- Jesus performed His first sign when he changed water into wine at a wedding feast (2:1-12)
- With a word of command Jesus healed the son of a royal official (4:46-54)



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- Jesus healed a man who had been paralyzed for 38 years (5:1-15)
- Jesus multiplied seven loaves and fishes to feed the five thousand people who gathered to hear him (6:1-15)
- Jesus walked on water and calmed the waves to rescue his disciples caught in a life-threatening storm at sea (6:16-24)
- Jesus healed a man born blind, giving him sight (9:1-12)
- Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after Lazarus was in the tomb for four days (11:1-44)





# Characteristics of the Gospel

- This Gospel is characterized by its use of certain terms that are repeated, and that are different from those that occur in other Gospels
- Probably, the most important words repeatedly used are: believe- (98 times); know- (55 times); live- (55 times); testify- (21 times)
- These words have not been repeated at random or without reason, but it is done by the will of divine inspiration in order to reveal the aim of this Gospel



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- The Gospel of St. John is considered the Gospel that quotes the least or that quotes indirectly from the Old Testament
- In the Greek text- the 'Nestle Greek Text'- we find only 14 quotations taken from the Old Testament
- In the 'Westcott-Hort' text, we find 27 quotations taken from the Old Testament
- In contrast, there are 70 in the Gospel of St. Mark, 109 in St. Luke, and 124 in St. Matthew



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- The logos (the Word): only John calls Jesus the Word
- The Greek term logos had a broad usage
- In Jewish circles, it was the word often used to represent God's spoken word, through which creation itself was brought into being
- Clearly, one of the dominant emphases for the fourth gospel is Jesus as Revealer of God the Father
- He is Revealer in terms of His deeds, to be sure, but Revealer even more so in terms of His words, because He was, indeed, the very Word of God





# Characteristics of the Gospel

- The Lamb of God is a distinctive title, found particularly in John 1 in the context of John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus
- This has the Old Testament background in terms of the Passover lamb – a sacrificial offering to denote forgiveness of sins and take the place of humans who deserve to die for their sins
- But also perhaps, it alludes to the sheep led to the slaughter in the context of the Suffering Servant texts and predictions in Isaiah, particularly Isaiah 53



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- Jesus is Wisdom personified (much as in Proverbs 8 and 9), but separated even more from God to become a distinct person, while still one being with the Father
- In Greek, the Holy Spirit is the word parakletos, sometimes rendered into English just as the term Paraklete
- This is a word for which there is no single translation in most modern languages
- It combines such concepts as Counselor or Comforter or Advocate



# Characteristics of the Gospel

- The Holy Spirit is a Helper of God's people (14:15-21)
- He is an interpreter of God's revelation (14:25-31)
- A witness or one who testifies to the truth of God (15:26-16:4)
- A Prosecutor, one who convicts the world of its sin, of its lack of adequate righteousness and God's coming judgment (16:5-11)
- And of Revealer of God's truth and of God Himself (16:12-16)



# Sayings of the Church Fathers on the Gospel of John



- “We may venture to say that the Gospels are the first- born of all the Holy Books, and that from among the Gospels the first- born is the Gospel of St. John. Unless we lean on the Lord’s bosom (John 13:23), and accept St. Mary through Jesus Christ as our Mother (John 19:27), we will not understand its message. By doing so, we become another St. John, and the Lord Jesus Christ will appear to us just as He had appeared to St. John.”

Origen

# Sayings of the Church Fathers on the Gospel of John



- *"John, last of all, seeing that the plain facts had been clearly set forth in the Gospels, and being urged by his acquaintances, composed a spiritual Gospel under the divine inspiration of the Spirit."* -St. Clement of Alexandria (b. circa 150 AD)
- St. Clement finds that the Gospel of St. John constitutes the spirit while the other three Gospels constitute the body

# Sayings of the Church Fathers on the Gospel of John



Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340), a scholar and church historian, comments on the difference between John's Gospel and the other three accounts written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke :

- Matthew at first preached to the Hebrew people
- The day came when he had to leave them and to go to other nations
- Before he went he set down his story of the life of Jesus in Hebrew, "and thus compensated those whom he was obliged to leave for the loss of his presence."
- After Mark and Luke had published their gospels, John was still preaching the story of Jesus orally



# Sayings of the Church Fathers on the Gospel of John



- “Finally he proceeded to write for the following reason
- The three gospels already mentioned having come into the hands of all and into his hands too, they say that he fully accepted them and bore witness to their truthfulness; but there was lacking in them an account of the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry ....
- They therefore say that John, being asked to do it for this reason, gave in his gospel an account of the period which had been omitted by the earlier evangelists, and of the deeds done by the Savior during that period; that is, of the deeds done before the imprisonment of John the Baptist

# Sayings of the Church Fathers on the Gospel of John



- .... John therefore records the deeds of Christ which were performed before the Baptist was cast into prison, but the other three evangelists mention the events which happened after that time.... The Gospel according to John contains the first acts of Christ, while the others give an account of the latter part of his life” (Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 5:24)

# Sayings of the Church Fathers on the Gospel of John



Augustine of Hippo (345-430 AD), in his *Harmony of the Gospels*, contrasts John with the other three evangelists – Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

- In the four Gospels, or rather in the four books of the one Gospel, Saint John the apostle, not undeservedly in respect of his spiritual understanding compared to the eagle, has elevated his preaching higher and far more sublimely than the other three...



# Sayings of the Church Fathers on the Gospel of John



- For the other three evangelists walked with the Lord on earth but this evangelist, as if he disdained to walk on the earth, just as in the very opening of his discourse he thundered on us, soared not only above the earth and above the whole compass of air and sky, but even above the whole army of angels and the whole order of invisible powers, and reached to him by whom all things were made, saying, “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). (in his *Harmony of the Gospels* 1.6.9)

# Sayings of the Church Fathers on the Gospel of John



- St. Theophilus Bishop of Antioch (d. circa 185 A.D.): *"This is what the Holy Scriptures teach us, as do all the inspired men, one of whom, John, says, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.'..."*



# Discussion

- How is the Gospel according to St. John unique among the gospels?
- When was John written in relationship to the others?
- What are John's credentials as an author?
- What was the purpose for John writing this gospel ?





# Discussion

- What are the seven I AM statements of Jesus?
- What titles are prominently assigned to the Holy Spirit?
- Why was John called the “disciple whom Jesus loved”?