

## Notes on St John's Gospel

**Date:** Probably around 90 AD. Place: Ephesus.

**Characteristics:** Nouns like 'logos', 'life' 'light', indicate strong Hellenistic influences, including allegories, symbolism and 'magisterial pronouncement':

"I am the bread of life...", i.e. Gnosticism, or Hellenistic speculation. Scholars conclude that this influence is limited to the vocabulary, but the words can have profound truths' e.g. 'to go up', i.e. to Jerusalem, can also refer to 'going up to the Father (The Ascension). This language had already been found in the Qumran documents which appears in the Synoptics, but John's stress different aspects of the same found in Jewish circles at the time.

Jesus' dialogues usually start with him pronouncing a profound religious truth, which the listener only takes in at face value, giving Jesus then the opportunity to elaborate on its true spiritual significance. Then it usually enters into a monologue in which the theme is explored more thoroughly and serves as single discourse.

There is more symbolism in John's Gospel than in the Syn. and more attention to its spiritual significance, e.g. 'the beloved disciple', Lazarus, besides being historical, can also represent all Christians.

All this does not mean that John's Gospel is ahistorical.

**Relation with Synoptic Gospels:** Jn presupposes the Synoptic tradition; e.g. the readers' knowledge of the Twelve and Christ's baptism.

Jn was probably familiar with Mark's Gospel. The strong affinity between Luke and John, e.g. the adulteress (7:53-8:110 is more likely due to tradition rather than to dependence of one evangelist on the other.

There are more divergences: Jn scarcely mentions the miracles and no exorcisms found in the Synoptics, whereas John's discourses of Jesus are not found in the Syn. This does not imply that John wanted to correct, or supplement the Syn. but rather give his own testimony to the 'Truth', thus giving it a more profoundly theological meaning (St. Clement of Alexandria). Hence, John 'the Theologian'.

John's Gospel is ecclesiastical through his accounts of the 'signs', of the present realities that are found in the Church. Also, it is sacramental, e.g., the wine replacing water at Cana (Ch. 2), the heavenly bread that is his flesh (Ch. 6).. Likewise, his eschatology stresses that the Christian already possesses here and now divine life that is also the goal of salvation, rather than in the expectation of the parousia. Finally, John presupposes the portrayal of Jesus as the Messiah by the reader and focuses on Christ as the incarnate word who wants to share with humanity his divinity (Ch. 1) and therefore his gospel is very Trinitarian.