

Introduction to the Gospel of John -John 1:1-18

December 21, 2008 - Skip MacMillan

John, the name

"English form of Iohannes, the Latin form of the Greek name (Ioannes), itself derived from the Hebrew name (Yochanan).

The name (in various spellings) has been borne by 21 popes and eight Byzantine emperors, as well as rulers of England, France, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Portugal, Bulgaria, Russia and Hungary. It was also borne by the poet John Milton (1608-1674), philosopher John Locke (1632-1704), American founding father and President John Adams (1735-1826), and poet John Keats (1795-1821). Famous bearers of the 20th century include author John Steinbeck (1902-1968), assassinated American president John F. Kennedy (1917-1963), and musician John Lennon (1940-1980)" -Behindthename.com.

"**John**" means, "the favor of God," "loved by God" or "YHWH is a gracious giver".

John, the man

- He is not John the Baptist
- Fisherman in his dad's fishing business, parents were Zebedee and Salome, with brother James (Mark 1:21)
- The youngest of the 12 disciples
- Jewish man
- Wrote: the Gospel of John, 1,2,3 John and Revelation
- He was first a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35)
- He was one of the first six disciples called by Jesus (John 1:37-51)
- Jesus called John and James "Boanerges", "Sons of thunder" in Mark 3:17, "suggesting strength, unexpectedness, and zeal approaching to methods of violence" -International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
- There was a rumor that "spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die" (John 21:23)
- A reputed "pillar apostle" according to Paul in Galatians 2:9

Inner circle:

- Peter, James and John made up the inner circle of Jesus Christ
 - There at the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:27 and Luke 8:51)
 - There at the transfiguration (Matthew 17; Mark 9; Luke 9)
 - There at the agony of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37)
- John leaned into Jesus at the Last Supper (John 13:23)
- John stood at the base of the Crucifixion in the last moments of Jesus' life (John 19:26)
- Jesus gave his mother to John at the cross (John 19:25-27)
- It was John's mother Salome who bought spices to anoint Jesus' dead body (Luke 23:55)
- Mary Magdalene came to John and Peter telling them of the resurrection of Christ (John 20:1-10)
- John was the one who outran Peter to the empty tomb (John 20:4)
- John was the first to recognize Jesus on the shore of Tiberias after the resurrection (John 21:1-7)

"The impression we get is that John knew Jesus more intimately than any of the other disciples" -L. Morris.

John writes from an "inner circle" perspective: as one who ate, walked, worked, and who had a deep understanding and relationship with Christ. We have 21 chapters from this insider's per-

spective on Jesus. Matthew, Mark and Luke did not have this perspective. Their perspective was a kind of third-party perspective. Luke gathered information and Mark followed Peter. "They wrote of Jesus' life as events in time, John pressed toward the spiritual meaning" -Barclay.

Personality:

"When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, 'Lord, do you want us to call fire down from Heaven to destroy them?' " (Luke 9:54).

What had John done in the past that he would think such a thing was possible for him?

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.' 'What do you want me to do for you?' He asked. They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.' 'You don't know what you are asking,' Jesus said. 'Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?' 'We can,' they answered" (Mark 10:35-39).

" 'Teacher,' said John, 'we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us' (Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49).

The older John writing the gospel

After the Acts and Galatians 2:9 where John is called one of the "pillar apostles," he disappears until we read of his banishment to Patmos (where he wrote Revelation), and then later (we) meet the old man John at Ephesus, (where he wrote 1, 2, 3, John and the Gospel).

He was the last surviving disciple who lived with Jesus.

In these many years God changed the "son of thunder" into the aged apostle of "love".
1 John 4:10 - "God is love".

"The disciple whom Jesus loved"

Never mentioned by name in his gospel but refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

Arrogant?

What does it mean to be loved by God?

Do we understand God's love for us?

Have we received God's love?

Is this easy to receive? I believe it took John a lifetime to really take it in.

What if you did?

God is declaring His "love that surpasses knowledge" for you by His Son's incarnation.

John began to receive it!

During and especially toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry (at John's correcting, at the cross and resurrection) I believe John began to understand. It was not the miracles, power or position as he once thought. Over the years he no longer pursued them, he gradually let all that go and fell into the arms of his Savior, Jesus Christ. He received God's love for him and so identified himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

The ultimate truth John discovered was, I am loved by God.

The question we face each Christmas is “will I receive it?”

Even as believers we struggle. We try living the Christian life, doing good, trying to give, love, help others, only to exhaust ourselves and eventually give up on Christianity. Why, because we have not continued to receive God’s love for us. We do not realize that **I am, you are** the disciple whom Jesus loves.

You who are searching for God, this applies to you.

Christmas is about:

1. The eternal Son of God taking on flesh and dwelling among us. This is THE expression of the Triune God’s unconditional love toward humanity. The incarnation is His declarative statement, His exclamation mark, His stake in the ground.
2. Receiving this love, “for God so loved the world that He gave His One and only Son.”

My prayer is that we will receive His love for us and grow in His love for our entire lives.