

## Gospel of Mark

By general consensus today, Mark is regarded as the earliest surviving gospel.<sup>5</sup> Its rough Greek grammar, its awkward phrasing, its sometimes perplexing portrait of Jesus and the disciples, and other anomalies explain both why a majority of scholars regard it as early, and why Mark was not favored in Christian usage. However, Mark's gospel has received renewed attention since the mid-1800s, when scholars began to regard it as the earliest gospel. And Mark's episodic style and narrative design have found a more appreciative audience among narrative critics since the 1980s.

### Structure

<b>1:1–8:26</b>	<b>Ministry of Healing and Preaching in Galilee</b>
1:1–3:6	Introduction by JBap; an initial day; controversy at Capernaum
3:7–6:6	Choice of the Twelve; training through parables and mighty deeds; misunderstanding among Nazareth relatives
6:7–8:26	Sending of the Twelve; Herod/JBap flashback; feeding 5000; walking on water; controversy; feeding 4000; misunderstanding
<b>8:27–16:8</b>	<b>Suffering Predicted; Death and Resurrection</b>
8:27–10:52	Three passion predictions; Peter's confession; transfiguration; teaching
11:1–13:37	Ministry in Jerusalem: Entry, Temple actions and encounters, eschatological discourse
14:1–16:8	Anointing, Las Supper, passion, crucifixion, burial, empty tomb

### Author

The title "According to Mark" was added to manuscripts in the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. A 2d century tradition attributed to Papias and reported by Eusebius in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century has a Mark as Peter's interpreter or translator, and when Justin mentions "Peter's memoirs" in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (a few decades after Papias), one might wonder if he means Mark's gospel. However, it is hard to square Mark's gospel with these traditions. The gospel appears to have been composed in Greek (not Aramaic) by someone with little knowledge of Palestinian geography, so it doesn't match the tradition that the author is a companion of an early apostle. Even Papias acknowledges that Mark was not an eyewitness himself.

### Probable Audience

An early tradition from Clement of Alexandria (late 100s CE) cites Rome as the place that Mark wrote his gospel. While this may be based on the (erroneous?) tie Papias posited between Peter and Mark, there are Latinisms and Latin loan words in the Markan text, the style of reference to the Greek/Syro-Phoenician woman sounds is more typical of the western empire than the east (7:26), there is a reference to a coin that was only in western circulation (12:42), and there is a sense of crisis during which many disciples failed (only the Christians of Rome experienced a major persecution before Mark was written). Other scholars have championed Syria, Transjordan or the Galilee as likely locations. Wherever they were, Mark's audience knew Greek but not Aramaic, had some exposure to Latin and Hebrew, but were unfamiliar with Jewish customs and some phrases so that the author had to explain them (e.g., 5:41; 7:3-4; 15:42). Expectation of an imminent *parousia* appears to be strong (Mark 13).

### Date

If the Papias tradition (that Mark was Peter's interpreter) is accurate, it would likely require that Mark wrote his gospel soon after Peter's death in the mid'60s. There is some debate about whether the gospel references the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish Temple (70 CE). If Matthew and Luke were written c.80–90 CE and are based on Mark, it would require that Mark was composed at least 5-10 years beforehand to allow time for it to circulate and achieve some authority. For all these reasons, 65–75 CE, or perhaps 68–73 CE, is a reasonable date.

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<sup>5</sup> The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel according to Mark," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 126-70.

## Theological Themes

### *Christology: A suffering messiah*

- All of the gospels have been called “passion narratives with extended introductions,” but this is a particularly apt description of Mark.<sup>6</sup> Jesus’ enemies begin to plot to kill him as early as chapter 3; 3 predictions of the passion begin in chapter 8, and the final period (a week?) in Jerusalem takes up fully 6 of the 16 chapters of the gospel. This gospel is trying to explain how Jesus can be messiah when he was executed, failed to rally all the Jews to his cause, and failed definitively to inaugurate the messianic age. In a sense, Mark’s view is that the cross is necessary because of these failures; only through the cross and resurrection can his followers come to faith in him.
- Another purpose of the death of Jesus is “as a ransom for the many” (10:45).
- Davidic Christology: Jesus is the son of David and the true King of the Jews; he enters Jerusalem triumphantly like its King, and the Jerusalem scenes are where the Davidic references cluster.
- Jesus is portrayed as a prophet who accurately predicts the behavior of others (Judas, Peter) as well as his own death and resurrection. Ironically, he is mocked as a false prophet at the Jewish trial at the very moment when his prophecy about Peter’s denial is coming true (14:53–15:1).
- Mark’s Christology is “low” in comparison to the other gospels, particularly John. Mark emphasizes the emotions of Jesus, emotions that seem to get the better of him at times. His final words on the cross he seems to despair of God’s support (albeit through Psalm 22:2).

### *Ecclesiology: Discipleship means being willing to follow Jesus to the cross*

- Since Jesus’ “messiahship” takes him to the cross, following him means being willing to “drink the cup” of suffering as well and being a servant, rather than the greatest (9:33–35).
- Discipleship requires absolute dependence on God. Hence the disciples are to take nothing on their mission (6:7–33); and to rely on God for food even for enormous crowds (twice!).
- A strong motif in this gospel is the failure of, or at least the repeated misunderstandings of, the disciples in face of the demands of discipleship. But this does not mean they fail completely (9:49–50; 14:28; 16:7), particularly if one compares them to Jesus’ other foils: demons, family, scribes-Pharisees-Jewish leaders).

### *Eschatology: God’s rule has begun*

- Jesus’ teaching and acts of power inaugurate the kingdom of God; the entry into Jerusalem also signals the arrival of the day of the Lord.
- The culmination of that day lies in the future, and not even the Son knows the day or hour (13:32); but there is also a sense in which the master’s return occurs within Jesus’ life (see the time markers in 13:35 and then in the passion narrative [14:17; (implied in 14:32–65); 14:72; 15:1]).

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Kähler, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (trans. and ed. Carl E. Braaten; Seminar Editions; Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1964; German original, 1896) n. 11, p. 80.

## Gospel of Matthew

Matthew reproduces about 80% of Mark, but is 50% longer than Mark because he has added an infancy narrative, long sermons of sayings material (largely from Q), and two miracles from Q (healings of centurion's servant and blind and mute demoniac, 8:5-13; 12:22-23). Matthew's gospel has historically been the most popular catechetical gospel in the church, because of its organization and clarity and the connections it establishes between Jewish tradition and Jesus' message.<sup>7</sup>

### Structure

- 1:1–2:23**      **Introduction: Origin and Infancy of Jesus the Messiah**  
Who Jesus is: "Immanuel," true King of the Jews (in contrast to Herod the Great), fulfillment of promises to the Jewish people.
- 3:1–7:29**      **Part 1. Proclamation of the Kingdom**  
Narrative: Ministry of JBap, baptism and temptation of Jesus, beginning of Galilean ministry  
Discourse: Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29).
- 8:1–10:42**      **Part 2. Ministry and Mission in Galilee**  
Narrative: Nine miracles (healings, calming of storm, exorcism)  
Discourse: Mission discourse (10:1-42).
- 11:1–13:52**      **Part 3. Questioning of and Opposition to Jesus**  
Narrative: Jesus and JBap, woes on disbelievers, thanksgiving, Sabbath controversies, Jesus' power and family  
Discourse: Parable discourse (13:1-52).
- 13:53–18:35**      **Part 4. Christology and Ecclesiology**  
Narrative: Rejection at Nazareth, feeding 5000, walking on water, controversies with Pharisees, healings, feeding 4000, Peter's confession, first passion prediction, transfiguration, second passion prediction  
Discourse: Discourse on the church (18:1-35).
- 19:1–25:46**      **Part 5. Journey to and Ministry in Jerusalem**  
Narrative: Teaching, judgment parables, third passion prediction, entry to Jerusalem, Temple cleansing, clashes with authorities  
Discourse: Eschatological discourse (24:1–25:46).
- 26:1–28:20**      **Climax: Passion, Death, and Resurrection**  
Narrative: Conspiracy against Jesus, last supper; arrest, Jewish and Roman trials, crucifixion, death, burial, guard at tomb, opening of tomb, bribing of guard, resurrection appearances

### Author

The title "According to Matthew" was added to manuscripts in the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The actual author was likely a non-eyewitness (because he depends on Mark and Q), whose name is unknown to us, and who wrote in Greek. Most scholars believe he was a Jewish Christian, but perhaps one raised in the diaspora given his greater linguistic facility in Greek compared to Mark.

### Probable Audience

Most scholars place the original audience of Matthew's gospel in Antioch of Syria, because (1) Matthew adds "Syria" to Mark's description of the spread of Jesus' activity (Matt 4:24); (2) early traditions tie Matthew to a Gospel of the Nazaraeans that circulated primarily in Syria; (3) the gospel mentions "city" 26x compared to only 4x for the word "village," suggesting an urban context; (4) Antioch was a major imperial city and early Christian center, which helps to explain the early prominence of Matthew's gospel; (5) Ignatius of Antioch and the *Didache*, which may also be associated with Antioch, quote from Matthew in the early 2<sup>d</sup> century; (6) the complex interplay of Jewish law and openness to Gentiles fits the history of Antioch well (Brown is very helpful on this; see pp. 213-16).

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<sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel according to Matthew," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 171-224.

**Date**

80–90 CE, give or take some years on either side. The gospel would have been written after Mark (68–73 CE) had time to circulate; it would have been written by 100 CE given that it is quoted by figures 10–20 years later and shows no awareness of Gnosticism, which has become a problem by 125 CE.

**Theological Themes***Christology*

- Jesus represents the fulfillment of scripture (Matthew says that Jesus fulfills scripture 41x, more than any other synoptic author; these have a teaching purpose)
- Jesus is Messiah, Son of the living God (16:16 and the virgin birth); he is also Son of Man (*passim*), Immanuel (“God with us” 1:23; cf. 28:20)
- David Christology (Jesus as descendant of David, true king, and heir of the messianic promises) is prominent: see the genealogy, the contrast to Herod in the infancy narrative, and the passion
- Moses Christology (Jesus as the “prophet like Moses” who would return to restore the law, Deut 18:15) is prominent in the infancy narrative, the Sermon on the Mount, and the transfiguration
- Jesus as divine Wisdom (11:19, 27)
- Earliest Trinitarian formulation (Father, Son, and holy Spirit) in 28:19

*Ecclesiology (ekklesia in Greek = “those called out”)*

- The Jewish law is not abrogated, but neither are Gentiles shunned from the group (there are positive portraits of Gentiles—centurion 8:5-13; Canaanite woman 15:21-28; the “nations” 25:31-46; Mrs. Pilate 27:19—even while the Jewish law is upheld [5–7])
- Foundation of the church is narrated (16:18-19); Peter’s role is featured; characteristics of community life and discipleship are described (ch. 18)
- The kingdom of heaven ≠ the church, but the church is where Jesus is confessed as Lord before the eschatological consummation. It is transferred from Jewish authorities to those who will produce fruit (25:14-30)

*Eschatology*

- Natural phenomena signal the decisive change that Jesus inaugurates (2:2; 27:51-54; 28:2)
- Some of Matthew’s more difficult ethical demands reflect an eschatological morality (5–7; 24–25)

## Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles

Luke's is the longest of the four gospels, and to that he adds a volume 2, Acts of the Apostles.<sup>8</sup> This amounts to over a quarter of the entire New Testament!

### Structure

Luke		Acts	
1:1-4	<b>Prologue</b>	1:1-5	<b>Prologue: Recap of Gospel</b>
1:5-2:52	<b>Infancy Narrative</b> Diptychs of annunciations, births, and circumcisions/manifestations of JBap and Jesus; visitation at center; 12-yr old Jesus in Temple	1:6-26	<b>Preparing for the Spirit</b> Jesus instructs disciples and ascends to heaven; awaiting the Spirit; replacement of Judas
3:1-4:13	<b>Preparation for Public Ministry</b> Preaching of JBap, baptism of Jesus, genealogy, temptations	2:1-45	<b>Pentecost and Communal Life in Jerusalem</b> Pentecost, Peter's sermon; reception of message, Jerusalem communal life
4:14-9:50	<b>Ministry in Galilee</b> Rejection at Nazareth; activities at Capernaum/lake; reactions to and controversies with Jesus; choice of Twelve, sermon on the plain; Jesus' identity; Herod, feeding of 5000, Peter's confession, passion predictions 1 & 2, transfiguration	3:1-8:1a	<b>Ministry in Jerusalem</b> Activity, preaching, trials of apostles, the Hellenists; Stephen's trial and martyrdom
9:51-19:27	<b>Journey to Jerusalem</b> Three mentions of Jerusalem shape narrative (9:51-17:10); last stage of journey to arrival (17:11-19:27)	8:1b-12:25	<b>Missions in Samaria and Judea</b> Dispersal from Jerusalem; Philip and Peter in Samaria; Philip and Ethiopian eunuch; Saul to Damascus, then Jerusalem and Tarsus; Peter in Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea (clean foods/Gentile inclusion); Jerusalem, Antioch, Herod's persecution, Peter's departure
19:28-21:38	<b>Ministry in Jerusalem</b> Entry, activities in Temple area, eschatological discourse	13:1-15:35	<b>Gentile Mission (Barnabas and Saul), Jerusalem Approves</b> <u>Journey 1</u> : Antioch church sends Barnabas and Saul to Cyprus and SE Asia Minor; Jerusalem conference and approval; return to Antioch
22:1-23:56	<b>Passion Narrative</b> Conspiracy against Jesus, Last Supper; prayer and arrest on Mount of Olives, Jewish (priests and Herod) and Roman trials; way of cross, crucifixion and burial	15:36-28:31	<b>Mission of Paul to the Ends of the Earth</b> <u>Journey 2</u> : Antioch through Asia Minor to Greece and return; <u>Journey 3</u> : Antioch to Ephesus and Greece, return to Caesarea; arrest in Jerusalem, imprisonment in Caesarea; <u>Journey 4</u> : to Rome as prisoner; under house arrest there
24:1-53	<b>Resurrection Appearances</b> Scene at empty tomb; appearance on road to Emmaus; appearance in Jerusalem and ascension to heaven		

### Author

The title "According to Luke" was added to manuscripts in the latter half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The actual author was likely an educated Greek-speaker and skilled writer who was not an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry. He does not appear to be from Palestine, and may even be a convert to Judaism; at any rate, he is very familiar with Jewish tradition and the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures), from which he not only quotes but also borrows a narrative style. Late 2<sup>nd</sup> century traditions attribute this gospel to Luke the companion of Paul, a man mentioned in Phlm 24; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11 as a fellow worker and beloved physician. But there is really no way to verify that, and discrepancies between details about Paul in Acts and in Paul's own letters raise doubts that the author was a companion of Paul (despite the "we" passages in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16). A prologue to a late 2<sup>nd</sup> century manuscript of Luke suggests he may have been a Syrian from Antioch.

<sup>8</sup> The material in this summary is adapted (particularly the Acts outline) from Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel according to Luke" and "The Acts of the Apostles," in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 225-332.

### Probable Audience

The emphasis on the inclusion of the Gentiles suggests an audience of Gentile Christians; the prominence of Paul in Acts suggests that the implied audience may have been the communities visited by Paul in Greece or Syria. Such a Hellenistic setting is also recommended by the conventions the author borrows from Hellenistic biography (genealogy, accounts of Jesus' youth), and the author's reluctance to attribute emotion or suffering to Jesus. The gospel and Acts provide assurance to the audience of a reliable tradition traced to eyewitnesses and that the conversion of the whole Roman world is part of the plan of salvation history, extending back to creation.

### Date

85 CE, give or take some years on either side. The gospel would have been written after Mark (68–73 CE) had time to circulate; it would have been written by 100 CE. Its focus on Jerusalem as a Christian center does not match the outlook one finds in 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christian literature. Moreover, the simple structure of presbyters in Asia seems earlier than Ignatius' reference to a bishop in each church in 110 CE. Finally, the author of Acts seems unaware of the letters of Paul, which while written in the 50s and 60s, were not gathered as a collection until the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

### Theological Themes

#### *Christology*

- Jesus is portrayed as Savior in Luke—a title used of and by Roman Emperors—to present Jesus as the true savior of the world. The political term had both material and theological connotations (see Mary's canticle 1:46-55 and Jesus' inaugural sermon, Lk 4:17-22).
- Jesus is the Davidic messiah (Lk 2:1-7) and God's saving eschatological prophet, the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy and history (see Zechariah's canticle 1:67-79 and the speeches in Acts).
- Jesus is God's son (1:35; 2:49; 3:22-23); frequent prayer signals ongoing communion with God.
- There is a kind of Moses Christology in Luke, but it is harder to see than in Matthew. The placement of the genealogy between infancy and ministry parallels where Moses' genealogy is placed in Exodus 6:14-26, and only in Luke does Jesus speak with Moses and Elijah at his transfiguration about "his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem" (9:30-31). But the theme is more prominent in Acts.
- Baptism is in the name of Jesus in Acts 2:38-41, indicating the reverence for and power of Jesus in the early Lukan community.

#### *Ecclesiology*

- In giving us the story of the early church, Luke clearly emphasizes the importance of the church. We see a community that confesses Jesus as Lord, and that joyfully expresses its gratitude by sharing life, prayer, possessions, and the good news with the world (*koinonia*, the common life). The cost is persecution and sometimes death, but even in these the testimony to Jesus renders the suffering witness of conviction and gratitude.
- Luke has a redactional interest in the proper distribution of possessions (e.g., 3:10-14; 10:29-37; 16:19-31), which links to his emphasis on the redemption of the lowly and the humbling of the mighty, and thus the year of favor that Jesus inaugurates (1:17, 68-79; 2:10-14; 4:19).
- There is more mention made of women in Luke's gospel. Some take this to illustrate the favor for the lowly, but Luke makes the female followers of Jesus wealthier (8:1-3), putting them and thus Jesus above reproach. Other women are portrayed in typical domestic tasks, so the passages are not necessarily "liberating."
- The church is first "the way," indicating its evangelical motion outward, and then "Christians," indicating the group's fidelity to Jesus as the Christ.
- The Spirit is the principle of continuity across salvation history, filling John the Baptist at his meeting with Jesus (*in utero*), filling Jesus at his baptism, and filling the church at Pentecost. Jesus prays before major decisions, as does the early Jerusalem church.
- The church includes Gentiles; salvation is universalized (Jesus' genealogy goes back to Adam, the father of all humans; and the story of Acts is about the inclusion of the Gentiles, an innovation made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28, see 10:1-11:18 and 15:8).

#### *Eschatology*

- Luke has a complex notion of the kingdom of God. Is it kingship or kingdom? Has it already come, or has it come to some extent, and will it come soon (9:27)? Does his two-volume portrait of the sweep of salvation history represent a shift away from eschatological speculation toward a realized eschatology (Acts 1:7)?

### Manuscript Evidence

There are two different manuscript traditions of Luke–Acts that differ significantly from each other. The first is referred to as the **Western text**. This is actually a *family* of manuscripts (mss) attested by the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Codex Bezae (D), some fragmentary papyri, some marginal notes in Syriac mss, the African Old Latin ms h, and citations by Cyprian and Augustine. The second tradition is called the **Alexandrian text**. It too is a family of manuscripts whose witnesses include some of the earliest papyrus fragments and some of the earliest complete mss (e.g., 4<sup>th</sup>-century mss Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, and 5<sup>th</sup>-century mss Alexandrinus and Ephraimi Rescriptus). The NAB and NRSV largely follow the Alexandrian text for the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles.

#### *Gospel of Luke*

The Western family of mss, which are generally fuller than other text types, are not fuller when it comes to Luke. They omit verses found in the Alexandrian (and other) families of mss at the following points:

Passage	Alexandrian	Western
Lk 22:19b-20	<sup>19</sup> Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." <sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you." <i>{cup vv17-18, bread, cup}</i>	<sup>19</sup> Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body." <i>{cup vv.17-18, bread}</i>
24:3b	<sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; <sup>3</sup> but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.	<sup>2</sup> They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; <sup>3</sup> but when they entered, they did not find the body.
24:6a	<sup>6</sup> "He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee..."	<sup>6</sup> Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee..."
24:12	<sup>12</sup> But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, bent down, and saw the burial cloths alone; then he went home amazed at what had happened.	<i>{missing}</i>
24:36b	<sup>36</sup> While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."	<sup>36</sup> While they were still speaking about this, he stood in their midst.
24:40	<sup>40</sup> And as he said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.	<i>{missing}</i>
24:51b	<sup>51</sup> As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven.	<sup>51</sup> As he blessed them he parted from them.
24:52a	<sup>52</sup> They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup> and they were continually in the temple praising God.	<sup>52</sup> They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup> and they were continually in the temple glorifying God.
Mt 27:49	<sup>49</sup> But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him, but another took a lance and pierced his side, and out came water and blood."	<sup>49</sup> But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him."

The NRSV and NAB follow the Alexandrian tradition for all the Luke verses, but follow the Western tradition for Matt 27:49 on the argument that the added material is an interpolation based on John 19:34.

*Acts of the Apostles*

In contrast to the situation in the Gospel of Luke, the Western text of Acts is nearly one-tenth *longer* than the Alexandrian text, adding color and detail to the more straightforward—and at times obscure—Alexandrian tradition. In this case, text critics judge the extra material in the Western text to be later additions (the alternative would be to view the Alexandrian short forms as later deletions), persuaded by the nature of the four types of changes (one sample of each type is provided below):<sup>9</sup>

Type of Change	Passage	Alexandrian Original	Western Addition
<b>Emphasis exaggerated</b>	6:10	But they could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.	But they could not withstand the wisdom <i>that was in him</i> and the <i>holy</i> spirit with which he spoke, <i>because they were confuted by him with all boldness. Being unable therefore to confront the truth,</i>
<b>Religious formulae introduced</b>	9:40	Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, rise up." She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up.	Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to her body and said, "Tabitha, rise up, <i>in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.</i> " She <i>immediately</i> opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up.
<b>Simpler title for Jesus replaced with later and more theological title</b>	13:33	<sup>32</sup> "We ourselves are proclaiming this good news to you that what God promised our ancestors <sup>33</sup> he has brought to fulfillment for us, [their] children, by raising up Jesus, as it is written in the second psalm 'You are my son; this day I have begotten you.'	<sup>32</sup> We ourselves are proclaiming this good news to you that what God promised our ancestors <sup>33</sup> he has brought to fulfillment for us, [their] children, by raising up <i>the Lord Jesus Christ</i> , as it is written in the second psalm 'You are my son; this day I have begotten you. <i>Ask of me and I will give you Gentiles for your inheritance, and for your possession the ends of the earth.</i> '" {adds Ps 2:8 as well as titles}
<b>Emphasis on inspiration of words and actions</b>	19:1	While Apollos was in Corinth,  having traveled through the interior of the country Paul came to Ephesus where he found some disciples.	<i>And although Paul wished, according to his own plan, to go to Jerusalem, the Spirit told him to return to Asia. And</i> having traveled through the interior of the country he <i>comes</i> to Ephesus where he found some disciples.

In general, text critics tend to favor the Alexandrian text for both Luke and Acts, but there are occasions when they judge the Western text to preserve the earlier form of the text.

<sup>9</sup> T. E. Page, "Blass's Edition of the Acts," *Classical Review* 11 (1897) 317-20.

## Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is like no other in the canon. Rather than the brief episodes that characterize the synoptic gospels, John is arranged into long narrative units that consist of sustained monologues of Jesus or dialogues between Jesus and other characters.<sup>10</sup> Rather than the parables and simple metaphors drawn from daily life that one finds in the synoptic gospels, John layers symbolism as the narrative progresses, so that the crucifixion and resurrection become not only the climax of the plot but the culminating symbol that manifests the truths to which John attests. Nor is that language of “manifesting” and “attesting” accidental: John is gradually revealing Jesus’ identity in a profoundly rich way, and both the narrator/implied author and other characters in the story “testify” to this so that the entire narrative reads like an extended trial of Jesus—or rather of those who do not recognize him. Like the Gospel of Matthew, this gospel has some of the most anti-Jewish passages, and like Matthew, it is also one of the most Jewish gospels, with major events set on days in the Jewish festival calendar that add an important symbolic dimension to the stories. Brown notices other unique features: the extensive use of irony and parenthetical remarks directed to persons “in the know,” an emphasis on the “truth” and its misunderstanding,<sup>11</sup> conscious allusions and transitions that link episodes, poetic format and discourse.

### Structure

<b>1:1-18</b>	<b>Prologue</b>
<b>1:19-12:50</b>	<b>The Book of Signs</b>
1:19-2:11	Initial days of revelation of Jesus to disciples (using different titles)
2-4	Two Cana signs bookend cleansing of Temple, Nicodemus, Samaritan woman at well, healing of royal official’s son
5-10	Old Testament feasts replaced; themes of light and life: Sabbath (new Moses, rest), Passover (bread of life), Tabernacles (water and light), Dedication (Jesus as temple)
11-12	Raising of Lazarus, Sanhedrin plan to execute Jesus in place of nation; coming of hour signaled by arrival of Gentiles
<b>13:1-20:31</b>	<b>The Book of Glory</b>
13-17	Last Supper/Last Discourse
18-19	Passion and death
20:1-29	Resurrection (four scenes in Jerusalem), gospel conclusion (20:30-31)
<b>21:1-25</b>	<b>Epilogue:</b> Galilean resurrection appearances; second conclusion

### Author

Many have since Irenaeus (c.180 CE) connected the beloved disciple who appears in the passion narrative with the disciple John son of Zebedee who is numbered among the Twelve. But Irenaeus’ tradition is late, and few would put much weight on it now. In fact, because of the heavy theologizing of Jesus that one finds in this gospel, most believe that the author was not even an eyewitness from the time period of Jesus’ life, but rather collected traditions of both fact and interpretation. If the beloved disciple was one Jesus’ followers, that needn’t mean he was the author (despite 21:20, 24); in any case, he is most likely not one of the Twelve, because the synoptics don’t mention him and because the Gospel of John speaks of him as distinct from the few references to that group (6:67-71; 20:24).

### Probable Audience

The author is accurate in some interesting details about Judea and Palestine and about Jewish festivals, which suggests that his audience is deeply familiar with Jewish tradition. But this gospel also presents Jesus and his adherents in constant debates and controversies with other Jews, who are often castigated by the generic term “Jews” as if the Judeans (where the word “Jew” comes from) were by now considered a separate group from the author’s audience. Brown offers a possible history of this audience on pp. 374-6 which is speculative but interesting, for it explains in part the particular debates unique to John’s gospel (Jesus as Mosaic prophet and preexistent Christ and new Temple; the role of the Gentiles in prompting the hour of Jesus’ glorification; the divinization of Jesus vs. the human life and its ethical implications, the integration with the larger church symbolized by the Peter-beloved disciple dynamics).

<sup>10</sup> The material in this summary is adapted from Raymond E. Brown, “The Gospel according to John,” in *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 333-82.

<sup>11</sup> Both of these characteristics overlap with later gnostic concerns, and led some to believe John was too close to gnosticism to be included in the canon.

**Date**

Brown suggests a final redaction date of perhaps 100-110 C.E.

**Theological Themes***Christology*

- This gospel exhibits the highest Christology of any of the canonical gospels; Jesus is a “stranger from heaven” who preexists this world and is even the Word of God through whom it was created.
- Jesus is the way to God for those living in darkness; he saves by being the eternal Word incarnate in whom followers believe (but the saving moment is already realized; one doesn’t make it real by the act of faith). The incarnation is the salvific moment; the crucifixion and resurrection merely its culminating act.
- The emphasis on long monologues of Jesus emphasizes what is clear in the prologue: Jesus is divine wisdom incarnate.
- John layers levels of symbolism onto the figure of Christ through the many “I am” sayings and discourses (bread of life [6:25-40]; light of the world [8:12; 9:1-12]; sheepgate and good shepherd [10:1-18], resurrection and life [11:17-27], way-truth-life [14:1-7], true vine [15:1-11], at arrest [18:1-6]).

*Ecclesiology*

- The church is those who leave the darkness to follow the light.
- There is a clear sense that followers of the beloved disciple are somehow closer to the truth of Jesus’ wisdom than followers of other disciples, like Peter, though Peter is reconciled to Jesus in the resurrection scenes in both endings of the gospel.

*Eschatology*

- The judgment is not a future event for this gospel. Instead, the gospel itself is the trial, one’s reaction to Jesus the judgment. Characters “testify” throughout this gospel to the truth; and when, in the final trial with Pilate, the “Jews” are made to say “We have no king but Caesar,” they have judged themselves (thus *Jesus’* trial is really more *their* trial).