

Who Wrote the Gospel of John?

Introduction

Welcome back to the Thinking Theologically podcast, the show where we teach you how and why you should think theologically. I'm one of your hosts, Jack Dodgen, joined as always by the resident master theologian in training, Spencer Shaw. Spencer, how you doing? I'm doing good. I think I mentioned in our last episode my Achilles injury from playing basketball. I'm out of my boot. I don't think I told you that before we got started. You're out of it? I'm out of the boot and started physical therapy, moving around a little bit better. It'll be a while before I'm back to playing basketball, but... Uh, the, the boot was just, I, cause it was, cause it's the Achilles. It's one of the tall ones. So it comes up, you know, most of the calf. And so it's not one tall. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. It's not one of the, cause sometimes you see, you know, the boots that just, you know, just barely comes up on the ankle, like a rolled ankle or something like that. This one goes up the calf. So it was, A lot difficult to move around. Yeah. Um, yeah. Cause your knee doesn't move fully when you've got, you know, a hard piece of plastic that's going all the way up your shin. So, um, Anyway, that's nice. So I'm doing it feeling a lot better. Nice. I have been, this is news for the podcast, I suppose. Uh, I've been like, For at least four to five, but I did nine miles last week of running every week for the last month and a half, month and a half. I, every, every ten years I decide like I should lose some weight now. So I ram back up and then try to knock it back down. But, uh, That's been good. That's been good. Getting back out there. We got a nice little park pond area and it's got all kinds of wildlife and whatever. So it's been nice to get out and do those things. So. That's not what we're here for though. Uh, leg injuries and recovery and all of this we're here for, uh, we're here for some conversation. Uh, about, uh, what we've been doing is authorship and the gospels in particular. We are three episodes down, which means this fourth one here, we're going to cover. Uh, Gospel of John and its authorship, uh, here in just a little bit. Uh, I want to make a couple notes and then we'll have a special announcement, uh, here from Spencer in just a second. But I want to remind you about thinkingtheologically.org to check out our website for Not just the podcast, but also some additional written content. As we're recording this, a new article has gone up. So if you're not checking out the website or following us on Facebook at Thinking Theologically, then you're Probably missing out on those. So, uh, be sure to check both of those places for additional content, uh, to our podcast episodes, uh, as well as our interview series, which, uh, we'll have one of those, uh, Soon, uh, in relation to this series that we've been doing right here. Episode after this one, we'll have a Interview that is connected to kind of the gospel stuff that we've been talking about. I guess with that, before we continue, we can go ahead and say to be looking out for some Bonus paid content that we're going to start putting out in relation to starting out with the interviews and the conversations that we do and then I guess if y'all like it, we've got some ideas about how we can expand that, but be on the lookout for along with those interviews, some bonus discussion. Yeah, the interviews, this podcast, stuff, you're right, that's still happening, coming out, whatever, all free and all of this, but we've been talking about some additional things and maybe trying to Uh, all of that stuff out cause more stuff will take more time and, and all of that. And so, uh, that, that helps us to, to be able to. Uh, make, make time to do more of the work on those things. Uh, speaking of all of that, uh, Spencer's been doing some work on getting us, uh, affiliations, the right word, I suppose. Tell us a little about Logos and, uh, what we're, what we're doing with them now as, uh, partners. Yeah. Logos or Logos or however you want to say it, Bible software. Yeah. You, you may have heard of it or seen it. Before, but it is a very comprehensive and in-depth Bible software, particularly for language stuff. I've known this for word studies and language studies. That's primarily what I use it for and I've even started buying a lot of my, so there's, it's able to do that through an expansive library of books and works and I've started purchasing a lot of my books on there because I'm virtually out of shelf space and I'm getting there. And for, for me, it's like I can study at home. I can say at a coffee shop, something like that. I don't have to drag. Thank you. All my books around with me everywhere. I've got them on my iPad, on my computer, uh, on my phone. And I'm even one of those that I don't use a hard, uh, like a hardback Bible, a physical copy of the Bible anymore when I'm studying. Uh, I use my digital because I can have multiple versions open. I can do my word studies straight from it. So I'm looking at a word. Well, what is this Greek word? Where else is it used in the text? There's all kinds of cool stuff that you can do with. Logos. It's something that both Jack and I have been using for our Bible study for a long time. And I want to say, though, that now it's even more affordable. I don't know... Uh, how many of you who may be familiar with it know, but used to, you had to pay a lot like thousands of dollars and you get a package and you'd own all of these books that they've now gone to a subscription service, which is not very expensive. For. The kind

of introductory one. So you get to use all the features, you get access to thousands and thousands of books without having to buy all of them upfront. So instead of paying. \$3,000, \$4,000 to own all these things you pay like \$20 a month and you get access to them and you can purchase them so if you want them Beyond, you can cancel any time, all of those kinds of things. That's a long way for me to get to the point of that we at Thinking Theologically are now affiliated with Logos Bible Software. You can go onto our website and under the resources tab in the menu, there's a link that you can click on and Through that link, you can get access to a sixty day extended free trial. So if you want to go and try it out, you're like, I'm not sure about this, but I want. to do deeper Bible study, but I'm not sure about this software, how it works, or something like that. You can go and get an extended 60-day free trial by going through us here at Thinking Theologically. So again, something else on the website for you to go and Check out. Uh, to that point, um, first of all, I was going to say that that's the most radical thing you've ever said is that you just don't use hardback. That's the worst thing I've ever heard. I do when I preach sometimes. Oh, okay. But a lot of things are up on the screen now. I mean, it's so... I don't, I don't know how visible that stuff will be, but there's a lot of colors and whatever on my like Philippians there, Ephesians on the other side. I've, I've, I've had logos since I went to school twelve twelve thirteen years ago now. Um, and that was a required, uh, software that we needed, uh, for school. And it has changed a lot since then, but, uh, key wording and finding words, all that I, Able to generate words, uh, specific words and all of their occurrences in, in this case, Greek, um, where they occur within a book and then start marking them in my Bible like, like that. It's insane. Uh, that's what I've primarily used it for is, uh, show me where the words are at, uh, what words occur the most, all that kind of stuff. So been really helpful, uh, in studying for various things, especially the resources that they, they offer. 60-day free trial, uh, through our, for, through our link there, Thinking Theologically, the resources tab, take you right there. Uh, speaking of studying, Gospel of John today, we, we've covered the synoptics and authorship and Uh, ended the last one on a high note of, I think Luke wrote it. Uh, so there, so there we go. Uh, this is where we get back to, and when I say we, I'm, I'm just kind of on the, I think John wrote it train. Uh, but we had, we had discussion about all of that before all of this. And so we're going to talk about who wrote the gospel of John. It is without question, a different kind of a gospel. Uh, it's not included with the other three there. I mean, they are this John stands off to the side, maybe for, uh, more reasons than just one here.

What is the External Evidence for Authorship?

Uh, so let's talk about authorship and, uh, Where we get this external evidence for John being the author of the book. So the external evidence that we get for authorship of the Gospel of John is...begins with Irenaeus. So in the late second century, the second half of the second century is... When we get Irenaeus writing, who says that John, the disciple, after the production of the other three gospels, wrote a gospel while he was in Ephesus. So Irenaeus locates authorship. In the Gospel of John and also the location of writing in the city of Ephesus. There are some reasons why we might want to question just a little bit of the trustworthiness of Irenaeus. So Irenaeus says that in his youth, he was a student of Polycarp, who was a student of John the Apostle. So he kind of connects himself to, I was of Polycarp, Polycarp was of John the Apostle. He also claims that Papias was a student of John the Apostle, though Papias was not a student of John the Apostle, but of John the Elder. So in the ancient... At church, we had this man by the name of John the Elder who was different and distinguished from John the Apostle, so two prominent Johns, and we know that At least regarding Papias that Irenaeus gets it wrong, that he refers to the wrong John. He says he knew John the Apostle. It was actually, we know from other evidence, that it was John the Elder. So it's led people to wonder, well, does he get this John right? He says that John wrote this gospel. Does he get it right that it's John the Apostle? Versus John the Elder. And so that raises the possibility. And this isn't just true of the Gospel of John, but also even the letters of John that bear his name and the Book of Revelation, as people have argued that one Some or all of those were actually written by John the Apostle, but maybe John the Elder, this other John who was prominent in the early church, because John, even to this day, is a very common name. And so there were multiple people in the early church named John. So like we've talked about with all of the other names that are associated with the gospel, there was more than one person who had this name. So just because Some guy named John wrote it doesn't necessarily mean that it had to be John the Apostle, but not only does Irenaeus connect it to John the Apostle, The Muraturian canon, one of the earliest canon lists that we have, attributes it to John the son of Zebedee, which was John one of the apostles or the disciples. At this point, I want to remind us a little bit of something that we've talked about in previous episodes. I would

encourage you, if you haven't, go back and watch the episodes we've done on the other three Gospels. Particularly the Gospel of Mark, where we talk about some things that helps to really set the stage for all of these discussions. But we talked about why, and I think this is kind of where we're going to go. After these as well, I was talking a little bit about the importance of authorship for canonization. So wanting to connect a work to an apostle. So that that work can be considered authoritative. So again, you would want to connect it in some way to an apostle. So there's a little bit of biased reasoning among the church fathers about—it doesn't mean that they're wrong, but we just have to recognize, yeah, they have other reasons to want to make this connection, and so— It's good to have a little bit of healthy skepticism and just want to dive in a little bit more in, okay, what exactly is the other evidence? Let me just not assume that... This ancient guy is right. Let me dive in a little bit deeper, which is why you have us. Let, let, let us do it for you. Uh, sake of understanding and maybe this is more than just me and maybe it is just only me. So. The chain, this chain's a little different than what we've had with some of the other ones where it's a, I studied under him, he studied under John, uh, is the argument, uh, or what he says, what he claims. Um, but then alongside that, this, uh, Papias that he's talking about, how, how are they, do we know how they're connected? Was that a contemporary of Irenaeus or was it like contemporary of Polycarp? Well, I guess it would have been a contemporary Polycarp potentially. A little bit earlier. So, so we get the, uh, uh, more, uh, more of the first half of the second century. So. Irenaeus is coming later, so if you take John the Apostle, you're, you know, maybe two generations removed by the time you get to Irenaeus, and you just see that under, you had this guy, and then this guy studied under him, and then I studied under him. So he might have been wrong about who Papias studied under, but there's at least more of a direct link with him as far as, uh, his, uh, his mentor and then John being that mentor. Um, okay. That's, that's what I was wondering, uh, seeing all that and stuff. It is a little different than that. Uh, I don't think anything you said is without, uh, merit. Uh, but I think it's worth noting with Matthew and Mark, uh, What we had was just this guy later on said. These guys then told me that this was the author of it. And there was that was really it. It was just telephone game passing on of stuff. Just just verbal. This has at least a little more substance to it. Yeah, and as we're gonna see as we go through, I think that's one of the reasons that There's some good evidence to connect this gospel with John. The question becomes, what is the nature of that connection? And we'll talk about that as we go. Just because there's a connection doesn't mean he... Wrote it. So that's just something to keep in mind. Yeah. So let's talk about that. So the external evidence, we've, we've done that.

What is the Internal Evidence?

So internally, uh, what kind of evidence do we have for, uh, John and its authorship? The first things that you notice internally, so when you read through the Gospel of John, is some of the similar things that we talked about with the authors of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The author is educated. Most Christians, maybe just as many as 5%, probably no more than that, were educated enough to be able to read and write. So the author of this gospel is educated. He is able to read and write. He is, I wrote down here, a theological thinker, not just because we're called thinking theologically, but Of all the Gospels, John is more theological, and by that he... So all of the authors are telling these historical events to make theological points, so to say something about Jesus, to say something about God. To say something about the church, so what it means to be a disciple or a follower of Jesus, but John does so to a greater degree. He connects these stories more so than any of the other Gospels to... Theological concepts about the nature of God and the identity of Jesus. So John, for example, has the highest Christology of any of the Gospels, and by that I mean he has the highest view of The identity of Jesus. And you see that just at the beginning of when John says that the Word was with God and the Word was God. You don't get statements like that in any of the other Gospels. That Directly connect Jesus to being God. John is the only one who just outright makes that connection. And so John is much more of a theological gospel than the other ones that we have. There are some other interesting aspects to the gospel of John that complicate the way that we Think about who could have been the author, and I want to mention a couple of these. One is that in the gospel there is an attack on the temple and references to followers of Jesus being kicked out of the synagogue, particularly kicked out of the synagogue because of what they believe about the identity of Jesus, which fits with what I just said about John's gospel being more theological, so John, with this higher Christology, is identifying Jesus in ways that the other gospels Don't. So he's, John's kind of going further with the identity of Jesus as human and as God in his gospel. So it makes sense that when he speaks of Christians being kicked out of the synagogue, it's because of who they believe

Jesus to be. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is... These kinds of things. And again, that's something that we don't get in the other Gospels. The other Gospels don't talk about followers of Jesus being kicked out of the synagogue because of their belief about Jesus. And the reason is, is at least the evidence that we have. And something that I want to mention is just because we don't have evidence for something doesn't assure the fact that it didn't happen. But it does make it more difficult to make an argument that it did happen. And I hope that kind of makes sense of we have to be careful when we say that something happened and we don't have evidence for it. Um, just because we don't have evidence for it, like I said, doesn't mean it didn't happen, but we just have to be careful there. Based upon the evidence that we have, it seems that it was a later phenomenon. And the development of Christianity at the earliest, at the end of the first century, when Christians began to be kicked out of the synagogue. This was... During the time of what scholars have called the parting of the ways. And so early on, the first Christians were also Jews and they didn't Christian Jews didn't stop being Jews. They didn't stop with the food laws. They didn't stop honoring the Sabbath. They didn't stop circumcising their children or the festivals or anything like that. They still were Jews. And part of that is that A Jew was just as much of an ethnic identity as it was a religious identity, but also because early Christians saw Jesus as the continuation of God's story with Israel. There wasn't a disconnect between The between faith in Jesus and faith in the God of Israel and the practices of Israel, because Jesus was just a continuation of that. Jesus was the fulfillment of Israel's vocation. Early followers of Jesus were able to bring their Jewish faith and their faith in Jesus together in a very harmonious way. And that's why we see, for example, at the beginning of Acts that the early Christians gathered together at the temple. They attended the temple together. They Jews outside of Jerusalem would attend the synagogue. Jewish Christians would attend the synagogue together. And so they continue to be Jews. And it wasn't until The end of the first century that Judaism and Christianity begin to kind of part from each other and become two what we could call separate And distinct religious groups or two separate religions. And the reason for this separation was really two things. On the one hand, it was the addition of Gentiles. And so the community became multi-ethnic. It wasn't just Jews, it was Jews and Gentiles that were being united together in Jesus. But the other was the development of the Christology, of the belief about who Jesus was. We've talked about this in previous episodes that The development about Jesus being God is something that developed over time. And it, it wasn't that Christians created this. It was just that from the beginning they had to kind of figure out, to work out, what does this mean? This is what Jesus has done. What are the implications? And one of the implications is that Jesus is fully God and fully human, where all this Jesus stuff doesn't work. But they had to kind of... Learn that over time and realize that and have God through the spirit reveal that to the early Christians. And that's just the way God works. He doesn't dump all the information on us from the beginning, right? He lets that develop. So as developing. In the belief about who Jesus was and the entrance of Gentiles began to characterize early Christian communities, there began to be this parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. And as that separation began to happen, that's when you began to see Jewish Christians no longer allowed into the synagogue. Because of their belief about Jesus. And so again, the evidence that we have is that this is something that developed over time, that it was something that was characteristic of the end of the first century at the earliest, maybe even not characterized. Characteristic of synagogues and Christian communities until the beginning of The second century. And so this is something that happens much later. And I say that because the fact that this is evidence in the Gospel of John brings into question Brings into this question the dating of the gospel because the dating of John might Bring into question whether we could expect John the Apostle to still be alive. And that's the thing. So Jesus' ministry was around the year thirty The disciples were probably teenagers when they were called. So let's say fifteen And the further you push back the date of John, so ninety ninety-five 100 105, 115, you know, even into the second century as some scholars do. You become less and less likely that John is still alive. So if John is fifteen or twenty when Jesus calls him and he's in the year thirty and he's writing in ninety and He's what, eighty-five or something like that when he's writing this gospel, which is within the realm of possibility. But if you say that some of the things in the gospel only make sense in the second century, so 110, Right? Well, now he's over 100 years old. And it's very unlikely that John the Apostle would have still been alive in the first half of the second century to write the gospel. And so I just say that to say, Something that has to be taken into consideration is when was this gospel written? And one of the important dating features is this parting of the ways. When did Christians start to be kicked out of the synagogue? In a way that it would make sense to talk about it in the Gospel of John. And it's a debate for another episode whether that happened in the time of Jesus or John is just Writing the scenarios that's going on in his community back into these stories to make the stories of Jesus applicable to his time and place. And I just want to say there's nothing wrong with doing

that. That's what we do when we tell the stories and sermons today. So that can still be a true thing, something that's inspired by the Spirit. That debate's not important for this. The important thing is, in what period of Christian history would these stories be important to tell? When would it be important to talk about being kicked out of the synagogue? Is that first century or is that second century? And there is some debate about that. Though there is always the possibility, and we're going to get to this more as we continue. That John's teachings were compiled after his death. So maybe John taught or wrote down in short form some of these stories and they get compiled together in the second century or later. Into the first century where it makes more sense to talk about being kicked out of the synagogue. So just because we may want to say, well, that didn't happen until the second century. So the gospel couldn't have been written in the second century. Also, does it necessitate Disconnecting it from John the Apostle. There's still a possibility there, and we'll capitalize that on a little bit more. The author is familiar with Palestine, Jewish traditions, and Scripture. We see that throughout the Gospel, both in the use of The Old Testament as well as the way that certain places and things and festivals and stuff are talked about. In the Gospel of John, the most important piece of physical evidence, the most important piece of internal evidence, and this may be where some of your mind went initially when we were thinking about The authorship of the Gospel of John is that like Luke, the author may have presence in the narrative, and that presence would be in the form of the beloved disciple. So there's this character In the gospel, who is called the disciple whom Jesus loved or the beloved disciple. And he's never named, but he shows up in all these kinds of scenes. He's there at the crucifixion. He's there at the last supper. He's there at the end of the gospel and the resurrection accounts. There's this disciple whom Jesus loves. That's a part of the group that is following around Jesus. And it's long been assumed that this unnamed disciple whom Jesus loved is John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, and that the author, and that Uh, the beloved disciple is also the one who authored or wrote the gospel. Now, the, those are two different points that we have to think of separately. Is John, John, the apostle, the beloved disciple? We have to prove that first. And then if we say yes, the beloved disciple is John, we then have to go and say, all right, did the beloved disciple write this book? Those are two separate things. And I'm going to talk about both of those. Here real quickly. Uh, the first thing that I want to say is that John nine twenty-six And 2124 seem to claim that at least certain aspects of Jesus' passion and resurrection, or perhaps the entire gospel, are Are testimonies of the beloved disciple, not necessarily that the beloved disciple wrote the gospel. And the prime example I want to read here from John twenty-one At the very end, it says, this is the disciple, speaking of the beloved disciple, who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that the testimony is true. So some people have highlighted that we, that the author is saying we know that these testimonies and writings of the beloved disciple that are seen here are true, which could suggest that it doesn't have to. It could suggest that the one who is writing or compiling these together is not John the disciple. That the author or the compiler is saying these stories that I'm telling you They were handed down in both writing and speech from the beloved disciple. John, and I am just recording them and writing them down, and I, as well as you, know that they're true, that they're trustworthy. So that's one way to render it. And so there's a little bit Of question of even if we identify the beloved disciple as John, did the beloved disciple actually write this text? However, these verses also seem to read as if the author is relying, as I said, on the testimony of the beloved disciple, not that the beloved disciple necessarily wrote the gospel. This has led people to speculate either that the gospel was written by someone relying on the teachings of John the Apostle, Or the writing of John was edited by another into the final form we now possess. So some have said, well, if this we is someone other than the beloved disciple, maybe it's a compiling of the teachings. Or the notes of John or John wrote a rough gospel and it gets kind of expanded and reworked and edited into a more polished form. Which becomes the gospel that we have today. So some have argued for an editor that John the Apostle actually wrote a gospel and then it gets edited and the edited version is the gospel that we have Today, it has been conclusively demonstrated that communities in the ancient world collected and edited the teachings of their founder. This is actually why we have Gospels in the first place. Outside of the realm of possibilities, that communities would gather the teachings of someone and write them down, right? That's what the gospels are doing with Jesus in the first place. They're, hey, this is our founder. This is someone we respect. This is the one who we follow. Let's compile their teachings together. So it's not outside of the realm of possibility that a community that was taught by John the Apostle After he dies, wants to do something similar with his teachings to compile them together in the form that we have. And this even brings up the debate, and we're not going to get into it, but it brings up the debate over the original audiences of the Gospels as well, which is something that we'll come to in a future episode, I'm sure. But this is something that we can know, and we'll get more into the beloved disciple here in a minute. We, I think, can assume that the original audience both knew and respected the

beloved disciple. It seems that the audience knows who this person is. And we might not be privy to that information because we're not the original audience, but there is presence in that the beloved disciple is known in some way by the audience that's receiving this gospel, or at least the first audience. Yeah, yeah. Um, that's just normal writing behavior and that would have been true then too if you don't, you don't just introduce a character, and I think that'll make sense here in what we're talking about. The first introduction of this phrase, uh, beloved disciple and all of this. You wouldn't just throw somebody in who's like, uh, who Yeah. Who is that? I don't know who that is. Um, so the, the audience we can anticipate has some kind of understanding of who this person is. Uh, I'm actually interested as we get into the phrase of who all of this stuff is. Um, Uh, as we go through here because, uh, well, the first thing that you're going to say here is actually really interesting to me. As somebody who's coming into this, because I'll speak maybe for a lot of the audience on this one. It's this phrase that for a long time I've been like, well, the author is this because of this, this phrase. And it's not just beloved disciple, it's also connected to Uh, the other disciple or it's even connected to the one who was at the table or the one who, so it gets threaded through the second half of the book. Um, and so that, and then ultimately that's the attribution of. The witness, uh, as, as you mentioned there. Uh, and so for a long time, it's, well, John's the writer because of this phrase.

Who is the Beloved Disciple?

Um, so I'm actually really interested this first thing that you're about to bring up and who is the beloved disciple? Uh, where do we see it first? And then this next piece, uh, who does, who does Jesus love according to the book of John? Yeah, so something, the next place we have to go, as I said, first, there's question on, is the beloved disciple also the author? Because, right, there's a couple of places, particularly at the end, That could be construed to say, well, the author isn't the beloved disciple, but he's using the teachings and the writings of the beloved disciple. Composing the gospel. So that's the first thing you have to realize if we're not, it's not certain from the internal evidence that The beloved disciple is the author. And so you have to kind of think about that first. That's similar to the Luke phrasing in Luke chapter one, uh, one through what? Three, four, um, that same kind of idea. Uh, it's just coming. At the end of the book and all that. Yeah, so you might have a compiler or an editor or something like that that gives us our final gospel. But then you have to ask, regardless of how you want to answer that question, right? So you want to say, no, the beloved disciple is the author. Or you want to say, no, the author is using the teachings of the beloved disciple to write the gospel. You then have to ask, okay, well, who is the beloved disciple? And it's not as easy as you might think. Of interest is the phrase the disciple whom Jesus loves only occurs in the second half of the gospel. Its first occurrence is in chapter three and verse twenty-three which is odd because If the beloved disciple was there from the beginning. So we actually talked about something similar with the we passages in Acts of... Saying that, well, the person writing was probably a traveling companion of Paul because the wee passages only show up in like the back end of the gospel. You would expect if they were... There the entire time, or if they were trying to pretend like they were, that you would see the wee passages throughout Acts. And you get something similar here with the Gospel of John, that If the, this disciple was there from the beginning which John the Apostle would have been there At least as it appears from all of our Gospels, from like the very start of Jesus' ministry, you would expect this phrase to be used throughout the Gospels. So from the beginning to the end, not just the second half. So that's interesting. The reference only comes, and this is something interesting that scholars have pointed out, the reference comes after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. And Lazarus is the only one in the gospel explicitly identified as one whom Jesus loves. In John eleven and verse three and verse thirty-six this has led some scholars to conclude... Thank you. That the beloved disciple is Lazarus, which is an interesting interpretation. Because again, Lazarus is the only one that the Gospel says Jesus loved, and the phrase is not used until after Lazarus is raised from the dead. There's some other interesting arguments to be made. Was Jesus, was Lazarus, rather, at the Last Supper with Jesus because they were meeting at his home in Bethany, which is a possible historical way to understand. This meal that perhaps they were beating at Lazarus's home, which is why the beloved disciple is there. The last thing... Did people believe he wouldn't die because people, because Jesus had already raised him? So at the end of John, we get this weird thing about the beloved disciple that people were Assume that he wasn't going to ever die, which is a very, very strange thing to say. And it's like, well, why did some people think that the beloved disciple wouldn't die? Well, if it was Lazarus, maybe, well, he already died. Jesus raised him from the dead, so he's not going to die again is an interesting way to interpret that. I'm not fully convinced that it's Lazarus. But

there's a very interesting argument to be made that it could, like, Lazarus does fit. And one of the things that I want to show is that John the Apostle is not the only one who fits who the beloved disciple could be. So I want to add one more to this because in, in John eleven you have reference to Lazarus being loved three times. There's the two that we have posted here. The third one is different, uh, but speaks to a different point. Uh, so the first two are, uh, let's see what, what is it? It's the. He whom you love is ill. And now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. But then there's one in verse thirty-six of the Jewish people saying, see how he loved him. And if we're going to say, as we did a moment ago, The audience would know who this individual is. We have a voice from the crowd here saying. See how he loved it. So there's this recognition of Jesus very much loves this individual, not just that's how he feels, but also the Jews around recognized and went. That's how they feel. That's how he feels about this guy. Uh, so there's, that, this is the thing I was saying is very interesting, uh, in, in this conversation. Yeah. Well, and, and even think about if we consider the book a compiling of somebody's teachings. That that would be an interesting perspective to add to the other Gospels. So I think the author of John knows the synoptics, knows Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And is in conversation with them and maybe even using them at some, at some points or assuming, I think there's some evidence that at least a couple stories The author assumes that his audience has read like the Gospel of Mark because he doesn't explain things and it's like, well, how are we supposed to know this? Well, it's explained in like Mark, for example. So, but if that's the case, it would be an interesting addition to the conversation to have the perspective of somebody like Lazarus, who might be there, but wasn't a part of the Twelve. And something like that would actually fit in with why we don't have certain stories that we might expect to have, which is kind of where we're going to conclude here. But yeah, Anyway, my point is simply to demonstrate to us that there's other possible alternatives that you can make a compelling case for. It doesn't have to be John the... Apostle. Something else that's interesting is if it is John, son of Zebedee, It's interesting that the sons of Zebedee are only mentioned once in John twenty-one like that you would think we would get more discussion of James and John, maybe their conversion story, maybe... You know, some of the other stories that we get in the other Gospels about these guys, but they're not very important in the Gospel, which has led people to wonder, since they're so insignificant, In just the grand story, does it make sense that the beloved disciple would be John, one of the two brothers? Something else that people have pointed at is the beloved disciple is present at the Last Supper, and that's led a lot of people to say, well, he has to be one of the twelve. He has to be, because it's assumed that only the twelve Were present at the Last Supper. My first question there, though, is why do we assume that? Like, we know that the Twelve were there because they're specifically mentioned. Mm-hmm. But... Do we know that only the twelve were at the... Supper or... Because Jesus, when he was traveling around, it was more than just the twelve that were with him. There were other people. Luke talks about a band of women that were financially supporting him and... So can we maybe assume that they were all there at the table and only the twelve are mentioned in the synoptics because they're kind of front and center. They're the most important people. That's something to ask. One of the reasons that people have assumed that the beloved disciple is one of the twelve is because of the connection with Peter throughout the gospel. These two kind of stand together, uh, Peter and the beloved disciple. And again, if you think about who are two prominent figures that can hold a prominent, in the early church, who can hold such a prominent position in these stories. Peter and John would fit that very well. Lazarus wouldn't. And so that's another suggestion of, well, This Peter and the beloved disciple may suggest someone of a little bit more prominence, but maybe Lazarus was more prominent than we know, and we just don't get very many stories. That's always a possibility. But something else about The Last Supper is that it's interesting to note that the synoptics mention the twelve, Matthew and Mark. Luke mentions the apostles, but John has no specification about the disciples at the table. So John doesn't specify who's there and who's not there, which may be for, maybe John wants us to assume that there were more there. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's also interesting to note that John's meal takes place before the Passover, unlike the synoptics where it is the Passover meal. John specifically says before the Passover, The synoptics are very particular. This is the Passover Seder that they are sitting down to eat. John's happens beforehand. It's not the Passover meal. So you could argue that it's another meal that John's talking about a different meal because John also doesn't have the institution of the Lord's Supper in his. That's a synoptics thing. So you could argue this is a different meal. And if you want to argue it's a different meal, then that opens up the possibility even more that it wasn't just the twelve So you could say only the twelve were there for the Last Supper. But that this meal is not the Last Supper and that there were more people there because John doesn't specify. You could make that argument. Um. I don't think that's compelling. I think we're talking about the same meal. I think John's doing something different. I think John's, I think John's doing something theological and not historical with this, that the dates are different

because John wants Jesus Dying on Passover when the Passover lamb was slain to make a theological point which would be a day before when he was actually Crucified and the day in the synoptic. So I think John moves the dating a day before to make a theological connection with Jesus as the sacrificial lamb. So I do think they're the same meal. My point is you could argue that they're not. That is a possibility. And people have done that. Uh, I'm just, it probably just sounds like I'm muddying the waters, but my point is you have to deal with some of these things. Like if you're going to assert so-and-so wrote it, these are some of the things you have to think through. We we've talked about supposed contradictions as well between like resurrection narrative, things like that, uh, within the gospels as well. And we've, we've had this discussion of different authors trying to do different things, uh, to your point, uh, about. Before Passover and the timing of all of that and those things. So be sure to check those episodes out. Uh, if you haven't already, it'll, it'll help with, uh, what Spencer was just talking about there. Yeah. So in something else that's interesting. In John twenty-one we have a... We have Jesus, he's gathered with, in verse two of twenty-one he's gathered with Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, so James and John. And two others of his disciples. And then you skip down a few verses to verse seven. And it says, the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, it is the Lord. And so it seems that the disciple whom Jesus loved is a part of this group of Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, and John, and two of his other disciples. So he seems to be one of these disciples. Peter's ruled out because he speaks to Peter, right? So Peter can't be the beloved disciple. But what I want to point out is that John is a part of this group. So it definitely could be John, but he's not the only one. It could be James. It could be Nathaniel. It could be Thomas, and there's two other disciples who aren't named, which brings Lazarus back into the picture, right? He could be one of the two others who aren't named. And it's also interesting that the disciple whom Jesus loved isn't named, so maybe we should assume that he's one of the other disciples. He's kind of just this generic character, and not that he wouldn't be one of the sons of Zebedee, but... There's no way of knowing for sure whether that's the way that we should read it or not, but we do know, I think my point is, is that he is one of this group that's identified there in John nineteen twenty-one. It's also been argued that the beloved disciple is simply a rhetorical device, not to be connected with a particular disciple, the author of the gospel, or either one of those. That is just kind of a rhetorical device. I, uh... I think it is a rhetorical device, but I think that the first readers would have known who this person is. And I do think that. The gospel tries to connect these stories with the text. Beloved disciple, that these were handed down by the beloved disciple at the very least, or all of this was written by the beloved disciple at the greatest. So I don't buy the rhetorical device. I think that the audience knew who this was. The question just becomes, well, who is it? Is it John? Is it Lazarus? Is it Thomas? Is it Nathaniel? Is it one of the other disciples? That does become a little bit more difficult. Okay, so a lot of, uh, a lot of different pieces to this about who authors should, or who, who this, uh, phrase, the beloved disciple could be. Uh, referring to specifically some of it's a little more open, uh, than we might think. Uh, I particularly find the, uh, the connection to Lazarus, the phrasing there though. I'm not. Saying I'm convinced it's Lazarus. What I am saying is that that's the kind of stuff that's, that's why I use logos for honestly is looking for those threads and connections. Well, at point it starts with Lazarus and it happens right after the Lazarus event now. This phrasing becomes used is rather interesting. Um, because though authors might write in different ways, authors are consistent in the way that they write. Um, and so that, That's something I look for heavily. Uh, and something that man, if you want to win me over with an argument, that's the way to do it. So maybe that'll, maybe that'll get me there.

If John the Disciple is the Author, Is This the Type of Gospel We Would Expect?

Uh, okay. So as we, we close this, if John, the disciple is the author. Is this the type of gospel we would, uh, expect from him? Some of this is going to be, uh, is conjecture the right word? Just, just kind of thinking of like, well, I think we'd see a little bit more of this, but there's a, there's a, Comment about stories here that you'll end with that's really, uh, Compelling to me of, yeah, why aren't those here? That's weird. Like you said, some of this is a bit subjective because two people reading the same thing might expect or see Different things. And so that's also important of one of the things we're trying to do with episodes like this is just kind of go through most of the things that have to be considered or the important things that have to be considered. Right. And at the end of the day, you need to make your own decision. You don't have to agree with either one of us on it. And some of this is a bit subjective, but you do have to deal with all of these things. Like, if you're gonna say so-and-so wrote it and I ask, well, then why does it only show up in the second half of the

gospel or something? You've gotta be able to explain that within whatever theory that you put together of So, there's a couple of things that, to me, I would expect to see in the Gospel if John the Apostle wrote it that we just don't get. The first is, we've talked about this, I would expect the beloved disciples' language to be throughout the whole gospel and not just the second half of it, because John the Apostle would have been there through more than just the second half. Mm-hmm. This connects to the second. I would expect more of an authorial self-identification as an eyewitness. So we've talked about before of The importance of ancient authors saying, I was here for these events that took place. And so you would expect or at least I would expect a little bit more of a connection of saying, yeah, I was here. And we kind of get that at the end, right? These stories, or at least the passion story, comes from the beloved disciple. But there's question of, is it the beloved disciple writing? And just saying we as in me and our entire community understand that what I'm saying is true. Or is it we as in we who learned these things from the beloved disciple know them to be true. There's two ways to interpret that. Right. So, uh, there's questions of how much of an authorial presence is there. And so I wonder, I would just expect a little bit more. And we just don't get it. There are also stories that are unique to John the Apostle that don't show up in the Gospel, and I find that weird. There are some... Not so important stories like Jairus' daughter, when Jesus raises her from the dead, he goes into the room with the parents and Peter, James, and John. And so that's a unique experience that John the disciple has that even the other disciples don't get to have. And we don't get stories like that in the gospel, which to me I would expect of, hey, if you were there, you'd Write about your own experience as a part of this story, especially if you're in conversation with the synoptics, who I don't think any of them were written by eyewitnesses. If you were, you would... I would think come out and say, yeah, I was here for this. Let me talk about it a little bit more. But the story that makes the least sense to me, and I've never heard a good explanation about why it's not in the Gospel of John if John wrote it, is the story of the transfiguration. That's another story that is unique to Peter, James, and John and fits perfectly with what the gospel is trying to do. The Gospel of John, more than anything, is trying to identify Jesus as God. He's trying to make that connection between Jesus and God. Again, we talked about this development of Christology, the high Christology of the Gospel of John. That's making this connection. And there are very few stories that make the connection between Jesus and God as much as the transfiguration. Does like that? Oh, yeah. That's up there as one of the top two stories that say, yeah, Jesus is God that is making that connection. And John the apostle was there. At least according to the synoptics, he was there, he saw it, he witnessed it and doesn't tell us the story. It's, that is very strange, that is very odd to me, and I don't know a good way to Explain it. Um, but Jack, I'll, I'll turn it over with you to give a couple comments and then I'll kind of say where I stand on who wrote it and I, I'll let you do the, the same before we close this out, but. Uh, yeah, just the, the stories unique to John thing is really interesting. Maybe you don't need Jairus's daughter cause you have Lazarus. You like, we have a resurrection, something like that. I don't know. Uh, But even still, Transfiguration, I don't know why you wouldn't have that, especially with what the book's trying to do. Peter, James, and John, those connecting points are always there. And in John's, in this gospel, you have Peter, John all the time together. Well, both of those are accounts that connect them together more. Uh, so something's being done with Peter in the writing. Uh, and you would just think like, Hey, especially the transfiguration that is. In the synoptics, that is a turning point of, I have to go die now. Like, it's a huge turning point in all three of those gospels. Why would you not have it here? It's just really interesting. Especially when with Lord's Supper and things like that, you get multiple chapters of things happening Where you get a lot less in the synoptics. Why would why would this not be here if you were there is is really strange. So I don't I don't have an answer for that either. Man, I don't know what to think about authorship as far as that stuff goes. The Lazarus thing is interesting, but I'm not convinced on that. I also find, I'll say this too, I find the rhetorical device part of things interesting as well. With how. Laden the book is with I am the I am statements and illustrations and you're meant to interpret things a little harder I think than within the synoptics of really think through what in the world does this mean. That may be the case with this too of I want to be the beloved disciple. I do not want to be maybe the way Peter is acting in these moments. Maybe that's what's happening there between. Those kinds of ideas. Again, not that it's not a real person, but that it doesn't really matter who it is. It matters that you are that and not the other thing. Don't know. So that's, that's where I'm at. You've confused me and ruined mine. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. Interesting information and I'd be curious to see what other people listening and all that think about all this, but uh, where, where are you at?

Who Wrote the Gospel of John?

Yeah. So, you know, first off, like you said, if you're listening, leave us a comment, send us an email, do something like that to kind of give us your thoughts. Yeah. Um, so I, I think where I'm at is to me, there's enough evidence. Internally, as well as the historical evidence that connects this to John, to say that the beloved disciple is John. So I do identify the beloved disciple as John, the son of Zebedee. So I'm on board with that. I think that makes the most sense. Lazarus is interesting, but I don't think it makes as much sense, you know, just him being at the Last Supper, which I do think it's the Last Supper, and at the cross, and just the church history and all that. I do think when I read through the gospel, it seems that it is being used as a rhetorical device more so than, hey, I was here for them. So I don't see a lot of the author really claiming to be an eyewitness. That little brief mention at the end, because of that, reads more to me like, hey, we got these from the beloved disciple, but I, the one writing or compiling or editing this, whatever they were, am not John the... Apostle, that seems to make the most sense to me as well. And that seems to, if that's the case, to me that explains why we don't get some of these Other stories, maybe a little bit. I still wonder, like, so you don't have a story that was told by John the Apostle if you knew him of some of these things? But to me... That makes a little bit more sense of it if John's not actually the one that's writing it down. We talked a little bit about dating. We might do some episodes on dating at some point in the future and dive a little bit deeper into it, but Jack and I were talking about this a lot beforehand. The way that I date the Gospel of Luke that I think John is familiar with and the way that I date the Johannine epistles which I think have to be written after the Gospel Of John, I think. And there's even debate about that. Are they written after traditions that become the Gospel of John or after the Gospel of John's finished? Because there's not a literary connection there. But I think they're written after the Gospel of John and the way that I date that along the development of heresies like Gnosticism and Docetism. Um, I want to date John later where I begin to have questions whether or not John the apostle is still alive. And so all of that taken together, what makes the most sense to me is that the author is someone who knew John. Maybe was a part of a church that John was. Maybe was a disciple of John that followed around and taught with John or something like that. Kind of like Luke and Paul or something like that. Or what some people think with Mark and Peter, though, I think there's issues with that. But I think that's kind of what you have going on. And John the Apostle, who is the beloved disciple, told a lot of these stories. He even might have wrote some of them down. We know that there were... Wax tablets and codices and stuff that existed around this time where you might take notes and jot down. That wasn't uncommon to take notes, listen to a lecture and take notes. So John might have wrote these down. Disciples and stuff might have wrote these down. Taking notes as they were listening to John teach and preach and stuff like that. So I think what you have is that these stories are told and they're written down that go back to John. And sometime after John's death, they're compiled together. And they become this gospel. Maybe even John wrote down something like this and it becomes edited and expanded a little bit to become The story that we have. But I think some kind of writing or editing process happened after John, and that's how we get our current gospel. So I would say the author or the final author is not John. But I do think there's enough evidence to say that these stories and stuff go back to John. And so for me, this is the only gospel that I think there's some evidence that some of these stories go back to a, an, uh, Actual eyewitness in more of a direct way than like Luke goes around and does his, he does his research. Yeah. And maybe Luke talked to some eyewitnesses or we don't actually know that for sure. But there's more of a connection, I think, to an eyewitness with John, because I do think it goes back to the disciple in some way, even if he didn't write it, which... Doesn't take anything away from inspiration or anything like that. We've talked about that in previous episodes as well.

Concluding Thoughts

Okay, well, tell us what you think, uh, if any of these, uh, if any part of this discussion was like, oh, I didn't know that, uh, that's interesting, maybe it's, maybe it's making you think a different sort of way and all that, let us know. Uh, check out our Facebook page, Thinking Theologically. You can comment there on the episode. You can comment on the website, thinkingtheologically.org, uh, underneath this particular episode. We'll see those too. Uh, or reach out to us. Uh, if you know us personally, you're friends with us, Facebook or, uh, anywhere on social media with, uh, with Spencer, you can reach out there and. Get ahold of us, ask us questions, all that kind of thing, and we'd love to hear from you about this and our future episodes that are

coming up. Hope you're on the lookout for those things, but that does it for this particular episode. I'm Jack.
That's Spencer. We'll see you next time.