

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

Take another look - The Bible has the answer

J. Phillips

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The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

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Dedication

Thank you, God, for the question that was raised at that Bible study where my sister Stella said, *I have a problem with the Gospel of John. The author never called himself John. Rather, he always called himself, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," the "other disciple," or "the other disciple, whom Jesus loved."* The two verses that she then quoted opened my eyes and led me to search the scriptures, and for that I am very grateful. Your word has preserved many critical details for us, but I had not paid attention to them. Thankfully, she did. By raising this question, she inspired me to take another look at the Bible on this issue, and the search for truth on this question has resulted in a greater appreciation for your word. "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth" (Ps 86:11).

The efforts of many people helped this book to become a reality. The love, prayers, patience, encouragement, and help of my wife, my mother, my sisters, and my friends, were all vital to this project and are deeply appreciated. I also need to thank everyone who has supported this work by sending funds, assisting with corrections and feedback, and/or by recommending this book to others. May God bless all of those who have helped in this work and may the biblical evidence cited herein lead people to honor God's word.

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Preface

“Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him” (Prv 30:5).

“Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prv 30:6).

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Prv 16:25).

“*It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes” (Ps 118:8-9).

“For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding” (Prv 2:6).

“The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead” (Prv 21:16).

“... Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4).

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby...” (1Pt 2:2).

“For the word of the LORD *is* right...” (Ps 33:4).

“... he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully” (Jer 23:28).

“A faithful witness will not lie...” (Prv 14:5).

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed...” (2Ti 2:15).

“Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies” (Ps 40:4).

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1Th 5:21).

“*It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings *is* to search out a matter” (Prv 25:2).

Introduction

The first three gospels all mention these three notable events of Jesus' ministry: his transfiguration (Mt 17:1-9, Mk 9:2-9, Lk 9:28-36), his Gethsemane prayers (Mt 26:36-46, Mk 14:32-42, Lk 22:39-46), and his raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mt 9:18-26, Mk 5:22-43, Lk 8:41-56). Only three disciples were present at these events, and the Apostle John was one of them (Mt 17:1 & 26:37, Mk 5:37, 9:2 & 14:33, Lk 8:51 & 9:28).

Although John was an eyewitness to all of these events, there is no mention of these key events in the gospel that today bears John's name! These would surely have been extremely profound moments in John's life. So, what can explain their omission from the fourth gospel, a book that tradition has said was written by John?

Many teachers will refer to the fourth gospel as '*John's eyewitness testimony*,' but does the Bible support this claim? A closer look shows that the idea of John being the author of the fourth gospel is not consistent with the facts found in scripture, and the author's omission of the three events noted above is merely the tip of the iceberg. It turns out every event where John is referred to by name in the first three gospels is missing from the fourth gospel – every one of them!

For example, Jesus told John and his brother, “ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,” when he rebuked them when they sought to “command fire to come down from heaven” (Lk 9:54-55). John and Peter were sent by Jesus to prepare the Passover (Lk 22:8). Jesus privately answered the questions of John, Peter, James, and Andrew on the Mount of Olives (Mk 13:3). John and his brother asked Jesus to seat them, “one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory” (Mk 10:35-41). But these events cannot be found in the fourth gospel, since none of the events where John is named in the first three gospels are in the fourth gospel! Does the fourth gospel's omission of all of these 'John events' suggest this gospel was '*John's eyewitness testimony*'?

If this was John's eyewitness account, how did he come to exclude all mention of these events? Are we to believe John read the other gospels first and then wrote this gospel in such a way as to carefully omit every event where he was named in those other three gospels? Is this reasonable?

In the last chapter of the fourth gospel, verses 21:20 and 24 let us know this work was written by an unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved." This author never identified himself as John. Rather, he used various terms like "the disciple whom Jesus loved," "the other disciple," etc. to refer to himself, and his use of these curious terms to cloak his identity raises many questions.

The fourth gospel does present the author's testimony, but scripture can prove he was not John. The 'John idea' comes from non-Bible sources, and even though there is not a single verse that justifies assuming the beloved disciple was anyone named John, this case of mistaken identity still persists. Whoever this disciple was, he cannot have been the Apostle John because that idea forces the Bible to contradict itself, which the truth cannot do.

Lest anyone mistake the thrust of this study, please note: God's word is not in error, and nothing herein suggests otherwise. In fact, this study cites nothing but the scriptures! Why? Because the Bible is the primary source on Bible issues, and if we heed the details that have been preserved therein, it can help to correct mistaken ideas we may have. As will be shown, the title *Gospel of John* was not written by the gospel's author. Others added it to this author's work. Still, the record of scripture is able to overcome the errors of men, and the verses quoted in this study do exactly that.

Indeed, one should not be presenting an idea *as if it were biblical* if he cannot cite a single verse that would justify teaching that idea. Also, if the Bible can disprove an idea we have believed, why would we not give up that idea and stand corrected?

Acts 18:24-28 tells of a man named Apollos. He was "mighty in the scriptures," "instructed in the way of the Lord," "fervent in the spirit," and "spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord." Yet, we know his understanding was lacking because when Aquila and Priscilla heard his teaching, they took him and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." We are told, at that time Apollos knew of "only the baptism of John" (i.e., John the Baptist). But the key point is, he updated his views when the truth was presented to him. This led him to change, and thereafter, it says he "mightily convinced the Jews," "showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ."

Apollos was mighty in the scriptures and he was still willing to be taught. So, why not us?

History proves falsehoods can become widely accepted as truth, the 'Piltdown Man' evolution hoax being a notable example of this. Most people tend to take the scholars word for it; they simply assume what the experts teach *is* the truth. But where Bible questions are concerned, we can test if what we believe is true or not. Seeking the truth requires us to weigh the evidence without prejudice. If we are to render a fair verdict, then we must be careful not to let our judgment of the facts be prejudiced by views we have held up until now, but never put to the test.

There is very often a difference between what people think the Bible says and what it really says. So, the way to verify the truth on biblical issues is to check to see what the Bible itself says. In this case, since the fourth gospel's author identified himself in terms of Jesus' love for him, why not look to see who had such a relationship with Jesus?

Since the Bible never singles out John in this manner, it is fair to ask, what evidence would lead anyone to think it would honor God to say, '*John was the beloved disciple*'?

The Bible has much more for us to consider regarding this question, and thank God, the identity of the one whom “Jesus loved” can be shown from a study of the Bible facts alone. Rather than quoting non-Bible sources, the method used to shed light on the beloved disciple in this study is to weigh the data in scripture and let God’s word guide us to the truth. By doing so, it is hoped readers of this work will gain a new appreciation for the details God has preserved for us in the biblical record.

Today many people assume the Bible cannot reveal anything new, because they assume teachers and scholars have already mined all of the truth out of God’s word. But the evidence in this study will prove otherwise and will confirm scripture can still provide “reproof” and “correction” (2Ti 3:16). Let us not trust in “enticing words of man’s wisdom,” because our faith “should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1Cor 2:4 & 5).

What would you say to someone who asked, why should people read the Bible? If the best people can hope for is to learn what scholars have already discovered, then why not just tell people to read the writings of scholars, rather than reading the Bible and risk misunderstanding what it says?

The goal of this book is to encourage a love of the truth. Lord willing, those who read this study will be led to read the Bible more often, to read it more carefully, and to test the things that they are told by others, rather than just assuming them to be true. Concerning this issue, would it not be wise to heed the “prove all things” admonition (1Th 5:21), especially since there are a number of Bible facts that do seem to argue against the John tradition?

If the evidence of scripture can disprove the John idea, then the authority of God’s word provides sufficient reason for rejecting the non-Bible sources that are used to justify the John tradition. Herein, the light of scripture will expose the danger of assuming that the opinions of others can serve as a measure for determining what is true! The truth is not assured by simply following the herd.

We know many things about John: his name; he was the son of Zebedee and had a brother named James; he was a fisherman; he and his brother were partners with Peter, and were there when Jesus healed Peter’s wife’s mother; he was one of the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus; he and his brother asked for the seats on the right and the left of Jesus and Jesus surnamed them, “Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder;” John was there at the raising of Jairus’ daughter, the transfiguration, and Jesus’ prayers in the garden; John and his brother wanted to call fire down from heaven on one group of people, and Jesus rebuked them for it; John was the one who told Jesus, “we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him;” etc. (Mt. 4:21, 10:2, 17:1, 26:37, Mk. 1:19, 1:29-31, 3:17, 5:37, 9:2, 9:38, 10:35, 14:33, Lu. 5:10, 6:14, 8:51, 9:28, 9:49, 9:54-55, et al.) Yet, amazingly, none of this information about John can be learned from the book many assume was written by the Apostle John.

As will be shown in this study, the only detail in the fourth gospel specific to John is a notation that “the sons of Zebedee” were present with some fellow disciples at an event reported at the end of the book. But since he is never named in this gospel, a person would have to learn from another source that the Apostle John was a son of Zebedee in order to know the phrase “sons of Zebedee” even referred to John. Thus, the irony is, the least helpful of the four gospels when it comes to learning about the Apostle John and the many things he witnessed, said, and did during the ministry of Jesus, is the book men decided to call ‘*The Gospel of John!*’

The Truth Matters

Gospel of the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

The God-inspired writer of our fourth gospel was careful never to identify himself by name. Since he deliberately concealed his identity, then perhaps it is not wise to ignore his efforts in this regard and uncritically accept the idea that this author was the Apostle John, the brother of James, son of Zebedee. Should we not ask why God's inspired author used cryptic phrases like "the disciple whom Jesus loved" to refer to himself? Why didn't he just use his name? Paul was named repeatedly in his books and John gave his name five times in the Book of Revelation.

Instead of simply identifying himself by name, this author cloaked himself in a veil of anonymity. Since God did not lead this gospel author to identify himself as John, should we be quick to follow those who declare he was the Apostle John? Non-Bible sources can be wrong. So, why would we not want to see if this belief lines up with scripture – especially since the author of this gospel went to great lengths to hide his identity?

This is not to suggest the identity of this author cannot be determined. There is a person who fits all the Bible reveals about this author. Several passages in his gospel, like 20:5 and 21:21, indicate this author was a male. Establishing his identity, however, takes more effort. The evidence-based Bible study method used herein will seek to examine everything the Bible tells us about this man. We will search the scriptures for the answer to the question the author's cryptic self-description poses to the readers of his gospel: Who was the disciple whom Jesus loved?

The Integrity of the Bible

The content of the fourth gospel is true and trustworthy. This is not what is in question. Nothing presented herein casts any doubt whatsoever on the legitimacy of this gospel as inspired scripture or its rightful inclusion in the New Testament. No one should think this study in any way challenges the words of God's inspired writers or the accuracy of scripture. Any such innuendo would plainly be a flagrant distortion of what is discussed in this book.

A firm reliance on the Bible as the inspired word of God does not prohibit the questioning of the traditions of men. Jesus himself was quite willing to challenge religious teachings that were based on an erroneous understanding of the scriptures! It is not improper for us to question teachings or traditions, even widely accepted ones, if we discover evidence that suggests something is amiss. If you love Jesus, then you love the truth (cf. Fourth gospel 14:6). A search for truth, utilizing only the evidence in God's word, is what you will find in this study.

Jury Duty

As you read, act as you would if you were on a jury and the Bible was Exhibit A. Your job is to weigh the testimony of scripture and decide whether or not this evidence is able to meet the burden of proof in two cases, both involving the identity of the disciple whom Jesus loved. You are the one who will render the verdict in these matters, so it is up to you to prayerfully seek the truth and consider the evidence without prejudice.

In the first case, this study will seek to prove beyond a reasonable doubt the Apostle John was not the disciple whom Jesus loved. Although beyond a reasonable doubt is a very high standard, the biblical

evidence presented in this case should be sufficient to meet this standard, in your judgment. The facts will show the Apostle John and this unnamed author were two different individuals.

The second case will seek to prove the identity of this heretofore misidentified disciple, but merely to a preponderance of the evidence. (This means the greater weight of evidence, enough to ‘tip the scales’ or enough to prove something is more likely true than not true.) But, even here, it will be up to you to decide if the evidence offered on this point is sufficient.

Just the Facts and Just the Bible

As was stated earlier, the writer of this gospel always described himself with phrases that avoided directly disclosing his identity. When one takes note of this, then mere dogmatic assertions regarding this author’s identity will probably sound less convincing than they would have otherwise, since his identity was the very thing God saw fit to have him conceal. As you will soon see, however, God’s word can reveal as well as conceal.

Unfortunately, some people do not realize the fourth gospel’s inspired author did not entitle his work *The Gospel of John*. But that title (like the chapter and verse divisions) was not in the author’s original text. It was added to his book by others, and it should be evident this was not a product of the inspired author. Why? Because the author surely did not put his name in a title, since the cumbersome phrases he used to refer to himself in the gospel text clearly indicate he intended to conceal his identity.

All scripture is inspired by God, but hearsay tradition is not. So, this study will not cite non-Bible sources like the opinions of scholars or comments attributed to this-or-that person in the ‘early’ church or the writings of men from the present or the past.

Since man’s wisdom is not God’s wisdom, non-Bible sources ought to be viewed in light of scripture, not the other way around. Thus, only scripture will be cited as evidence herein, and the verdict demanded by the testimony of scripture is what we will discuss.

Verify – According to the Scriptures

In Acts 17:11, we are told the Bereans “were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” We, too, can be diligent in seeking the truth by opening God’s word to see what is written therein.

If we read a book or hear a teaching, then we can subject those ideas to biblical scrutiny (in line with the directive “prove all things” (1Th 5:21)). It was Paul who taught the Bereans. Yet even though he was an apostle, they still searched the scriptures – and they were praised for doing so.

Therefore, it is fair to hold our teachers to the same standard. We can be just as conscientious in our pursuit of truth because we can use the Bible to test our beliefs and the ideas that are presented to us.

The truth is no threat to the followers of Jesus. But new insights challenge tradition, so they are often mocked or dismissed. However, unless mankind has discovered all the truth in the Bible, we should always remain open to the possibility God’s word may have something new to teach us.

The Truth Is Our Goal

God surely knew inspiring this author to refer to himself anonymously would lead some to wonder about this author’s identity. So, let us look to scripture as we try to ascertain who he was. In seeking to answer this question, do not assume the opinions of others can be trusted. Popular opinion can be wrong. Even if ‘everybody’ believes something, this does not make it so. Today, most scholars say dead things became

living things by accident, and they mock those who question their 'accepted truth.' Even so, they are wrong because information and programs (like DNA has) do not arise from random processes.

Let us follow the example of the Bereans. They did not just take Paul's word for it. They searched the scriptures daily, and we should do likewise when we are told "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was John. The truly incredible thing is there is not a single verse that would justify teaching that idea! In spite of this, commentaries and teachers routinely say things like, '*John was the beloved disciple*' and they present this idea as if it was biblical. In reality, however, all such assertions amount to opinion being mistakenly sold as fact. In this study, the light of God's word will enable the reader to see what happens if the John tradition is put to the test of scripture.

Commentaries or other books can be helpful, especially when they highlight some details we might otherwise miss. But we need to test the statements they make, and you should treat this book likewise. Carefully evaluate the two cases that are presented in this study and verify each scripture reference. Although the verses needed for this study are quoted herein, looking them up will enable you to confirm the evidence in its context. By doing so, you will become more grounded in God's word, even as you are built up in both confidence and competence when it comes to discussing the topic of this study. Also, Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." So, rather than cling to our understanding, we should trust in the LORD and follow wherever the truth in his word takes us.

Bible References and Quotes

This study will quote only the Holy Bible, as previously noted. Yet, the wording in your Bible may vary on some of these quotes since there are many different versions of the Bible. Still, no matter which Bible version you use, you will be able to verify the accuracy and context of every passage cited.

The differences in wording between Bible versions will not alter the verdict that is demanded by the evidence. All of the quotes in this study are taken from the King James Version (KJV). While the KJV can be challenging at times it remains the most widely held Bible version, so it will be the one quoted. Thus, you will find some words that appear to be misspelled, like "trieth." These are not errors but are the result of quoting the KJV. [Herein, double quotation marks "" will be reserved solely for quotations from the Bible. Also, for clarification, ten Greek terms are included from the *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, published by Baker Book House, 1981.]

A Worthwhile Pursuit and a Helping Hand

Rather than dive into God's word to see if the John idea is true or not, some try to dodge the issue by asking, '*What difference does it make?*' Well, for starters, if the John idea is not true, then promoting it undercuts the authority of scripture, as does every false idea men ascribe to God's word. In fact, as will be shown, the John tradition actually makes scripture contradict itself (which the truth cannot do). A more in-depth answer to this question follows later. But for now, keep in mind, Jesus indicated the truth matters (Fourth gospel 8:32, 14:6, 17:17, 18:37, et al.).

Per Proverbs 2:3-5, the pursuit of knowledge is a worthwhile endeavor, and the source we should look to is suggested in the next verse. "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding" (Prv 2:6). This pursuit is not a task one needs to take on alone. The Holy Spirit was called "the Spirit of truth" when Jesus told the disciples, "he will guide you into all truth" (Fourth gospel 16:13). Jesus also said the Father would, "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Lk 11:13). So, we should ask the Father for help if we want the Spirit to guide our study of scripture.

From Heaven, or of Men?

Truth is not a minor issue. When Jesus said, “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,” he did so in the context of identifying himself as the truth (Fourth gospel 14:6). He also said, “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (Fourth gospel 4:24). So, clearly, truth is not an optional item or a secondary matter. Furthermore, scripture encourages speaking the truth (Prv 12:17 & 19, Zec 8:16, Eph 4:15 & 25), ties sanctification and growth to truth (Fourth gospel 17:17 & 19, Eph 4:15, 2Th 2:13, Jam 1:18, 1Pt 1:22), links the armor of God and fruit of the spirit to truth (Eph 5:9 & 6:14), and Psalm 145:18 says, “the LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.” If a relationship with God is to be fruitful, respect for truth seems to be vital.

Those who seek the truth would do well to note the test of authority that was used by Jesus. When the religious leaders questioned his authority, Jesus pointed to one’s **source** as a litmus test on authority when he responded by asking them a question about John the Baptist. “The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?” (Lk 20:4) If it was from heaven, then his source was God. So, to avoid facing the truth they had to dodge the issue, since they refused to believe John (cf. Lk 20:5-7) and he testified of Jesus. In our case, this test helps one to properly weigh the evidence by considering its source. Is it from heaven or of men? Keep this in mind as you weigh the words of scripture herein. Many do not take time to consider the source, but this test can help to keep us focused on the fact God’s word is true and it is worthy of our respect.

The Authority of God’s Word

Jesus said, “He that is of God heareth God’s words” (Fourth gospel 8:47). So, the words of scripture should be enough to move us to stand with the truth. When the word of God offers to correct us, we ought to be humble enough to admit that we were wrong, but clearly not all will do so. Proverbs 1:29-30 tells of those who, “hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof” and some people still respond in this way to God’s word today. Sadly, the reaction to truth in our day is far too often precisely like the response the LORD described in Jeremiah 19:15, “they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.”

“*It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man*” (Ps 118:8). So, unlike those who try to defend the John idea by urging people to rely on non-Bible sources, this work will quote the Bible only. This way, the authority of God’s word can move us to accept correction and give us the boldness to witness to the truth on this issue when we face ridicule from those who are wedded to tradition and refuse to admit their trust in non-Bible sources was misplaced. “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Prv 29:25).

What Does the Bible Say?

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

The fourth gospel was written by “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Fourth gospel 21:20 & 24). This is how the author referred to himself, along with “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved,” “other disciple,” etc. and his use of these anonymous terms should prompt us to ask questions like, Other than who?

Saying this was John does not make it true and it is illogical to assume the majority’s opinion must be right. So, we should let scripture be the standard by which truth is judged when it comes to the identity of this gospel author.

The phrase “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is notable for several reasons, but primarily because this means he had a unique bond with Jesus. He was set apart from the rest of the disciples as the disciple (singular) who has the distinction of being the one “whom Jesus loved.”

If you met a man who referred to himself as *‘the one my mother loved,’* you would wonder why he did so. This term suggests a distinctive relationship, and if it is true, it would indicate he and his mother had a unique connection. So, when the Bible calls someone “the disciple whom Jesus loved” it should arrest our attention.

As the author of the fourth gospel used this term to refer to himself it is fair to ask, What could have led him to do so? Since this curious term distinguished the author based on the unique regard Jesus had for him, we should wonder why God’s word wants to call our attention to Jesus’ relationship with this author.

The designation “the disciple whom Jesus loved” differentiates this disciple on the basis of Jesus’ relationship to him. This is not the same as *his* love for Jesus, and the use of that term means Jesus’ love for this disciple is a distinguishing factor or else the phrase is stripped of its meaning.

Since the Bible emphasizes this relationship with Jesus, it is logical to search the scriptures for evidence of such a relationship in Jesus’ life. This is precisely what we will do. Let us begin by probing every passage that mentions this unnamed disciple so we can get to know him a little better.

The “Other Disciple” of the Fourth Gospel

The author first differentiated himself from his fellow disciples in this verse, “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved” (Fourth gospel 13:23). When Jesus was being put on trial, this author said Peter and “another disciple” showed up, who is also called “that other disciple” (Fourth gospel 18:15 & 16). [The literal Greek here reads, “the other disciple” in 18:15, and “the disciple other” in 18:16.] When Jesus was hanging on the cross, the author said Jesus “saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved.” This is the one who the author also called, “the disciple” and “that disciple” (Fourth gospel 19:26 & 27). The author then wove together his terms and used “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved,” along with “that other disciple,” “the other disciple,” and “that other disciple which came first to the sepulcher” when writing about his experiences on resurrection morning (Fourth gospel 20:2, 3, 4 & 8).

This disciple was last mentioned when the author wrote about seven disciples who went fishing together. Jesus visited them, and the author tells us “that disciple whom Jesus loved” was the first one to recognize Jesus (Fourth gospel 21:7). A few verses later, he was called “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and it was confirmed he was the one “which also leaned on his breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?” (Fourth gospel 21:20) The terms “him,” “this man,” “he,” and “that disciple” were next used to refer to him (Fourth gospel 21:21-23). This disciple then revealed he was the author: “This is the disciple which

testifieth of these things, and wrote these things” (Fourth gospel 21:24). The context reveals he is the one called “that disciple” in verse 23 and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in verse 20.

As the preceding references show, the phrase “whom Jesus loved” was the most revealing term that was used by this author to refer to himself. If the Bible calls someone “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” it is reasonable to expect he participated in more than just Jesus’ last days on this earth. Given the uniqueness of this designation he undoubtedly had a significant role in the life of Jesus. Moreover, he absolutely must have interacted with Jesus prior to the Last Supper.

These references let us know the author was present for some notable moments of Jesus’ ministry: his last Passover, his crucifixion, and his unoccupied tomb on resurrection morning. But now carefully read each of the following passages and then consider them together. What is missing?

A Look at the Scriptures

Fourth gospel 13:21-28 (with Jesus at the supper)

Fourth gospel 18:12-18 (with Jesus at his trial)

Fourth gospel 19:25-27 (with Jesus at the cross)

Fourth gospel 20:1-10 (first man at Jesus’ tomb & first to believe)

Fourth gospel 21:2-24 (first to identify Jesus & author of this gospel)

For your convenience, each of these passages is reprinted here with bold typeface highlighting all of the references to “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

- Ch. 13:21-28: “When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom **one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved**. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to **him**, that **he** should ask who it should be of whom he spake. **He then lying on Jesus’ breast** saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped *it*. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave *it* to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.”

- Ch. 18:12-18: “Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did another disciple: that disciple* was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out **that other disciple**, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also *one* of this man’s disciples? He saith, I am not. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.”

- Ch. 19:25-27: “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and **the disciple standing by, whom he loved**, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to **the disciple**, Behold thy mother! And from that hour **that disciple** took her unto **his own home**.”

- Ch. 20:1-10: “The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to **the other disciple, whom Jesus loved**, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and **that other disciple**, and came to the sepulcher. So, they ran both together: and **the other disciple** did outrun

Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And **he** stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went **he** not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following **him**, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also **that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher**, and **he** saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.”

- Ch. 21:2-24: “There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore **that disciple whom Jesus loved** saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher’s coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth **the disciple whom Jesus loved** following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing **him** saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall this man do*? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that **he** tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that **that disciple** should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, **He** shall not die; but, If I will that **he** tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? **This is the disciple which testifieth of these things**, and wrote these things: and we know that **his** testimony is true.”

A Latecomer?

The most unusual thing about the author is he seems to appear unexpectedly from out of nowhere. It should arrest our attention when we learn there is no mention of anyone called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” prior to chapter 13 of the fourth gospel. This person’s history with Jesus is missing.

The very first mention of this unnamed disciple whom “Jesus loved” was at Jesus’ last Passover! (At that event, the rest of the disciples all worried they might be the betrayer and Peter finally urged the one whom “Jesus loved” to ask Jesus who the betrayer would be.) Before this episode, we do not find the terms “other disciple” or “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in the fourth gospel. What can account for this?

No doubt, someone did not suddenly appear on the scene during the last days of Jesus’ earthly ministry and just instantly become “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” The “other disciple” had a special relationship

with Jesus, and this unique bond did not materialize out of thin air. So why do all of the references to this unnamed disciple begin on the day before Jesus was crucified? The questions get even more curious.

The terms “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” “other disciple,” etc. appear in only five passages of scripture (those being the ones just quoted above). Someone close enough to Jesus to be “the disciple whom Jesus loved” must have interacted with Jesus before the Passover prior to his crucifixion. Yet, there is no prior mention of an unnamed “disciple whom Jesus loved” in the book he himself wrote. So where should we look?

Erased from the Bible?

The bad news is that no other books of the Bible contain any reference to any person called “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” You will not find this phrase outside of this author’s own gospel. As a matter of fact, the other three gospel writers avoided mentioning the presence of this “other disciple” even when we know for certain he was present!

For example, all of the gospels tell us Peter followed Jesus into the palace of the high priest on the night of Jesus’ arrest. But the first three gospels totally ignore the “other disciple,” who was there and who got Peter through the door. Since no one else is mentioned in those reports, someone reading one or all of those accounts might think it is safe to assume Peter was alone when this occurred. Wrong! We know Peter and the “other disciple” **both** followed Jesus that night (Fourth gospel 18:15-16). But there is no mention of this “other disciple” in either Matthew 26:58, Mark 14:54, or Luke 22:54-55, all of which tell only of Peter’s following Jesus on that night. Why would the writers of those gospels purposely omit the presence of the “other disciple?”

Why would “the disciple whom Jesus loved” get no visible mention outside of his own gospel? He was very close to Jesus and he played a role during several of the weightiest moments of Jesus’ life. He was the author of one of the four gospels. Yet, if we did not have his gospel, we would not know about Jesus’ unique relationship with him, nor would we have a way to know he even existed! Does this not seem strange to you?

The fact that the first three gospels never refer to the one whom “Jesus loved,” “other disciple,” etc. is significant. As will be shown, this “other disciple” was set apart from the rest of the disciples in a unique way by the actions of Jesus – a key piece of evidence that will help us to identify him.

A Few More Questions Before the Answers

This unnamed disciple did not just suddenly pop up in the days before Jesus was killed. So, then why does it appear this way in scripture? Why did “the disciple whom Jesus loved” write his gospel in such a way that he seems to come from out of nowhere? The scriptures suggest a reason, one that will also help to prove the author’s identity.

What can we learn from the fact that the first mention of this unnamed disciple does not occur until chapter 13 of the fourth gospel? Why did the author of the fourth gospel choose this point in his own gospel narrative to start identifying himself? Chapter 13 tells us a lot about Jesus’ last meal with his disciples before his crucifixion. However, it does not explain either the timing of, or the reason for, the sudden appearance of the one whom “Jesus loved.” Still, there is a significant event in the Bible that does help to answer each of the foregoing questions, and it occurred not long before that last meal. We will focus on this episode a little bit later. First, though, let us take a closer look at John.

Was John The Beloved Disciple?

The Testimony of Scripture Regarding John

John never claimed to be the author of the fourth gospel, so the fact that it bears his name was not his fault. This was caused by others erroneously attributing it to him. The Apostle John cannot be blamed for the mistakes of others, and he is not available to testify on this issue. But God's word has preserved a body of clear and convincing evidence that is able to set the record straight in this instance.

Let us begin by looking to see what the Bible reveals about John, the brother of James and son of Zebedee. We will contrast those facts with the facts about "the disciple whom Jesus loved." As we do this, time and again you will see the evidence indicates John and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" were two different people. We will be analyzing a lot of data about the one "whom Jesus loved" as we go through this process. You will also be learning many of the facts that are needed to establish the true identity of this "other disciple" as we take the time to learn exactly how the evidence 'clears' John.

How Humble Was the Apostle John?

The idea of John being the author of the fourth gospel is typically defended with this excuse, '*John did not identify himself as the author because he wanted to be humble.*' Is this reasonable? John named himself five times in the Book of Revelation. Does this mean he was more prideful or less humble? Surely not. But this contrast does argue against the idea the same man also wrote the fourth gospel. John's identity was repeatedly noted in the Book of Revelation, while in the fourth gospel the identity of the author was repeatedly obscured. Moreover, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is not the most humble-sounding self-description. If it were not part of scripture, the author's use of this designation might actually seem to be quite immodest.

Rather than saying Jesus loved him, if this writer had used his name would it seem *less* humble? (Those who try to attribute this gospel to John offer no logical reason why he would conceal his identity. But it turns out something recorded in scripture about the actual author gives us at least one reason why he might avoid identifying himself by name.)

The notion that humility was the reason that John did not use his name has other shortcomings. Consider what we know about John and his brother. Jesus named them, "The sons of thunder" (Mk 3:17). They sought power to call fire down from heaven to consume people (Lk 9:54).

They also proposed **they** should be the ones sitting on the right and left hand of Jesus in his kingdom (Mk 10:35-40). Does that sound like humility? Their fellow apostles did not seem to think so for it goes on to say, "when the ten heard *it* they began to be much displeased with James and John" (Mk 10:41). So, it was not humbleness on the part of John and his brother that caused this indignation among the remainder of the twelve. Rather, it was a lack thereof. This does not mean John was never humble. The foregoing facts were brought up merely to show the Bible does not give us any reason to believe John was unusually humble. Prior to the day of Pentecost at least, it seems humility was not John's strong point. Although the presence of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost naturally would have led the apostles to be more humble, this does not permit us to assume unfounded actions on the part of John or any other apostle or disciple.

In the Book of Revelation, John was named five times, and some other writers of scripture named themselves in their books. But this does not mean they were not humble. In addition, nothing in scripture indicates the Apostle John had reason to, or ever tried to, conceal his identity. So, to assume the author of

the fourth gospel is referred to as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” just because ‘*John wanted to be humble,*’ turns out to have absolutely no scriptural support whatsoever.

A Glaring Oversight?

A simple truth can sometimes go unnoticed, but when we realize it or when it is pointed out to us, then we wonder how we could have ever missed it. Consider, for example, the other books of the Bible that are traditionally attributed to the Apostle John. Guess what is missing from all of them? None of those books ever call the Apostle John “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Neither does any other book in the Bible. But if, as the tradition of men claims, John wrote the book that today bears his name, then what can explain this glaring contrast?

Those who claim the Apostle John wrote the fourth gospel lack a plausible explanation as to why the identifying term “Jesus loved” and this unique relationship were never associated with John by any writer of scripture. Moreover, those who believe that both the fourth gospel and the Book of Revelation were written by the Apostle John cannot explain why he named himself in one book and not the other.

Then again, it might be John was not called the one whom “Jesus loved” anywhere in scripture because he was **not** “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” So perhaps this disciple was someone else, someone who was other than the twelve.

Why Include the One Whom “Jesus Loved” but Exclude John?

The other gospels treat John and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” differently. John and his brother upset the rest of the apostles on at least one occasion (Mk 10:41). Yet, the other gospel writers had no problem including John. Excluding references to John the Baptist, John was named a total of twenty times in their gospels. (He was referred to only once in the fourth gospel and we will consider this later.) The other gospels talk of Jesus taking aside “Peter and James and John” (Mt 17:1, Mk 14:33, Lk 8:51, et al.) and each one mentions other things about John. Time and again, the first three gospels note John’s presence and/or his actions at various events. So, the writers of those gospels were more than willing to talk about John’s involvement in Jesus’ ministry. There is something incredibly peculiar about this. Do you see the problem this presents?

The other three gospel writers never refer to the one whom “Jesus loved,” the “other disciple,” etc. As was noted earlier, they do not mention him even when scripture proves he was present (i.e., Fourth gospel 18:15-16 as contrasted with Mt 26:58, Mk 14:54, & Lk 22:54-55). So, while the other gospel writers do mention John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is conspicuous by his absence from their books. If he was John, then this inconsistent treatment presents a problem. Did the other three gospel writers freely mention John, except for all those times when the fourth gospel happens to mention “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” the “other disciple,” etc.? How could they have known when to leave him out? Even if they had a copy of the fourth gospel to know when it referred to this unnamed disciple, it does not follow they would omit all mention of him if he was John. However, if they knew he and John were two different people, then this dissimilar treatment is understandable.

Also, Matthew 27:56 tells us, “the mother of Zebedee’s children” was present when Jesus died, but never mentions her son John. Yet “the disciple whom Jesus loved” **was** at the cross. So, those who say he was John are inevitably forced to believe this author felt the presence of John’s mother was worthy of mention but her son the Apostle should be left out of the same account. Is this reasonable? In Matthew 20:20, “the mother of Zebedee’s children” was also mentioned. But there the author included “her sons” (John and James) and their conversation with Jesus (Mt 20:20-24). Since John was included with his mother when this author named her earlier, would this author have named her while ignoring John in his account of Jesus’ death if John had been there?

Does the work of the other three gospel writers suggest the “other disciple, whom Jesus loved” and John were the same person? No, it does not, and those who claim John was the “other disciple” cannot explain this discrepancy. The other three gospels omit the one whom “Jesus loved,” but we find many references to John in those gospels. This distinct treatment suggests these were different people, not the same individual. Conversely, if they were two different people, then it makes sense to find the other gospel writers treating them differently.

The Relationship Between Jesus and John

Some people claim Jesus had an ‘inner circle’ of disciples because there were three times when only “Peter and James and John” were permitted to accompany Jesus (Mt 17:1, Mk 13:3 & 14:33, Lk 8:51). These three occasions were mentioned briefly in the last section. No doubt, being selected to be with Jesus at these moments was a privilege Peter, James, and John enjoyed over the rest of the disciples.

John’s inclusion in this so-called ‘inner circle’ has been used by some as a rationale for supposing John must be “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” They say this shows John had a special relationship with Jesus, which then leads them to assume the phrase “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is talking about the Apostle John. Unfortunately, this is not good logic, nor is it scriptural. First, John was not alone with Jesus on those occasions. If being included in those events implies an ‘inner circle’ relationship, then this would also be true for Peter and James. Even so, scripture never suggests John’s relationship with Jesus put him in a class above Peter and his brother James, nor does it indicate John’s relationship with Jesus was otherwise unique among the apostles.

Jesus did choose Peter and John to prepare his last Passover (Lk 22:8). However, this one verse is not enough to justify assuming Peter and John were the two closest disciples of Jesus. Regardless, many do believe the two closest disciples of Jesus were Peter and John. But this is because they have already assumed John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” This idea is so pervasive most do not notice when circular reasoning is used to argue for John being “the disciple whom Jesus loved” – e.g., *‘Peter and John were the closest ones to Jesus, and Peter was not “the other disciple,” so it must be John.’* It is true Peter was not “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Fourth gospel 13:23-24, 20:3 & 21:20), but this line of reasoning says nothing about John because the argument rests on a false premise.

Superficial arguments might convince people to believe John was the one whom “Jesus loved,” but the evidence proves otherwise. There is no reason to assume this anonymous disciple was an apostle or that he was one of the three men that joined Jesus on the three occasions that were discussed above. As you will see, the author called himself the “other disciple” for a very good reason – because he was “other” than the twelve.

Peter Was Foremost Among the Twelve

Peter was the first disciple who was focused on by Jesus; Jesus told Peter to feed his sheep and called Peter blessed; an angel mentioned Peter by name on resurrection morning; it was Peter who gave an answer to the mockers on the Day of Pentecost (Fourth gospel 1:42 & 21:15-17, Mt 16:1, Mk 16:7, Acts 2:14). These and other passages show, Peter was the one who stood out among the twelve.

One would expect Peter to stand out from the rest of the twelve because this fits with what scripture says about him, but this cannot be said when it comes to John. When Jesus was arrested, his disciples fled (Mt 26:56, Mk 14:50). After that, Peter at least somehow found the courage to follow Jesus (Fourth gospel 18:15, Mt 26:58, Mk 14:54, Lk 22:54), although his three denials did begin soon thereafter.

Among the twelve apostles, it was not John but Peter who had a noteworthy relationship with Jesus. (Still, Peter was not “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” as has been noted.) Before Pentecost, John was not singled out in this way in scripture. Although Jesus did take aside Peter, James, and John three times, John’s

actions in the gospels do not suggest he was a cut above the rest of the twelve. Conversely, scripture does imply “the disciple whom Jesus loved” **was** a cut above the rest of the disciples, and we will go into detail about this later. Furthermore, a unique and very close relationship with Jesus is precisely what the term “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is acknowledging.

Do the times when Jesus took aside Peter, James, and John provide a basis to claim the one whom “Jesus loved” was John? It takes a big stretch to make such an assumption. However, without this, the argument *for* John goes nowhere.

The Behavior and Character of John

Now we will compare the character of John to what we are told about the “other disciple, whom Jesus loved.” First, let’s consider the behavior of John during one of the key events in Jesus’ life.

While Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he specifically asked for John’s support. Matthew 26:37 says Jesus, “took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.” Then Jesus made a simple request, “watch” (Mt 26:38, Mk14:34).

But Peter, James, and John could not even stay awake for Jesus while he spent time in prayer. When Jesus returned and found them sleeping, he made his dismay clear when he said to Peter, “could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Mt 26:40, Mk 14:37) Jesus left to pray again and John let him down a second time. When Jesus came back that time, he “found them asleep again” (Mt 26:43, Mk14:40). The last time he stepped away to pray, they fell asleep also (Mt 26:45, Mk14:41). John acted like his fellow apostles when things were calm, and the three of them failed to stay awake and watch. So, why would John have acted differently from them after the trouble started? The ensuing trial and crucifixion of Jesus were traumatic events, and during that period, the rest of the apostles (excluding Judas) would not have been exempt from being gripped by the same fear that ultimately drove Peter to deny he even knew Jesus (Mt 26:69-74).

Matthew 26:37-45 and Mark 14:33-41 give us a sense of just how much Peter, James, and John disappointed Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane that night. Jesus knew Judas had betrayed him and he knew he would soon be killed. But Jesus’ urgent requests were not able to rouse Peter, James, and John to action. Immediately following this series of failures by the three so-called ‘inner circle’ apostles, an armed and hostile mob showed up, seized Jesus, and hauled him off to trial.

If John could not manage to watch as Jesus had requested at Gethsemane, why would anyone think John abruptly changed and began to act *unlike* his fellow apostles after Jesus was seized? There is no reason to believe John acted any differently than the way the rest of the apostles acted on that night. But the “other disciple” did act differently!

He “went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest” (Fourth gospel 18:15), and at the cross the following morning, Jesus saw “the disciple standing by, whom he loved” (Fourth gospel 19:26). So, it appears he remained in the vicinity of Jesus during the time that transpired between these two verses.

What would an unbiased jury conclude if they compared the behavior of the “other disciple” to that of John, who could not even stay awake for Jesus earlier that same night?

The Bible Presents a Contrast

The night Jesus was seized, the Apostle John let Jesus down three times. But the “other disciple” went in with Jesus a little later, and the next morning, the disciple “whom he loved” was there at the cross of Jesus. This presents a stark contrast. Ask yourself, Does the evidence suggest the “other disciple” and John were the same person or does it indicate they were more likely two different people? If we set aside the John idea and just go by the evidence in scripture, what answer do we find the Bible pointing to?

The loyalty exhibited by the “other disciple” sets him apart from his fellow disciples. Moreover, Jesus entrusted his mother to this unnamed disciple at the cross (Fourth gospel 19:26-27) and it says, “from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*” (Fourth gospel 19:27). [“Unto his own” translates a term that was also used by the author in 16:32, where it is tied to a change in location. So, 19:27 indicates they departed from the vicinity of the cross at that time.]

Then, on resurrection morning, this disciple was the first man at Jesus’ tomb. Furthermore, when he entered into the tomb scripture specifically says he “believed” – the first disciple after the resurrection to do so (Fourth gospel 20:2-4 & 8). This all speaks well of the “other disciple,” but it does not in any way suggest this person was John. On the contrary, the facts in evidence show John and the “other disciple” were two different people because they behaved differently!

“And They All Forsook Him and Fled”

The “other disciple” was not the only one who showed some courage after the disciples fled on the night Jesus was seized. Peter also followed Jesus on that night. However, he remained outside, warming himself by a fire (Fourth gospel 18:18, Mk 14:54 & 14:67, Lk 22:55-56). Then he denied Jesus (Fourth gospel 18:25, Mt 26:70-74, Mk 14:67-71, Lk 22:57-60). After denying Jesus, when Peter recalled Jesus’ prophecy of this, it says he “went out” and “wept bitterly” (Mt 26:75, Lk 22:62). This all occurred before Jesus was taken to Pilate. While we are told Peter left the scene of Jesus’ trial, this is never said of the “other disciple.”

In any case, we need to think of both Peter and the “other disciple” as returning when they followed Jesus that night. This is because earlier that evening, Jesus told his disciples, “ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone” (Fourth gospel 16:32). On the Mount of Olives a little later he also said, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night” (Mt 26:31, Mk 14:27). He was correct. In Mark 14:50 we are told what happened just before Jesus was seized and led away to the high priest. It says, “And they all forsook him and fled.”

So, it would be wrong to assume Peter and the “other disciple” did not flee the scene at Gethsemane, as did the rest of the disciples. Yet, we are told these two men followed Jesus that same night. While this might appear to be a discrepancy in the scriptures, it is not.

With regard to Peter, we are told he followed Jesus “afar off” (Mt 26:58, Mk 14:54, Lk 22:54). This could indicate Peter was keeping a safe distance between himself and Jesus. On the other hand, he might have followed “afar off” as a result of fleeing at first, and then going on to follow after Jesus was taken away. Is it plausible Peter might vacillate like this?

Well, after finding the courage to follow Jesus, Peter soon denied even knowing Jesus. In addition, consider Peter’s vow to Jesus earlier that evening. Jesus had said, “All ye shall be offended because of me this night” (Mk 14:27). But Peter objected to this, and confidently singled himself out as being more reliable than the rest of the disciples. His reply was adamant, “Although all shall be offended, yet not I” (Mk 14:29). Jesus then responded by foretelling Peter’s three denials that would come later that night (Mk 14:30).

Peter insisted Jesus was wrong about this. Mark 14:31 says he “spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.” Is it reasonable to suggest Peter might have remembered his boastful words after he fled? Yes. Whatever the reason, it is clear that after Peter fled with the rest of the disciples, he eventually followed Jesus on that night.

In any case, we still have to deal with the same dilemma regarding the “other disciple.” Did he flee or did he follow? Later it will be shown that there is also a way to answer this seeming discrepancy for the “other disciple.”

Courage Under Fire

When we are careful not to force the identity of John upon the text, our eyes become opened to questions about the unique character of “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” Why did he behave differently as compared to the rest of the disciples? After the rest of the disciples fled, how was it he found the courage to follow Jesus? What gave him the fortitude to stick with Jesus when even Peter finally threw in the towel and left?

If Peter, James, and John could not even stay awake when Jesus asked them to pray, what could have motivated this “other disciple” to follow Jesus into his trial and to stand by the cross until the care of Jesus’ mother was assigned to him by Jesus?

These questions raise even more questions. Is there anyone in the Bible we could expect to exhibit these characteristics? Does scripture give us enough evidence to explain why the “other disciple, whom Jesus loved” behaved the way he did?

As you will soon find out, the Bible is able to answer all of these questions. First though, let us remove any remaining doubts about whether or not John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

A Wrong Assumption & More Evidence

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved and the Last Supper

A misperception about Jesus' last Passover tends to give credence to the idea that the author of the fourth gospel could be John. It stems from the fact that the Bible says "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was the person who "leaned on his breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?" (Fourth gospel 21:20)

Scripture says Jesus "cometh with the twelve" (Mk 14:17) and "sat down" with "the twelve" (Mt 26:20, Lk 22:14). Therefore, many assume the beloved disciple *had to be* one of the twelve. Complicating this, there are also many Last Supper paintings that help instill an image in our mind of Jesus seated with the twelve, having a private supper with no one else in the room. These artist renditions and an erroneous assumption have led many people to accept a faulty conclusion.

The Bible never says the twelve were the only ones present with Jesus at this event. It does not say they were there alone and there is nothing to indicate Jesus' other disciples were kept away. Is there any reason to believe Jesus and the twelve dined alone at that last Passover? Not unless one reads a constraint into the text that is not in Matthew 26:20, Mark 14:17, or Luke 22:14.

Keep in mind, as we have already seen, it is wrong to assume someone is not at an event simply because a passage of scripture does not mention him (cf. Fourth gospel 19:39-40, Mt 26:59-60, Mk 15:46, Lk 23:53).

Earlier it was pointed out it would be wrong to infer Peter was alone when he followed Jesus into the palace of the high priest simply because no one else is named in the reports of this event in the first three gospels. Peter was not alone when he entered the palace of the high priest. Yet, the first three gospels omit the "other disciple" even though he was the one who got Peter in the door! [As will be shown in a moment, Acts 1:21-22 also proves the twelve were not the only men who accompanied Jesus throughout his ministry.]

There are other examples, but the point is if we presume too much or build an argument from silence, we can easily miss the truth. The gospel writers knew how to specify a limited attendance when they meant to do so. Therefore, we must not assume those who are mentioned were the only ones at an event, unless the Bible itself specifies such a restriction.

Dinner Guests?

Scripture does not say the twelve were alone with Jesus during his last Passover. Thus, the next logical question becomes, does anything in the Bible indicate others might have been present? The answer is yes. Several things suggest this.

First off, Jesus and his disciples were guests in someone else's home that night! Earlier that day "the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples" (Mt 26:17-18). Notice, there is no justification for assuming the occupants of this home were expected to cancel their own Passover meal and vacate the premises!

Moreover, Jesus was accustomed to dining with others. The residents of those households where he ate were included, not excluded. Mark 2:15 says, "as Jesus sat at meat in his [Levi's] house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples." Likewise, in Luke 11:37 it says, "a certain Pharisee besought him [Jesus] to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat."

We also see this when Jesus was in Bethany six days before that Passover. We are told, “There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him” (Fourth gospel 12:2). This suggests other questions. Who worked at that Passover supper? Peter and John went earlier in the day and “made ready the Passover” (Lk 22:8-13). But who served the food and who cleaned up? Jesus and his disciples were house guests at the time. So, isn’t it likely their host took care of those details? And isn’t it also likely their host would have dined with them? (Fourth gospel 12:2, Lu. 7:36, 10:38-40, 11:37 & 24:29-30 confirm this is the case.) If the Bible never said the twelve were the only ones with Jesus at that supper, why would we think Jesus and the twelve spent the entire Passover alone by themselves?

Not Alone at the Passover

Other passages likewise indicate the twelve were not alone with Jesus that night. In Acts 1:21-26, a replacement for Judas was selected from a group who Peter identified as “men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us.” So, **the twelve were not the only ones with Jesus during his earthly ministry**. This is rarely discussed, but it proves that in addition to the twelve apostles, other disciples also followed Jesus *throughout* his earthly ministry. So, why assume these men were barred from the supper, if they were welcomed before and after it?

Also, in identifying his traitor Jesus said, “It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish” (Mk 14:20). In the gospels, “the twelve” is used only of those who Jesus named as “apostles” (Lk 6:13). “Disciples” refers to any of his followers, including some or all of “the twelve” (cf. Fourth gospel 6:66, Lk 19:37). For example, following the supper we see Jesus at Gethsemane with “his disciples” (Fourth gospel 18:1). This included the apostles, minus Judas. But it surely would have also included the apostle candidates of Acts 1:21-22, and we know the apostles were not the only ones there with Jesus because we are told of a “young man” who was still with Jesus after the rest had fled (Mk 14:50-51). Immediately after the supper this man was with Jesus and the disciples. Did he just show up or did he arrive with them? If he accompanied them, he was with them earlier, and this would mean he was with them at the supper!

If the twelve were the only ones with him, why did Jesus include the stipulation, “one of the twelve?” If they were alone, why did he not say, “one of” *you*? In fact, the only other time Jesus used the term “the twelve,” this is what he did. It was when the twelve affirmed their commitment to him after many disciples forsook Jesus. He responded, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and **one of you** is a devil?” (Fourth gospel 6:70) [“You twelve” in the Greek reads “you the twelve.”] Thus, at the supper, when he said the traitor was, “one of the twelve” (not ‘one of you’), it indicates “the twelve” were a subset of those who were there! Moreover, Jesus used the term “one of you” earlier at the supper (Mt 26:21, Mk 14:18). So, when he later stated his betrayer would be “one of the twelve” (Mk 14:20), this added detail no doubt brought relief to the disciples who were not included in “the twelve.”

Jesus also said, “with my disciples,” when he sent word regarding who would be eating with him (Mt 26:18, Mk 14:14, Lk 22:11). He did not say with “the twelve,” and nothing indicates he excluded the loyal disciples who Peter said, “companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us” (Acts 1:21). But we do find both Jesus and Peter saying things that point toward others being present at the supper.

After the Supper

If Jesus sat down to supper with the twelve and the one whom “Jesus loved” joined them later, then he was not one of the twelve. The sequence of events in the fourth gospel seems to indicate this is what occurred. For example, notice how the fourth gospel’s author begins his report on the events of that night, “And the supper being ended...” (Fourth gospel 13:2). Ended? Does the record in his gospel start at a later point than the other gospels do when they report on that night? As you will see, the answer is yes, but not merely by reason of this verse.

[Various Bible versions translate this verse differently because of conflicting opinions about the word tenses involved. However, instead of choosing between the opposing opinions of scholars, let us look again to the Bible to see what it can tell us.]

Luke 22:17-19 tells us Jesus, “took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.” Keeping this in mind, one will find the next verse is extremely relevant to this discussion.

Luke 22:20 continues, “Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood which is shed for you.” Did you catch when this occurred? It was “after” supper! [In the Greek it reads, “also the cup after having supped.”] The Bible provides a confirmation of this sequence of events in 1 Corinthians 11:25. In this verse we read, “also *he took* the cup when he had supped, saying this cup is the new testament in my blood.” [Here the Greek says, “also the cup after having supped.”] The sequence of events, and particularly what happened after the supper, has scriptural relevance. Next we will see how this pertains to the anonymous author’s gospel and consider how understanding the sequence of events helps us to identify “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Where Is the Bread and the Cup?

Churches tend to place great significance on the memorial custom that is commonly referred to as Communion. 1 Corinthians 11:26 says, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” So, the emphasis on this is fitting. Moreover, when followers of Jesus think about Jesus’ last Passover, the bread and the cup usually come to mind first.

The gospel accounts of that night focus on this solemn event, but only in three of the gospels. In the fourth gospel, you will find no mention of these things! Why would the one whom “Jesus loved” have omitted the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup from his gospel, especially since he wrote so much about that night? While Matthew 26:20-29, Mark 14:17-25, and Luke 22:14-38 give us the details about the supper, the fourth gospel devotes five whole chapters to the events of that night (Fourth gospel 13:3 - 17:26), much more than the other three gospel writers combined! Yet, in spite of this, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was the only gospel author to omit the bread and the cup. Obviously, this was not because it was unimportant. So, why is it missing?

The four gospels each report different things. So, this author’s omission of the bread and the cup is not a problem. However, this omission might suggest the author was not one of the twelve. We are not told why the author omitted these items. But he may have left this out of his gospel simply because he was not in the room when the bread and the cup were shared. This omission is understandable if the author joined Jesus and the rest of the disciples after they shared the bread and the cup. It would also explain why his report of that evening begins after the supper.

The fourth gospel also does not tell us about Jesus sending two disciples to prepare the Passover. The other gospels all report this in varying detail and they all end with “and they made ready the Passover” (Mt 26:17-19, Mk 14:12-16, Lk 22:7-13). This unnamed author’s omission of this item should not come as a surprise, since this omission is consistent with an account that starts at a later point in the day than the other three gospels do. Now let us look at what his book does say.

The Foot Washing Incident

After mentioning that it was in Judas’ heart to betray Jesus, amazingly, the first thing the author of the fourth gospel tells us about that Passover night is the washing of the disciples’ feet. “He [Jesus] riseth from

supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that, he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet" (Fourth gospel 13:4-5).

Here again, the biblical record is suggesting the supper, or at least a key part of it, had ended, since this begins with Jesus rising, "from supper." [The literal Greek reads, "he rises from the supper."] Despite this, some say they deduce just the opposite, supposing from this passage that the supper had not yet started. They infer this because they begin with the assumption Jesus would have washed their feet before the meal. But it turns out, the Bible does not support this conclusion.

For example, in Luke 11:37 we read about a time when a Pharisee asked Jesus to "dine with him: and he [Jesus] went in, and sat down to meat." Then in the next verse it says, "when the Pharisee saw *it*, he marveled that he had not washed before dinner" (Lk 11:38). Thus, we cannot assume it was customary for Jesus to wash before eating.

Also, in Matthew 15:2 Jesus was asked, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." Mark 7:5 puts it this way, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" So, it seems washing prior to eating was not their usual routine.

These verses show Jesus was not in the habit of always washing before eating and that his disciples behaved likewise. Similar divisions exist today. Some people wash their hands before using the restroom. This differs from most Westerners, who are much more accustomed to washing their hands after using the restroom.

Given what the Bible tells us about that night, it is apparent Jesus washed the disciples' feet after the supper, not before it. Jesus may have done so, but scripture never notes where he actually washed prior to eating, hands or feet. So, while the first item recorded in this author's gospel from that Passover is the foot washing, this is still consistent with the other facts that indicate his account of that evening begins after the supper. Finally, consider that after Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples, it says he, "set down again" (Fourth gospel 13:12). [The Greek says, "having reclined again."] Again? Here the author's use of the word "again" reveals Jesus had already been sitting down earlier that night, before the foot washing occurred.

"Not of You All"

Jesus washed the feet of "the disciples," thus, this was not limited to the feet of the twelve (Fourth gospel 13:5). Then, after Jesus sat down again, he said, "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen" (Fourth gospel 13:18). Here he contrasts a larger group referred to as "you all," with a subset, which he called "chosen." Since the twelve were "chosen" (Fourth gospel 6:70, cf. Lk 6:13), if they were the only ones who were present at this meal, then what distinction was Jesus making here?

Some may think these words were meant to exclude Judas Iscariot. Yet Luke 6:13 tells us, Jesus "called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" and it goes on to list Judas by name (Lk 6:16). We also find Jesus saying, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (Fourth gospel 6:70) Therefore, we see Judas was "chosen." So, if Judas was "chosen," who did the words "you all" refer to? His words here are one more statement that indicates Jesus and the twelve were not alone during that supper, as here again he refers to more than just the twelve whom he had "chosen."

The Sequence of Last Supper Events

If one "whom Jesus loved" does not have to be one of the twelve, then the facts suggest the following scenario. Earlier on that day, Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover. Later, he *arrived with* and *sat down to supper with* the twelve. After the supper, when the record of the fourth gospel begins,

Jesus got up and began to wash the disciples' feet. When Jesus had finished, he sat down again, and only then is "the disciple whom Jesus loved" introduced, sitting next to and leaning on Jesus.

The idea that the one whom "Jesus loved" must be one of the twelve presents irreconcilable problems (more on this later). But the thing to realize is that this idea is not dictated by scripture. We are told Jesus "cometh with"/"sat down" with the twelve (Mt 26:20, Mk 14:17, Lk 22:14). Honest reflection forces us to acknowledge those words do not limit attendance at the supper to Jesus and the twelve. Why? Because the record of scripture proves the gospel writers knew how to specify a limited attendance at an event when this was what they meant to do (Mt 14:23, Mk 5:37 & 9:8, Lk 8:5 offer some of the many examples of this).

A Hidden Key in the Book of Acts

The next two paragraphs might initially seem unrelated to this study, but the information provided is critical to the upcoming analysis of the evidence. Besides his betrayal of Jesus, Judas Iscariot was unique among the twelve for another reason. The Bible says he went to the "chief priests" to betray Jesus (Mt 26:14-16, Mk 14:10-11, Lk 22:2-6), but in addition to becoming a traitor, Judas gained another distinction at that point. Judas' conspiracy with the "chief priests" set him apart from the twelve in that those priests got to meet Judas. Nothing suggests the high priest would have known or even recognized any of the twelve other than him. Once you realize this, you can grasp the importance of a verse found in the Book of Acts. When this is contrasted with the evidence presented thus far, this can conclusively prove the Apostle John could not possibly be the unnamed "other disciple."

Acts 4:1-23 reports what happened to Peter and John after they healed a lame man. They were brought before the "rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas..." (Acts 4:5-6) to be questioned about this miracle. Peter's answer to them is found in Acts 4:8-12.

Then Acts 4:13 tells us, "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Why did the high priest and the rest "marvel?" To begin with, they discovered Peter and John "were unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13). [The words in the Greek mean "unlettered" and "uninstructed."]

Along with any Galilean accent Peter and John may have had, their vocabulary, mannerisms, etc. would have revealed they lacked a formal education. In addition, the Bible lets us know regional traits could be easily discerned by the people of that day (e.g., Mt 26:73, Mk 14:70, Lk 22:59). Regardless, Acts 4:13 points out what really shocked those leaders was seeing Peter and John, whom they judged to be unlearned and ignorant men, exhibit such "boldness." Instead of cowering before the educated men who would judge them, Peter and John proclaimed the name of Jesus.

They also charged those rulers with his death, said God had raised Jesus from the dead, and said the name of Jesus was responsible for the healing of the lame man that had occurred (Acts 4:9-10). During the encounter recorded in Acts 4:5-12, those leaders were learning elementary facts about the men who were before them. Acts 4:13 also says, "they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." [In the Greek it reads, "they recognized them that with Jesus they were."]

The telltale discoveries made by those rulers during this inquisition show Peter and John were not familiar to, or even recognized by, the high priest and his fellow religious leaders. This evidence lets us know the high priest and the other rulers first became acquainted with Peter and John on that day. On top of this, keep in mind Acts 4:6, which lists both "Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas" as being among those who were present at this inquest.

The Apostle John and the High Priest

The reaction of the high priest and the other religious rulers was a response to new information. It was

when Acts 4 was actually happening that the high priest and those with him learned the things which led them to conclude Peter and John were unlearned and ignorant men who had been with Jesus. Here the high priest was learning things which he would have already known if he had been previously acquainted with the two men who were standing in front of him.

Therefore, the high priest did not know John prior to Acts 4 and this proves John could not have been the “other disciple.” To confirm this, let us look at the record of the night Jesus was arrested and taken away to be falsely accused.

We are told Jesus was taken “to Annas first” (Fourth gospel 18:13). Then we read about two disciples who followed Jesus; “Simon Peter followed Jesus and *so did* another disciple” (Fourth gospel 18:15). [The Greek here states, “Now there followed Jesus, Simon Peter and the other disciple.”] Then, the verse says something that ultimately ‘clears’ John. It says, “that disciple was known unto the high priest.” It seems God wanted to highlight this, for his inspired author emphasized this fact by repeating it.

The next verse says, “Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter” (Fourth gospel 18:16). The “other disciple” was known to the high priest and he had access to the high priest’s palace. Does this suggest he was a Galilean fisherman? Certainly not. Furthermore, this disciple was the one who got Peter past the doorkeeper.

Consequently, **the Apostle John could not possibly have been the “other disciple” because John was not known to the high priest** (Acts 4:13). [This holds up even if a person is inclined to question whether Annas or Caiaphas was acting as high priest in those days, since both of them were present during the events of Acts 4.] Prior to Acts 4:13, there is nothing to suggest the Jewish leaders were acquainted with John or knew of his association with Jesus. In contrast to this, the “other disciple” was known to the high priest, who would, therefore, have known of his association with Jesus.

Moreover, something said on that night shows the “other disciple” was publicly associated with Jesus before that day. Yet this was not true of Peter, as this question reveals: “The damsel that kept the door” asked Peter, “Art not thou also *one* of this man’s disciples?” (Fourth gospel 18:17) The word “also” was a reference to the “other disciple” who had just talked with her (Fourth gospel 18:16). So, even “the damsel that kept the door” knew the “other disciple” was associated with Jesus. But as you now know, John’s association with Jesus was not known to the high priest until Acts 4:13.

If Not John, Then Who?

The evidence presented thus far has shown the Apostle John was not the “other disciple.” God’s word proves the John tradition cannot withstand biblical scrutiny. Scripture never justified believing “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was John. Also, unless Jesus was alone with the twelve at his last Passover meal, nothing would require the one “whom Jesus loved” to even *be* one of the twelve!

Who was this anonymous disciple? The Bible answers this question if we will rely on the evidence in scripture and let God’s word lead us. Many facts point to this author’s identity, from his relationship with Jesus, to details that suggest a possible motive for this author hiding his identity.

There is one, and only one, person in the Bible who can reasonably fit with everything scripture says about this unnamed “other disciple.” As we weigh the facts that reveal the identity of the one whom “Jesus loved,” it will be shown how each piece of evidence concerning the author of the fourth gospel points to a unique, and very famous, friend of Jesus. Nevertheless, recognize the case against the John idea is not dependent on the case that follows. If there is a man in jail for a crime and we uncover proof he did not do it, we do not hold him in jail until we find out who did do it. We let him go. Likewise, if biblical evidence is able to prove the “other disciple, whom Jesus loved” was not John, then we ought to admit our mistake and

let go of that false tradition – whether or not we know for sure who this author was.

Some will act as though it is okay to continue promoting the John idea so long as they object to some point in the next part of this study. But that is not okay. Whoever the one whom “Jesus loved” was, he was not John, and this tradition forces the Bible to contradict itself, as the testimony of God’s word has already shown.

Meet the Author of the Fourth Gospel

What Is God Telling Us?

The author's explicit description of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" puts the focus on Jesus' relationship to him. So, if we want to ascertain the identity of this individual, it is logical to begin by looking for evidence of such a relationship in the life of Jesus. Prior to Pentecost, did Jesus have this type of relationship with anyone? He did. This was so clear that referring to this relationship was sufficient to identify one particular man – without even mentioning his name (Fourth gospel 11:3).

Scripture never says John had this specific type of relationship with Jesus (prior to Pentecost). Moreover, being taken aside by Jesus three times with Peter and James does not imply John had the unique bond implied by the designation "the disciple whom Jesus loved." As has been noted, this term lets us know this disciple was set apart from the rest of the disciples based on Jesus' relationship to him. While this term has been a stumbling block for many on this author's identity, it is actually the key to identifying him.

Hidden in Plain Sight

So much biblical evidence points to the identity of this author, one begins to wonder how it could have all been overlooked. To start with, consider the term "the disciple whom Jesus loved." While it helped to hide the author's identity, it also calls our attention to Jesus' relationship with the author. In the gospels, besides the unnamed author, only one man who associated with Jesus was also identified as being loved by him. Two chapters before he introduced the one whom "Jesus loved," the author of the fourth gospel told of a friend of Jesus who was loved by him – in 11:3, when this message was sent to Jesus, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick," and in 11:5, where we are told, "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus."

Except for "the disciple whom Jesus loved," the only man who associated with Jesus who was singled out as being "loved" by Jesus was Lazarus. We are told "Jesus loved" Lazarus. His sisters cited this relationship, and when Jesus wept prior to raising Lazarus, the Jews who were "weeping" at his tomb attributed Jesus' tears to his love for Lazarus (Fourth gospel 11:19, 33 & 36); so this was public knowledge. The fact that "Jesus loved" Lazarus does not prove Lazarus was the "other disciple, whom Jesus loved." This lead is, however, certainly worth investigating.

Bible References to Jesus' Love

The phrase "whom Jesus loved" identifies the author as being the object of Jesus' love. Since he is not called the one who *loved Jesus*, this book does not examine verses dealing with an individual's love toward Jesus. Also, this study is not meant to be a discussion either on the principles of love or on the general topic of the love of God. Instead, this study will examine what scripture says about Jesus' love for or toward specific individuals.

Outside of the gospels, all of the references to Jesus' love are unrelated to the "other disciple." In the gospels, Jesus' love was referred to fifteen times (Fourth gospel 11:3, 5 & 36, 13:1(2x), 23 & 34, 14:21, 15:9 & 12, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7 & 20, Mk 10:21), but only two men in the fourth gospel were explicitly identified as being the object of Jesus' love, Lazarus and the one whom "Jesus loved" (Fourth gospel 11:3, 5 & 36, 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7 & 20 [Forms of two Greek words, *agapao* and *phileo*, were translated "love" in these verses and both were used to refer to 'both' men]).

In the first three gospels, there is only one time where an individual was said to be "loved" by Jesus. Mark 10:17-22 tells us of a meeting between Jesus and an unidentified man, and the passage says Jesus "loved him." But the passage does not say if this man ever had any other contact with Jesus. So, we will proceed

to take a closer look at Lazarus, since the fourth gospel tells of both his association with Jesus and the fact he was loved by Jesus.

A Sudden Appearance

“Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick” was the appeal of Martha and Mary (Fourth gospel 11:3). This reveals Jesus had this relationship with Lazarus prior to that moment. This was confirmed two verses later when we read, “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (Fourth gospel 11:5). Jesus also referred to him as, “Our friend Lazarus” (Fourth gospel 11:11). However, in spite of all the history this implies, the fourth gospel makes no mention of Lazarus until his name appears in the 11th chapter. Why is this?

Nothing in the fourth gospel overtly explains the origin of this friendship. (Still, the curious aspect of this sudden appearance is indeed parallel to what we saw regarding “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”) Even more important, the first three gospels never refer to Jesus’ friendship with Lazarus, nor to the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. (This resembles the similar omission of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in those gospels.)

What makes this noteworthy is we are only told about three people who Jesus raised from the dead: a widow’s son (Lk 7:12-15), Jairus’ daughter (Mt 9:18-25, Mk 5:22-24 & 35-42, Lk 8:41-56), and Lazarus (Fourth gospel 11:14-45). News of these miracles spread quickly (Fourth gospel 11:45, Mt 9:26, Lk 7:16-17). They were all miracles, but the raising of Lazarus was substantially different from the other two, as will be shown.

Jesus’ Friend Becomes a Celebrity

The three other gospel writers do not mention the raising of Lazarus and this is particularly striking because of what happened *after* Lazarus was raised from the dead. “Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him” (Fourth gospel 11:45). (i.e., the eyewitnesses.) Let us compare this to what happened six days later when Jesus was again in Bethany. “Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead” (Fourth gospel 12:9).

So, scripture lets us know the people were attracted to Lazarus in the aftermath of this miracle. This caused such a stir “the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death: Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus” (Fourth gospel 12:10-11).

Is this a testament to the allure of fame or to the witness of Lazarus or perhaps both? We lack further details as to why these people were drawn to Lazarus. But it is clear the public was aware of him and of the miracle Jesus did for him. Consider the event people commonly call the Triumphal Entry (Fourth gospel 12:12-18). Did you know the raising of Lazarus played a key role in terms of the crowd’s attendance at that event? We read of the greeting Jesus received from a cheering crowd as he rode into town on a donkey (Fourth gospel 12:12-15). Scripture also tells us about the crowd’s motivation.

People might assume it was the teachings of Jesus or the realization he was the Son of God that brought out the crowd on that day. But the author of the fourth gospel highlighted a particular reason for the crowd’s participation in that event.

This author points out the raising of Lazarus helped bring out the crowd at that Triumphal Entry. “The people therefore that was with him [Jesus] when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle” (Fourth gospel 12:17-18).

Thus, the crowd’s presence on that day was linked to their having heard the reports about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. “For this cause the people also met him” (Fourth gospel 12:18), and they had merely

heard.

The disciples of Jesus witnessed the raising of Lazarus. Undoubtedly, this was surely an electrifying and unforgettable experience. Yet, for some reason, the writers of the first three gospels decided they should not mention a word about it. What is more, we are told the formerly dead Lazarus had such an effect on the people that the priests took the extreme step of plotting to have him killed. Lazarus was big news! So why did the other gospels not mention any of this? If this seems odd, just think about how this parallels the way the first three gospels also omit “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

The Transition

What may be even stranger than the silence of the other gospels on all of these Lazarus matters, is his abrupt disappearance from the fourth gospel. In 12:9 it says the people came to see Lazarus, and 12:11 tells us he had a strong influence on the Jews. But after 12:17 refers to his return from the dead, the fourth gospel never mentions Lazarus again.

The fourth gospel’s presentation of Lazarus reveals two notable facts. First, Lazarus is named in only eleven verses of the fourth gospel, six in chapter 11 and five in chapter 12. He is not mentioned before chapter 11 verse 1 and after chapter 12 verse 17, he seems to vanish.

But what is even more interesting to note is this friend whom “Jesus loved” is last mentioned in chapter 12 – just before the obscure and unnamed disciple whom “Jesus loved” is first mentioned in the very next chapter (Fourth gospel 13:23).

If you are inclined to think this transition might be simply an unimportant coincidence, then just wait. There is much more evidence to come.

Still, one has to admit this presents us with a striking parallel. The one man associated with Jesus who was also singled out as being “loved” by Jesus **abruptly vanishes** from the text, and then the only disciple to be singled out as being “loved” by Jesus **abruptly appears** in this same gospel.

The sequence of these things in the Bible is no accident! Furthermore, this newly evident disciple plays an important role in the events that follow.

Some may want to dispute the thesis that the “other disciple, whom Jesus loved” was Lazarus because it might seem inconsistent for him to hide his identity as author of the gospel while mentioning his name several times in the same book. However, as will be shown a little later, by weighing the testimony of scripture, one is able to grasp a perfectly logical and biblically sound reason as to why Lazarus may have done precisely this.

Others may point out the Bible does not call Lazarus a “disciple” and we will also deal with this potential difficulty. Here is another reason why the order of these events is significant. This author used the term “the disciple whom Jesus loved” only after Lazarus was raised from the dead in the text – and this miracle was certainly a powerful act of love toward Lazarus.

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, he did not end suffering and death for everyone. The Bible tells of only three people Jesus raised from the dead while he was here. Lazarus was definitely privileged in this regard. This is extremely relevant to the sequence of gospel events, since after Lazarus was raised from the dead, he would never be the same again!

Dead Man Walking

The raising of Lazarus is not fiction. It was an important event in history. So, let us take the time to

consider the reality of this situation. Lazarus was close to Jesus *before* he was raised from the dead. Their relationship was close enough that when Lazarus was ill, his sisters sent for Jesus with this message, “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick” (Fourth gospel 11:3). This relationship must have existed for some time, and the message reveals his sisters felt “he whom thou lovest” applied to Lazarus, since their message did not even mention his name.

Lazarus had a close relationship with Jesus before Jesus raised him from the dead. What do you think this relationship was like after that experience? How would Lazarus have been changed by receiving this one-of-a-kind gift from God?

Is it reasonable to believe Lazarus simply said thanks and went back to his usual, daily routine – spending his time on the cares of this world, just like his fellow citizens?

It is laughable to suggest Lazarus could just brush off the tomb dust and return to his normal life. Pause and take time to consider this miracle. It would surely be the most profound event in anyone’s life. But for one who was already close to Jesus the effect must have been extremely transforming. How would Lazarus have been different after that?

Later, when Jesus came to Bethany again, “they made him a supper” (Fourth gospel 12:1-2). Yet, no one would believe that a supper was the full extent of Lazarus’ effort to show his gratitude or his loyalty. Peter once said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (Fourth gospel 6:68).

Where would Lazarus have gone? He not only heard the words of Jesus, he experienced their power firsthand, in a way that few ever did. In light of this, which of the following is most likely?

- A. Lazarus lived in fear of death for the rest of his time on earth, because he knew what it was like to die and dreaded having to do it again.
- B. Lazarus returned to what he was doing before he got sick. He remained a normal guy, tried to be a good person, observed the Sabbath, etc.
- C. Lazarus was thoroughly and radically changed in response to this rare and precious gift from God.

Like White on Rice

Lazarus already had a special relationship with Jesus, so his response to this gift from God would not have been limited to mere gratitude. Without a doubt, he would have been motivated to be even closer and more loyal to Jesus than he had previously been.

In fact, from that day forward, Lazarus more than anyone else, would have a reason to stick close to Jesus, ‘like white on rice’ as the old saying goes. Also, not surprisingly, close to Jesus is exactly where we next find Lazarus. When Jesus was in Bethany again, we read, “There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him” (Fourth gospel 12:2).

This verse and 11:44 are the only verses that actually depict Lazarus. So, this is the last time he is depicted in the Bible. (He is mentioned later in 12:9, 10, and 17, but he is not depicted as being present.) Since this is his last appearance, what stands out about this verse?

Where we find Lazarus in his final appearance is the key thing to note. The last time that Lazarus is seen, he is **sitting with Jesus at a supper table** and the first time that the one whom “Jesus loved” is seen he is **leaning on Jesus at a supper table** (Fourth gospel 12:2 & 13:23). Is this simply another remarkable coincidence or is it part of a larger pattern of evidence?

You will have to decide. For now, let us look at another time when someone seemed to stick close to Jesus. After Jesus was arrested, the “other disciple” followed him and “went in with Jesus into the palace

of the high priest” (Fourth gospel 18:15). Later, when Jesus was on the cross, Jesus looked down and “saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved” (Fourth gospel 19:26). The apostles were not standing at the foot of the cross, yet this disciple was there!

Why him and not the rest? What gave him the courage and stamina to stick with Jesus until he was assigned to the mother of Jesus and “took her unto his own *home*?”

The evening prior, Peter, James, and John let Jesus down by falling asleep three times. Then, the disciples fled when Jesus was seized. Peter and the “other disciple” reappeared and followed Jesus. But, while this “other disciple” went “in with Jesus,” Peter stayed out by the fire, denied knowing Jesus, and soon left. By contrast, as Jesus was on the cross, the disciple “whom he loved” was close enough for the crucified Jesus to speak to him. So, why did this beloved disciple behave in a way that set him apart as being a cut above the rest of the disciples?

Been There. Done That.

Given their relationship, Lazarus must have known about some of Jesus’ miracles. Then, on top of hearing about or perhaps even seeing miracles, Lazarus personally experienced coming back from the dead. What priority would Lazarus have put on self-preservation after he was raised?

Survival is a very potent human instinct. But it is still fairly easy to grasp why the raised Lazarus might not have behaved like the rest of the disciples. God taught him, in the most emphatic way possible, that death is not necessarily final. More important, he learned Jesus can give life. Thereafter, faith in Jesus would not have been a mental concept for him. He had become living proof of the power of Jesus, and every time he subsequently awoke, it is likely he recalled the moment of that miracle.

Regarding death, Lazarus had ‘Been there. Done that.’ – though he would surely not have been cavalier about it. Imagine the effect this miracle had on his life. Such an experience could reasonably be expected to have had a significant effect on his fear of death. (Possibly even overcome it?)

The Courage Evidence

A close call with death can cause a person to change drastically. Being dead for four days, along with his interactions with those who came to see him after his return (Fourth gospel 12:9 & 17) would have given Lazarus a wholly unique outlook on life. Could this lead to the type of courage and character the Bible attributes to the unnamed “other disciple?” The “other disciple” went “with Jesus into the palace of the high priest,” even though he was a known associate of Jesus (Fourth gospel 18:15-17). Unlike the rest of the disciples, the “other disciple” did not act in a way that exhibited a concern for his own life. Nevertheless, this is understandable if this individual was Lazarus.

Also, if the “other disciple” was Lazarus, then he was truly at risk when he entered the “palace of the high priest” because the “chief priests” wanted to kill Lazarus too (Fourth gospel 12:10). We are not told if Lazarus knew about the plot to kill him at that time or if he learned about it at a later point. Regardless, the unique behavior of the “other disciple” still befits a raised-from-the-dead Lazarus, i.e., a man who would stick with Jesus even when his own life was at risk. Some may ask, If the “other disciple” was Lazarus, why did they not kill him that night? They had planned to kill Lazarus **because** he caused people to believe on Jesus. But if they killed Jesus, which they were in the process of doing, then they had no further reason to bother with Lazarus. Even so, the Bible does not speak to this, so we cannot be sure.

What Is a Disciple?

Some may try to argue against Lazarus being the “other disciple” by pointing out Lazarus was not called a disciple in scripture. While this is true, it does not mean he was not a disciple. He was a friend of Jesus

and the apostles, for Jesus referred to him as, “Our friend Lazarus” (Fourth gospel 11:11). So, we know Lazarus must have spent time with them. However, the question for us is: Would it be correct to refer to Lazarus as a “disciple?”

“Disciple” was not a rank like Eagle Scout. There was no prescribed ritual to become a disciple. In the Bible, disciples come and go (cf. Fourth gospel 6:66, Acts 6:1). The term “disciple” is used in many verses, about a wide variety of people. [In the Greek, this word simply means a “learner” or “pupil.”]

While it is not precisely clear what made one a disciple, to contend Lazarus was not a disciple merely because he is not called a “disciple” in scripture is not reasonable. Why? Well, the first three gospels do not call him a disciple, but they could not do so, since they never mention him at all (not his friendship with Jesus, nor the miracle of his being raised from the dead).

The one gospel that tells us about Lazarus, also does not call him a “disciple.” But this would fit with Lazarus using the term “the disciple whom Jesus loved” to cloak his identity as the author of the gospel. [Another possibility is Lazarus may have graduated from friend to dedicated follower of Jesus only in the aftermath of what Jesus did for him. If so, this may be why the author referred to himself as a “disciple” only after he reported this miracle.]

The author said his goal in writing was “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (Fourth gospel 20:31). We will revisit this verse later when we discuss the author’s motive for hiding his identity. For now, let us realize the author was only including things that would help accomplish this goal. As we will see, this was reason enough for him not to call Lazarus a disciple. (Not identifying Lazarus as a disciple may well be the key reason the author’s effort at anonymity was so effective.)

Finally, to suppose Lazarus never became a disciple is not reasonable. We know he was loved by Jesus. He was raised from the dead by Jesus. He had supper with Jesus. Is it fair to infer Lazarus *learned* from his experiences and his relationship with Jesus? Yes, it is.

The Character Evidence

Coming back from the dead would certainly affect one’s character. Thus, it is reasonable to think Lazarus might exhibit a high degree of courage and faithfulness toward Jesus, in a way that set him apart from the apostles and the rest of the disciples. Do we see Lazarus behaving this way? Well, if Lazarus was the “other disciple,” then he *did* manifest these traits. So, we will weigh the actions of the “other disciple” to see if he behaved as a raised-from-the-dead Lazarus would act.

Notice how the one whom “Jesus loved” was set apart from the rest of the disciples by his reaction on the night of the supper. The topic of the betrayer came up several times that evening. First, before the bread and the cup, when Jesus said the traitor was “one of you” (Mt 26:21, Mk 14:18). Then the disciples were “sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?” (Mt 26:22; cf. Mk 14:19) This is different than asking, Who is it?, because to ask their question was to doubt their own character! This ended when Jesus ruled out all but the twelve by saying, “*It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish*” (Mk 14:20). Then, after the bread and the cup, the issue came up again. But since Jesus already ruled out all but the twelve, this time the response takes the form of a dispute about which apostle it would be; “they began to enquire among themselves, which of **them** it was that should do this thing” (Lk 22:23).

Still, the reaction of one person stood out from the rest. We see this after the foot washing, when Jesus sat down “again” (Fourth gospel 13:12). At that point, Jesus once again raised the issue of the traitor (Fourth gospel 13:21). The next verse says, “then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake” (Fourth gospel 13:22). Peter then probed further by using the one “whom Jesus loved,” who was then present. “**Now** there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he [Jesus] spake” (Fourth gospel 13:23-24).

Why did Peter not ask this himself? Did he doubt his own loyalty? He was an apostle, yet he used the one whom “Jesus loved” to ask this question. What about this disciple that made Peter turn to him instead of just asking Jesus directly? [Would Peter have gone through John to ask Jesus a question? Mark 10:41 suggests he would not.]

Anyone at the table was close enough to ask a question, yet Peter chose to prompt the one whom “Jesus loved” to do it. When Peter signaled him to ask which one of the twelve would be the traitor, this man did not hesitate or exhibit self-doubt like the rest had.

“He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?” (Fourth gospel 13:24-25) Indeed, his ease in posing the question befits the raised friend whom “Jesus loved,” because Lazarus would know whoever the betrayer was, it could not be him!

The one whom “Jesus loved” appears to have no qualms about asking this question. Unlike Peter, he seems sure of himself, and his physical position even suggests this for the author lets us know he was leaning on Jesus.

Three times the author described his position at the supper (Fourth gospel 13:23 & 25, 21:20). This reveals more than just the seating arrangements. His position at the table that night gives us insight into how close he was to Jesus personally. He could lean on Jesus because they had a close relationship.

No one else is said to have leaned on Jesus. This friendship did not materialize out of thin air on that night and it seems to be superior to the bond Jesus had with the rest of his disciples, including Peter. The quality and degree of camaraderie that is revealed by his position imply a secure friendship and an obvious devotion.

Moreover, Peter’s choice to use the one whom “Jesus loved” to ask about the betrayer lets us know this disciple was not one of the twelve. How? Peter would not use *any* of the apostles to ask this question – because Jesus had already said one of the twelve would be the traitor (Mk 14:20). One apostle could not be trusted and Peter wanted to know who it was. If he wanted someone to ask for him, it would have been someone who was **not** one of the twelve.

Does the Evidence Fit?

Is it reasonable to suppose Lazarus may have been privileged to have an especially close friendship with Jesus at the time of the supper? Yes, it is. Would such a relationship explain some of the actions of the one “whom Jesus loved” on the night of the supper? Does the evidence fit Lazarus? If you have not yet been persuaded, perhaps you will be convinced by the evidence from the morning when the unoccupied tomb of Jesus was discovered.

Resurrection Morning

Look at this author’s account of the events on resurrection morning. It is not merely a confirmation of the unoccupied tomb. If this was all God wanted, this anonymous author might have been inspired to use fewer words. So, keep an eye out for the details his words contain, because they provide us with quite a bit of revealing data regarding the “other disciple” and all of it ends up supporting the case for Lazarus.

“The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the

sepulcher” (Fourth gospel 20:1-4).

Pause and consider the last sentence above. Did the author mention this merely to let us know he (the “other disciple”) was a better athlete? Or was he simply being accurate? There is another possibility we should consider. Ask yourself: Other than sheer athletic ability, what could have caused the “other disciple” to outrun Peter? (The answer to this, it turns out, also suggests why this point was even noteworthy.) The answer is adrenaline! The “other disciple” might well have outrun Peter simply because he had a more intense desire to see the tomb. If so, then he would have pushed himself harder to get there even more quickly. As you consider this, remember it was the one whom “Jesus loved” who wrote this and took the time to describe this seemingly trivial detail from that day.

The idea that Jesus’ body was not in the tomb would also have had a special impact on Lazarus, who had recently vacated a tomb of his own.

Now, let us pick up where we left off. “And he [the “other disciple”] stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead” (Fourth gospel 20:5-9).

In our day, *‘the empty tomb’* is a term used by some who say this is proof of Jesus’ resurrection. While this may be well-intentioned, it is not biblical. First, realize the things Peter and the “other disciple” saw in the tomb on that morning did not fit with their understanding of scripture. We know this because it says, “as yet they knew not the scripture, that he [Jesus] must rise again from the dead” (Fourth gospel 20:9). This is highly significant because these two men react differently.

In addition, notice the tomb was not empty! Even though the tomb no longer contained the body of Jesus, the tomb did contain some important pieces of evidence.

The Evidence Inside the Tomb

Mary Magdalene told the “other disciple” and Peter the body of Jesus had been removed. This led them to rush to the tomb. It says, “So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher” (Fourth gospel 20:4).

When he got there, he stooped down and saw the linen clothes inside. The “other disciple” stopped at that point and did not go in. When Peter got there, he did not stop; he went right in. The “other disciple” remained outside until this, but then he “went in also” (cf. Fourth gospel 20:2, 4, 5, 6 & 8).

Why did the “other disciple” freeze when he saw the linen clothes? After Peter went in, the “other disciple” did too. Why did he not go in when he first got there? He ran, so he must have felt a sense of urgency. Despite this, he stood outside the entrance until Peter passed by him and entered the tomb. Why did the sight of “the linen clothes” cause him to stop in his tracks?

In a moment, you will see this curious behavior of the “other disciple” offers further evidence that he was Lazarus. But first, let us consider the difference in the reactions of Peter and the “other disciple” to those things they saw in the tomb on that morning – one of them “believed.”

“Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed” (Fourth gospel 20:8). The “other disciple” was the one who believed, and notice when this occurred. It happened only after he entered the tomb and saw “the napkin, that was about his [Jesus] head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself” (Fourth gospel 20:7).

The First Disciple to Believe

Upon seeing the linen clothes and the napkin, the “other disciple” believed. This author took the time to depict these items precisely, and he underscored the linen clothes by repeating this phrase three times (Fourth gospel 20:5-7). This is important and we can learn something about this author/“other disciple, whom Jesus loved” from the emphasis he put on these items and the effect they had on him; he saw, and believed.

Note, the first time the word “believed” is used after the resurrection, it refers to the “other disciple.” This is no small point. His being the first person who believed is extremely significant. (The Appendix will expound on this point later.) Does scripture indicate the Apostle John had any reason to react in a unique way to those items that were in the tomb? No, it does not. Furthermore, apparently Peter did not believe at that point in time. The author makes it clear that the unoccupied tomb, the linen clothes, and the napkin did not have the same impact on Peter.

However, the sight of the linen clothes would likely have stopped Lazarus in his tracks and the sight of the napkin would have had a unique effect on him. The significance of these items would not have been lost on Lazarus, for he had experienced waking up after he had been dressed in linen, *the material that was used to wrap dead bodies*.

The Linen Effect

“He [Lazarus] that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin” (Fourth gospel 11:44). Here the author also mentioned the seemingly trivial detail of the napkin with regard to Lazarus. Moreover, it was when the “other disciple” went in the tomb (i.e., where the napkin could be seen) that this reaction occurred – “he saw, and believed.”

While the author did not report what Lazarus’ “graveclothes” were made of, he noted the Jews used linen to bury the bodies in those days. “Then they took the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury” (Fourth gospel 19:40). So, this would indicate linen was most likely used for Lazarus’ body also.

Let us take a quick look at the use of the word “linen” in the New Testament. The word “linen” was used to translate several different Greek words, but only two of these Greek words involve dead bodies. These two words were both used to describe the material that covered the body of Jesus, so they may well be synonyms (cf. Fourth gospel 19:40 compared to Mt 27:59; and Lk 23:53 compared to Lk 24:12).

One of these words always refers to the cloth covering a corpse. Likewise, the other always refers to the cloth covering a corpse, with one exception. We will discuss this curious exception a little bit later. What we need to think about at this juncture is how Lazarus would have reacted to the sight of the items which had been covering the body of Jesus.

What was the first thing Lazarus saw when he came back from the dead? The inside of the “napkin” that covered his own face! In the moments after Jesus called him back to life, Lazarus came out of his cave-grave still wrapped in his graveclothes. Thus, Jesus gave the instruction, “Loose him, and let him go” (Fourth gospel 11:44). It is unlikely Lazarus ever forgot being loosed. Therefore, it is logical to suggest the sight of Jesus’ former graveclothes would have had a powerful and wholly unique effect on Lazarus!

The “other disciple” ran to Jesus’ tomb and stooped down to go in, but instead he stopped when he saw “the linen clothes” (Fourth gospel 20:3-5). When he did go in moments later, this “other disciple” became the first person to believe on the risen Lord, “he saw, and believed” (Fourth gospel 20:8).

In light of this evidence, especially his reaction to the linen clothes and the napkin, can we conclude this

disciple's behavior befits Lazarus? The facts that are reported about this event in scripture fit together logically and completely if this disciple was Lazarus.

The Fishing Trip

After resurrection morning, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is next seen when he and five others volunteer to accompany Peter, who announced he was going fishing. "There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons of Zebedee*, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee" (Fourth gospel 21:2-3). They caught nothing that night, and the next morning "Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus" (Fourth gospel 21:3-4). Jesus spoke and said to, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship" and when they did they could not pull in the net because of "the multitude of fishes" (Fourth gospel 21:5-6). The author's presence was revealed in the next verse when he wrote, "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord" (Fourth gospel 21:7).

The first one to recognize Jesus that day was "that disciple whom Jesus loved." More important, however, is the list of who was there, for right after he mentioned "the *sons of Zebedee*" (James and John), he mentioned two unnamed disciples were present. This reference to an unnamed disciple fits with the author's pattern of concealing his identity at this point in his gospel. Still, what should grab our attention is when we realize the author **grouped John in with the five apostles** whom he identified in the first part of his list. Then, in contrast with those apostle names, he lumped together the two unnamed disciples and tacked them on to the end of his list (Fourth gospel 21:2).

The author listed "the *sons of Zebedee*" with the apostles, yet he referred to himself anonymously (as "that disciple whom Jesus loved") moments later in verse 7 – and this argues against his being John. The author consistently used anonymous terms to refer to himself since he first did so in his record of Jesus' last Passover, and he continued that practice in this very passage. So, it would be totally contrary to that effort for the author to have named himself in verse 2.

The First Error

Later during this event, those disciples came to shore and dined with Jesus (Fourth gospel 21:7-14). Following this, Jesus had a conversation with Peter (Fourth gospel 21:15-19). This was interrupted when "Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me" (Fourth gospel 21:20-22).

Next, we find a very strange reference to this unnamed disciple. "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee?" (Fourth gospel 21:23) Here, the author reported and corrected an error that was circulating among the brethren. So, the first error about this disciple occurred long before he was mistakenly called John (i.e., when some said he would not die)

How should one respond to a false teaching? The method used by this God-inspired author was to note what **was not said** and then to emphasize what **was said**. He pointed out Jesus did not say what the rumor said. Then he quoted Jesus' words verbatim, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee?" The author offered no further comments on the words of Jesus. Rather, he faithfully presented Jesus' words and let them speak for themselves.

The author clearly expected his readers could understand Jesus' words. But if those words were sufficient for the readers of his gospel, why were they misinterpreted by those who spread the false rumor that said this author would not die?

A Telltale Rumor

The fourth gospel's author tried to correct the misunderstanding that had been circulating among the brethren. Nothing suggests the rumor was started by the men who were on the fishing trip. But there *are* things that indicate how this rumor could arise after others were later told about this trip. Still, regardless of who started the rumor, some of the brethren believed the one whom "Jesus loved" would not die. This begs the question, what could have caused this? Jesus' words did not demand this conclusion, for the author twice quoted his words verbatim (Fourth gospel 21:22 & 23). So, the author of the fourth gospel knew the "not die" idea did not represent what Jesus had said, rather, this idea was wrongly *substituted for* his words.

There is a big difference between people who heard Jesus' words recounted by the men who were on the fishing trip, and all those who would later read those same words in this author's book. The former group had a key piece of information that the author withheld from his readers and this helps to explain why the "not die" idea was ever believed in the first place. What differentiates these two groups is the knowledge of the identity of "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The author did not reveal his identity to those who would later read his book. The disciples of Jesus, on the other hand, knew who he was. His identity was not a mystery to them, and initially at least, they would likely have included this information in their testimony of what happened on the fishing trip.

What was it about this particular disciple that caused some to jump to the wrong conclusion? Why did they assume they should conclude Jesus' words, "If I will that he tarry till I come" meant "that disciple should not die?" The false assumption about this man not dying was not caused by what Jesus said. Rather, it arose because of whom Jesus had been talking about! What if those who heard about this event from those who were on the fishing trip, knew Jesus' words referred to Lazarus? Since he had already died and been brought back from the dead, a reason for the erroneous rumor becomes evident, and it is possible to see why some could jump to the conclusion that the words Jesus spoke meant, "he should not die."

Jesus had displayed his willingness to have his friend Lazarus loosed from the bonds of death even after four days. This miracle took place not all that long before the "not die" rumor occurred. This was a unique blessing, one not granted to all the disciples, nor their families and friends. Lazarus was one of the few individuals who had ever been chosen to receive this one-of-a-kind gift and all of the disciples knew it (Fourth gospel 12:9, 11 & 18).

If the one whom "Jesus loved" was Lazarus, then, as noted, there is a logical explanation for the origin of the false rumor. Jesus had already raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. So, those who knew he was the subject of Jesus' words mistakenly inferred Lazarus would be exempted from having to undergo a second physical death.

The "not die" rumor may also have arisen due to people reading a false meaning into these words – "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (Fourth gospel 11:25-26). Jesus said this to Martha in the context of his raising of Lazarus, and she likely mentioned this when she talked about that event. So, the "not die" idea could also be linked to a misapplication of Jesus' words "shall never die."

Once again, it turns out the facts surrounding this disciple perfectly fit Lazarus. This telltale rumor easily harmonizes with all of the other biblical data, if Lazarus was the one whom "Jesus loved." Before we consider more facts that support this conclusion, first let us try to answer this question: Why did this author conceal his identity?

Why Did the Author Write the Gospel?

The Motive?

The fourth gospel's anonymous author took the time to record his purpose for writing his book, and this is likely part of the reason he hid his identity.

He wrote, "many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name" (Fourth gospel 20:30-31).

The author's aim was to point people to Jesus and encourage them to believe he "is the Christ, the Son of God." While this may appear merely to be his goal for the gospel, it turns out this objective provided a motive for this author to cloak his identity. (All of this was under the inspiration of God, of course, but God does use people in their existing circumstances to declare his will and carry it out.)

The author wanted to point people to Jesus, so he would have avoided doing things that might have interfered with this goal. Also, Lazarus had a reason to believe disclosing his identity could interfere with this objective. If we consider what happened after Lazarus was raised from the dead, we can see the problem he faced. He became a celebrity. If he was the author of the fourth gospel, did this present a dilemma for him when it came to the gospel's stated goal?

The Fame Problem

In chapter 12, which is the last place Lazarus was mentioned by the author, we get a feel for how famous he became. For instance, it says, "they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead" (Fourth gospel 12:9). Consider the implications of "**they came not for Jesus' sake only.**" How would this have affected Lazarus?

Would he have welcomed the spotlight and basked in the glory this brought to him? Nothing suggests he took advantage of this or milked it for his own ego. (The sudden disappearance from the fourth gospel of the name Lazarus actually indicates quite the contrary.)

Prior to Pentecost we do not read of people wanting to "also" see Peter or any of the apostles, even though they helped feed the crowds (Mt 14:19, 15:36, et al.) and displayed power over devils (Lk 10:17). The focus of the people had always been Jesus. They came to confront, see, touch, listen to, or be healed by Jesus. But after Lazarus was raised from the dead in front of many eyewitnesses, the people came to see him "also." Thus, the friend whom "Jesus loved" faced a peculiar dilemma.

We read, "by reason of him [Lazarus] many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (Fourth gospel 12:11). Moreover, the raising of Lazarus was a key reason the crowd met Jesus when he rode in to Jerusalem on a donkey. "For this cause the people also met him [Jesus], for they heard that he had done this miracle" (Fourth gospel 12:18). This may lead some to suggest Lazarus' new found fame was a good thing because it could help to draw more people, who would then get to hear Jesus. However, there is good reason to suspect this would not have achieved a lasting result, since the crowd at the Triumphal Entry was not cheering for Jesus just a few days later, when the choice for pardon was Jesus or Barabbas.

There is no reason to think the raised Lazarus was anything but loyal to Jesus. Nevertheless, he became a novelty, who people also sought in addition to Jesus (Fourth gospel 12:9). This would have presented Lazarus with an unusual problem.

John the Baptist articulated this principle: “He [Jesus] must increase, but I *must* decrease” (Fourth gospel 3:30). One way Lazarus could avoid drawing attention away from Jesus would be to ‘disappear’ (by obscuring his identity or becoming anonymous).

The author of the fourth gospel did not report everything Jesus did (Fourth gospel 20:30). The goal of his book was that its readers “might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” so they could “have life through his name” (Fourth gospel 20:31). The author had a motive to cloak his identity. If he was Lazarus, he may have hidden his identity to prevent his notoriety from interfering with the goal of the gospel. Is this what led the author to hide his identity? While we cannot know for sure, this explanation is at least a reasonable and biblically sound possibility.

What about Him?

Even the disciples were not immune to this distraction effect, as can be seen when some of them accompanied Peter on a fishing trip and Jesus paid them a visit. While seven disciples were present, the resurrected Jesus took the time to focus on Peter (Fourth gospel 21:15-19). Moreover, we are also told this was only, “the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead” (Fourth gospel 21:14).

However, in spite of Jesus’ focus on him, it seems as if Peter’s attention was easily distracted – by the presence of “the disciple whom Jesus loved!” “Then Peter, turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*?” (Fourth gospel 21:20-21)

Instead of responding to the words Jesus had spoken to him, Peter appears to change the subject. It is not likely he did this because “the disciple whom Jesus loved” just happened to fall in his line of sight. So, what do you think could have prompted Peter to ask this question?

Furthermore, several disciples were present, so what motivated Peter to focus on “the disciple whom Jesus loved?” Verses 20 and 21 do refer to him “following” and Peter’s “seeing him,” but the mere fact that he was nearby would not have been a sufficient reason for Peter to single out one particular disciple from the rest who were there.

At that instant, Peter deliberately referred to this one disciple only. Why? Consider the possibility Peter may have asked specifically about “the disciple whom Jesus loved” at that moment because of who this disciple was, since Peter would have known him as Lazarus.

The other thing to take into account is the point at which Peter’s attention turned to the one whom “Jesus loved.” This is noteworthy because the topic of conversation had just changed, and at that moment Jesus was speaking about Peter’s death!

Jesus Foretells Peter’s Death

“This spake he [Jesus] signifying by what death he [Peter] should glorify God” (Fourth gospel 21:19). In the verse before this, Jesus foretold how Peter would die. After that prophesy, he had two more words for Peter, “Follow me” (Fourth gospel 21:19).

When Jesus raised the topic of Peter’s death, Peter seemed to change the subject, which might be dismissed by some as a typical reaction to anxiety. But bear in mind the one speaking to Peter was the resurrected Jesus, who had overcome death. As soon as Peter was told “by what death he should glorify God,” what did Peter do? “Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved... Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*?” (Fourth gospel 21:20-21) [The literal Greek reads, “Lord,

but of this one what.”]

Why, upon learning “by what death he should glorify God,” did Peter feel compelled to refer to one particular disciple? Was Peter merely concerned for this disciple or is there a more rational explanation that might better account for his question?

If the one whom “Jesus loved” was Lazarus, then we can see logic in Peter’s question. Perhaps he was wondering if he would be raised like Lazarus, or he may have been asking if Lazarus would have to die again – especially since he likely heard Jesus say, “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” prior to raising Lazarus (Fourth gospel 11:25-26). But regardless of why he asked his question, we can consider the distracting effect the one “whom Jesus loved” seemed to have on Peter.

Death is a weighty matter. Still, when Jesus brought up Peter’s death, Peter turned his attention from Jesus to “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” However, the key here is not the topic of death or Peter’s attention shifting from Jesus, it is his timing. He focused on the one whom “Jesus loved” as soon as the topic became death. Would Peter’s mind have associated Lazarus with this topic? Naturally.

This was only “the third time Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead” (Fourth gospel 21:14). Even so, Jesus was not the sole focus of Peter’s attention. The author (known to us as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”) ended-up being a distraction for Peter, just as he later became a distraction to those who spread the rumor that said he would not die.

Being a distraction would surely conflict with the author’s objective (cf. Fourth gospel 20:31). Earlier we discussed how this potential conflict would provide a motive for the author to remain anonymous. So, the question is: Do the facts support the conclusion that this was Lazarus, writing anonymously to avoid any hindrance to his goal?

An Act of Humility?

The idea of Lazarus not using his name to avoid becoming a distraction fits with the author’s expressed intent. After Lazarus was raised from the dead, he became an attraction (Fourth gospel 12:9). If he was also the God-inspired writer of the fourth gospel, then Lazarus would have been more than willing to avoid claiming authorship, rather than taking the risk of interfering with his intention of focusing his readers on Jesus.

“The disciple whom Jesus loved” may not be a very humble sounding term. However, we know it is an accurate description, since it was written under the inspiration of God – and note the timing here also. The author began referring to himself by this term only after writing “they came not for Jesus sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also.”

It is common to hear people claim ‘*John was humble*’ because of the author’s anonymity. But this author was not John, so any attributes one may want to infer about this author do not apply to John. If this author’s effort to remain anonymous shows he was humble, then this quality would pertain to the author, whoever he was.

Likewise, another fact may also imply humility on the part of Lazarus. This gospel tells of the raising of Lazarus and the subsequent public response, but the author did not report a single word that was said by the man who was identified as Lazarus! We do not know if humility was the reason for either this or his anonymity. Still, it is worthwhile to note these things as we seek to weigh all the biblical data regarding the author’s character (i.e., Lazarus’ character).

Names in Scripture

The belief that a man might forgo his name is not foreign to the Bible. The disciples of Jesus were willing to change their names. Simon became Peter (Lk 6:14), Saul became Paul (Acts 13:9), etc. Further, this practice was not new. Abram became Abraham way back in Genesis 17:5. In addition, the Bible often uses multiple names for people. James and John were surnamed “Boanerges” (Mk 3:17), Thomas was, “called Didymus” (Fourth gospel 21:2), and “Judas” (not Iscariot) was also called, “Thaddaeus” (cf. Mk 3:18, Lk 6:16).

Thus, it is at least compatible with scripture to suggest Lazarus may have stopped using his name. Did he do this? If he was the unnamed author of the fourth gospel, then as far as this gospel is concerned, the answer is yes. As the jury, you must decide if scripture can prove this author was not John. If so, then your next job is to decide if the biblical evidence indicates this author was Lazarus. Hopefully, you have been convinced, but we will look at one final piece of evidence that might help to persuade anyone who is still unsure.

The Other Murder Plot

Lazarus had an effect on many people. We are told, “by reason of him [Lazarus] many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus” (Fourth gospel 12:11). This may have been due to the fact he was raised from the dead. But if Lazarus had already been a known figure in the community, then this would have amplified the effect of the news of him being raised, and several things hint at this idea.

For example, after he died “many of the Jews” comforted his sisters and after four days the Jews were still weeping over Lazarus (Fourth gospel 11: 19 & 33). In addition to his well-attended memorial service, the body of Lazarus was in a cave tomb with a rock door (Fourth gospel 11:38). This sounds like the kind of tomb we see associated with a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea (Mt 27:57-60). Moreover, when Lazarus and his sisters threw a supper for Jesus, his sister Mary anointed Jesus with “a pound” of “very costly” ointment (Fourth gospel 12:1-3). This, too, may be another indication that their household had no shortage of money.

Regardless, “the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus” (Fourth gospel 12:10-11). In the time between the raising of Lazarus and the plot to kill him, a ground swell of response to this miracle started to develop among the people (cf. Fourth gospel 12:18). Also, as word of the raising of Lazarus spread, those religious leaders would have found even more reasons to want to dispose of him. Lazarus was the only one besides Jesus who was the object of a murder plot by the chief priests prior to Pentecost. The “chief priests” did not plot to kill all of the disciples of Jesus and they did not target just any random friend of Jesus. These men wanted to get rid of Lazarus specifically.

The thing to consider is the chief priests knew Lazarus had been raised from the dead, and knew of the public’s fascination with him and the impact this was having on the people (Fourth gospel 11:46-47, 12:9-11 & 18). While the chief priests may have known Lazarus as a figure in that community before Jesus raised him from the dead, after he was raised they knew him as the man they wanted to kill (Fourth gospel 12:10). These facts are relevant because they indicate Lazarus was known unto the chief priests.

Which Disciple Was Known?

The author twice tells us the “other disciple” was known unto the high priest (Fourth gospel 18:15 & 16). As was shown earlier, this helps prove John could not be the “other disciple, whom Jesus loved.” The John idea faces a truly insurmountable problem here. But, if this “other disciple” was Lazarus, this fact can be reconciled with the biblical evidence.

Here too, as with all of the other biblical data that was weighed in this study, we see the scriptures harmonize completely with the idea of Lazarus being “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved.”

“Add Thou Not unto His Words”

The title, '*The Gospel of John*' was not part of the original text. It was added later and the evidence in scripture is able to prove the John idea is not true. Therefore, we have a compelling reason to avoid promoting the idea that the one whom “Jesus loved” was John. So, herein, the book written by “the disciple whom Jesus loved” has not been referred to by the misleading title '*John*'/'*Gospel of John*,' since that can only serve to perpetuate a false idea.

Instead this anonymous gospel author's work was referred to as the fourth gospel. This is a simple and easy-to-understand way to refer to his book in terms of its location in the New Testament. Those who reject the unbiblical John tradition (and who refer to the gospel in a way that does not promote that erroneous tradition) will no doubt have to endure ridicule and scornful looks from those who will not accept the biblical evidence on this issue. Nevertheless, those who are careful to refer to the gospel of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” by a term that does not promote the John error are justifiably encouraged by the words, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Th 5:21), for they are holding fast to the truth revealed in scripture. Inspired scripture is what we are to rely on, not the things men add to it. “Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prv 30:5-6).

The Bible Versus Tradition

The Jury Summation

This study presented two cases: the case as to why the Apostle John was not “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (the author of the fourth gospel), and the case for why this author was most likely Lazarus, both with God’s word being the only authority cited.

Below is a summary to help you weigh the evidence so you can render a verdict. (The verses were quoted earlier, so they will not be repeated here.)

The evidence shows beyond a reasonable doubt John was not the “other disciple” because:

- *The gospel writers treated them like different people.* The first three gospels totally omit the one whom “Jesus loved,” but they often refer to John by name. Conversely, all of the events where John was referred to by name in the first three gospels are missing from the book that was written by the one whom “Jesus loved.”
- *The one whom “Jesus loved” wrote his gospel without identifying himself by name, but there is no evidence John ever avoided using his name.* In fact, John identified himself by name repeatedly in the Book of Revelation, and this difference in behavior argues against thinking the same man wrote both books.
- *“The disciple whom Jesus loved” enjoyed a one-of-a-kind bond with Jesus.* This cannot be said of John, and the three times Jesus took John aside with Peter and James do not single John out as having this relationship.
- *On the night Jesus was arrested, John and the “other disciple” behaved differently.* That night, John let Jesus down by falling asleep three times. In contrast, the “other disciple” went into the palace of the high priest with Jesus, and we only see him leave the next day, when Jesus reassigned him.
- *The idea that the one whom “Jesus loved” was John relies on assuming this author was one of the twelve.* Paintings of the twelve alone with Jesus at the supper promote this error. But the details in scripture show Jesus and the twelve were not alone at that event, such as the fact they were guests in someone’s home. Besides this, the phrase “other disciple” itself indicates he was not one of the twelve but, was one of those additional loyal disciples who had also followed Jesus. (See the Appendix for more proof of this.)
- *If “the disciple whom Jesus loved” joined Jesus and the twelve after the supper, then this person could not be John.* Yet, this is what is indicated by the author’s record of events on that night, which skips the bread and the cup and opens up with the report of the foot washing, after which Jesus sat down “again.”
- *The “other disciple” was a known associate of Jesus and he was known to the high priest.* But John was not known to the high priest. It was only after Pentecost that the high priest first became acquainted with John.
- *The author’s anonymity argues against the John idea.* At the end of this author’s gospel, he listed “the sons of Zebedee,” even though he also listed two “other” disciples and referred to

himself as the one whom “Jesus loved.” He referred to himself anonymously at that point, but he grouped John in with the apostles.

A preponderance of the evidence indicates the “other disciple” was Lazarus because:

- *They had the identical relationship with Jesus.* “Jesus loved” both of them and these they were the only men who associated with Jesus during who were also singled out as being loved by Jesus [the key relationship].
- *The other three gospel writers treat these two alike.* They do not tell us Lazarus was a friend of Jesus, had supper with Jesus, or was raised from the dead! Likewise, they never mention the one “whom Jesus loved,” and their gospels totally ignore this disciple’s role in the key events in the closing days of Jesus’ earthly ministry.
- *This gospel author treats Lazarus and himself in a parallel manner.* Lazarus suddenly appears late in the text and is only mentioned a few times. The one “whom Jesus loved” also suddenly appears late in the gospel and he too is only referenced a few times.
- *One seems to replace the other in the gospel.* The last mention of Lazarus occurs before the first mention of the one whom “Jesus loved.” The author ceased mentioning Lazarus and only after this did he begin referring to himself as the one whom “Jesus loved.”
- *The suddenly famous one disappears, and then the anonymous one suddenly appears.* Right after the public’s desire to see Lazarus is recounted, a transition occurs. He vanishes from the text and the term “Jesus loved” (that had only been used of Lazarus) begins to be used by the author in anonymous references to himself – “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” the “other disciple, whom Jesus loved,” etc.
- *The experiences of Lazarus would produce the behavior exhibited by “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”* Jesus gave a one-of-a-kind gift to Lazarus when he raised him from the dead. After that, Lazarus was different from the rest of Jesus’ followers, and he also would have been different from the man he was prior to that miracle. Jesus’ relationship with the one whom “Jesus loved” and the behavior of this “other disciple” befit what one would expect if he was the raised-from-the-dead Lazarus.
- *The Bible reveals both of them sat with Jesus.* The last time Lazarus is seen in the Bible he is sitting with Jesus at a table. The first time the one “whom Jesus loved” is seen, he is leaning on Jesus at a table.
- *When confronted with the linen evidence in the tomb, the “other disciple” became the first one who believed.* This reaction befits Lazarus – the one person in scripture most likely to be deeply moved by the sight of the linen clothes and the napkin (because he had been wearing similar wrappings for four days before he was raised from the dead).
- *The “not die” rumor about “the disciple whom Jesus loved” points to Lazarus.* Lazarus was raised from the dead. Jesus said, “whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” just prior to raising him. Knowing either fact might cause a rush to judgment about Jesus’ words, “If I will that he tarry till I come” and result in the rumor that was misconstrued from them (especially if it was known he “believed” first).
- *The “other disciple” was anonymous and Lazarus had a motive to become anonymous.* When people came “not for Jesus’ sake only” but to “see Lazarus also,” surely Lazarus knew the focus belonged on Jesus and not on him. Likewise, the author intended to lead people

to Jesus and since he concealed his identity, he apparently felt this was needed in order to achieve his objective.

- *When Peter's death was foretold, he turned to "the disciple whom Jesus loved."* This could be because Peter associated "the disciple whom Jesus loved" with the issue of death, a topic that would undeniably be forever associated with Lazarus by everyone who knew him.
- *The "other disciple" was a known associate of Jesus and was known to the high priest; both fit Lazarus.* He was a friend of Jesus and the apostles. His death led many of the Jews to mourn, with some still weeping four days later. When Lazarus was raised, the chief priests sought to kill Jesus, but thereafter many Jews "came not for Jesus sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also." So, the chief priests conspired to kill him too, because "by reason of him many of the Jews" believed on Jesus.

The First Disciples

The evidence presented thus far should have been sufficient to achieve the goals set forth earlier. There are other items that relate to the cases we have considered, but the verdict you have already reached is not likely to be altered by the three supplemental passages we will consider now. Still, these items are worth noting, for they can help shed added light on the unnamed "other disciple."

For example, consider what we are told about the first disciples of Jesus. The first chapter of the fourth gospel tells of a day when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming unto him. John went on to call Jesus, "the Lamb of God," to testify the Spirit "abode upon him," and to "bare record that this is the Son of God" (Fourth gospel 1:29-34). The next day, Jesus returned and John the Baptist once again called him, "the Lamb of God," and then it says two of the disciples of John the Baptist, "heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" (Fourth gospel 1:35-37).

Those two went with Jesus and "abode with him that day" (Fourth gospel 1:38-39). These men were the first individuals that scripture says, "followed Jesus." Now, be careful to pay close attention to what the next two verses say, and more importantly, what they do not say.

"One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (Fourth gospel 1:40-41). In the subsequent verses, Andrew brought his brother Simon to meet Jesus, and then Jesus also found Philip (Fourth gospel 1:42-43). These first three, Andrew, Peter, and Philip became loyal disciples and they all were eventually selected to be among the twelve (Mt 10:2-3, Mk 3:16-18, Lk 6:14). But who have we forgotten here? Did you notice there is one person who seems to vanish from the scene?

What happened to the other disciple of John the Baptist who abode with Jesus along with Andrew? It seems Andrew and this other, unnamed man were the first ones who followed Jesus. Andrew's name is recorded here and he is mentioned in all the gospels. Yet, the other man who was one of those first two is not named here, and we do not find him referenced at all outside of this passage. Did he just suddenly disappear? Was he of no importance? Or is there another possibility?

Another Possibility

The unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved" is the only gospel author who tells of this unidentified ex-disciple of John the Baptist who followed Jesus. So, another possibility is that this unnamed follower of Jesus eventually became the unnamed author of the only book that mentions him. Perhaps one of the first two followers of Jesus amounted to nothing and merited no further mention. But it could be the author kept the spotlight off of himself in his reporting on these first disciples.

Obviously, the bond between Jesus and the one whom “Jesus loved” did not appear out of thin air. This relationship existed for some time prior to the Last Supper (where “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was first introduced). In light of this, is it conceivable that this unnamed “other disciple” was there from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry? Yes. But can any other verses help to establish this? Yes.

In Acts 1:21-22, Peter refers to men who, “compared with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that he [Jesus] was taken up.” We cannot know if Peter’s words included the man who followed Jesus with Andrew, but it is possible this group included this early follower of Jesus. It is up to you to weigh this as you see fit. [Some who think John wrote the fourth gospel say this early follower was John. But John could not have met Jesus before Peter did, because scripture teaches us Jesus met Peter prior to meeting James and John.]

Clearly, there is not enough evidence to prove the anonymous author of the fourth gospel was the one who, along with Andrew, left John the Baptist to follow Jesus on that day. Nevertheless, this idea is worth considering and it would begin to explain the origin of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” prior to Jesus’ last Passover. Moreover, if this was Lazarus, then this helps to explain: (a) the origin of the relationship he had with Jesus, and (b) why he was called a friend of Jesus and the apostles.

Also, just prior to telling how Martha and Mary sent word of their ill brother to Jesus, the author had said Jesus, “went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode” (Fourth gospel 10:40). So, their appeal came when Jesus was nearby. This also means John the Baptist was near Bethany at the time those two disciples left him to begin following Jesus. (The KJV calls this area “Bethabara” (Fourth gospel 1:28) while others translate it “Bethany.” So, this early link to Lazarus’ hometown is easily missed in the KJV.)

Mark’s Mystery Man

There may also be a unique link to Lazarus in Mark 14:43-53, which tells us about the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested. In Mark 14:50 we read, “And they all forsook him, and fled.” One might think this means there was no one left to stand with Jesus. Yet, immediately after this, a curious reference calls attention to one person who still remained with Jesus – an unnamed “young man!”

Mark 14:51-52 tells us, “And there followed him [Jesus] a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about *his* naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: And he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.” You will not find this detail mentioned in the other gospels. Still, it is part of inspired scripture, therefore, God wanted us to have this information. So, let us think carefully about the questions that are raised by these two verses.

One question is, why did he remain with Jesus after the rest of the disciples had fled? If he was Lazarus, then we know why he might have remained. Yet, this young man then fled too. So, how was his behavior different from that of those disciples who forsook Jesus in Mark 14:50? It appears he fled for a different reason.

Notice Mark 14:51 takes the time to tell us the details of how this young man was clothed, having only a linen cloth covering his nakedness. Then Mark 14:52 says he fled away naked. So what, you ask? When the others forsook Jesus, the implication was they did so out of fear for their own safety. However, this young man left naked, so this may suggest he fled out of shame or embarrassment. It says they “laid hold on him” (Mk 14:51).

In response to being grabbed, it is natural to try to pull away or shake free, especially if one is grabbed without warning. This is most likely how he came to be stripped, for the next words say, “And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked” (Mk 14:52). Surely startled to find himself being seized and ending up suddenly naked, it was at that moment this young man fled.

This young man fled too, yet his actions are set apart from the rest of the disciples who forsook Jesus that night. Is it possible the fear of death could not move Lazarus to flee, but the shock of unexpectedly being stripped naked might cause him to flee out of embarrassment in the heat of the moment? Even after Lazarus was raised from the dead, he was still a human being, subject to the influence of emotions. After the mob left, he either retrieved his linen cloth or got something else to wear, and then proceeded to follow Jesus, as did Peter. Now, we will look to see if any evidence exists that might connect this young man to Lazarus.

A Fashion Statement?

In telling us this unnamed young man was the last follower of Jesus to flee from Gethsemane on that night, scripture called attention to this young man's attire. Twice we see references to the "linen cloth" he was wearing (Mk 14:51 & 52). Both verses note this was the only thing covering his otherwise "naked" body. So, why did God inspire this author to include these details? Perhaps he was led to record them because they can shed some additional light on this unnamed young man.

Earlier in this study, the significance of "linen" was discussed. Remember, our English word "linen" was used to translate several Greek words, but two of these words always refer to the cloth covering a corpse, with the only exception being found here in Mark 14:51-52.

Why would this young man wear a material that was used by the Jews to bury their dead? (Fourth gospel 19:40). Is it possible this unnamed young man was indicating he had already been dead or he did not fear death? Or could it be his way of indicating he was a new man, who reckoned himself dead to sin but alive unto God (the mindset we see encouraged by Paul in Romans 6:11)? Whatever the reason, this potential link between this unnamed young man and Lazarus (the unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved") can be seen when one takes the time to examine the "linen" evidence that has been preserved in scripture.

Enough Evidence?

An unnamed young man dressed in linen was the last one with Jesus when he was arrested, and every other time this Greek word for "linen" was used it was only in reference to Jesus' dead body (Mt 27:59, Mk 15:46(2x), Lk 23:53). Is this enough to suggest this young man might have been Lazarus? Before you decide on this, consider one more fact.

Other than Jesus, this young man was the only person who the arresting mob sought to seize. They let the rest of the disciples go, but they "laid hold on him" (Mk 14:51). Why was he treated differently than the others who were allowed to leave unhindered? There was one man who the chief priests sought to kill besides Jesus at that point; they "consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death" (Fourth gospel 12:10). Even this is not sufficient to prove he was Lazarus. Still, given the curious statements of Mark 14 which let us know this young man was the last person to leave Jesus at Gethsemane, this potential link to Lazarus is worth thinking about. Once again, as you consider these additional items, keep in mind the evidence that was presented regarding Lazarus and John is intended to stand on its own. These supplemental items are being raised simply as a way of tying up a few loose ends.

More than a Story?

Now we will look at several parallels between a teaching in the Gospel of Luke and facts reported by the anonymous author in his gospel (Fourth gospel 11:1-12:10, Lk 16:19-31). As we do, keep one thing in mind, although Jesus did use stories to teach, scripture also indicates Jesus was a prophet (Mk 6:4, Acts 3:22-26). In Luke 16, Jesus contrasted two characters, a "rich man" and a beggar named "Lazarus," both of whom died (Lk 16:19, 20 & 22).

The rich man found himself “in torments” (Lk 16:23) and then he proceeded to make some requests. To start with, he sought relief, and oddly enough, in his appeal he included the petition, “send Lazarus...” (Lk 16:24). After he was told why this could not happen (Lk 16:25-26), he made another appeal that again involved Lazarus. “Send him [Lazarus] to my father’s house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them” (Lk 16:27-28).

Jesus had the dead rich man asking if a man named Lazarus could return from the dead to testify to his brethren who were still alive. Then Jesus had the rich man kick against the response he was given. Jesus said, the rich man was told his brethren “have Moses and the prophets” (Lk 16:29). The rich man resisted this idea, for he thought sending Lazarus back from the dead would yield a different response – “if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent” (Lk 16:30). However, the rich man was informed, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Lk 16:31). Jesus ended this teaching here.

Now, try to imagine the effect this teaching would have had on those who actually heard Jesus give this message. The day the disciples heard Jesus speak these words, it is likely they assumed this was no different than Jesus’ other teaching parables. But what would have went through their minds when they later saw part of this teaching come true? That is, when an individual named Lazarus rose from the dead!

Who Was Jesus Speaking About?

Some try to apply the ‘moral of the story’ to the situation of the high priest, rulers, elders, and scribes who refused to repent after the resurrection of Jesus. While this might appear to be a good fit, there is more to learn if we will take a closer look.

To begin with, let us contrast the way Jesus ended the teaching (“if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead”) and the response to the news of the resurrection of Jesus (that has persuaded many over the last 2000 years).

Moreover, consider this. In the scriptures, the resurrected Jesus did not appear to unbelievers. After the resurrection, every recorded appearance of Jesus was to people who believed or would believe! He did not appear before the chief priests, elders, and/or their council to testify unto them. This argues against comparing the risen Jesus to the person who was requested by the rich man (Lk 16:30), i.e., the one who the rich man was sure would bring about repentance in those who already had “Moses and the prophets” (Lk 16:29).

This teaching has frequently been related to Jesus’ resurrection and the good news of the gospel. But might it be better understood if we consider the possibility that in this teaching, Jesus was articulating a prophecy? [Jesus’ delay and words prior to raising Lazarus may well support this idea (cf. Fourth gospel 11:4, 6-7 & 14-15).] The teaching in Luke 16 has several parallels to the real-life Lazarus. In both cases Lazarus died. But in the teaching, we do not see him raised, we only hear the request. Also, while there are no words of Lazarus recorded in the Bible, it is certain he testified about Jesus to those with whom he spoke.

After Lazarus was raised, he became a **living** testimony to the power of Jesus and because of him “many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.” But just like the response described in Luke 16, the Jewish leaders (who had “Moses and the prophets”) were not persuaded, even though a Lazarus was sent to them from the dead!

Eyewitnesses to this miracle “went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.” Yet, instead of repenting, “the chief priests and Pharisees” plotted to kill Jesus (Fourth gospel 11:46-53). The chief priests sought to kill Lazarus also (Fourth gospel 12:10). So, was the statement of Jesus in Luke 16:31 a prophecy of this response? As with the other supplemental items, you get to chew on this food for thought. Now, let us return to the main thrust of this study to provide a wrap-up and to tackle some questions that

are likely to remain.

In Conclusion

Most of us assumed John was the author of the gospel that bears his name because:

- This is what we have been told
- It has been called this for a long time
- This is what 'all' the scholars seem to say
- The gospel we read has this 'title' added to it
- Etc.

These are not separate excuses because one mistaken assumption underlies them all. They all rely on a non-Bible source, i.e., trusting someone else's judgment. These reasons do not require us to search the scriptures. Instead, they rely on someone else to have already done this job.

But, what if others now and in the past did the same thing? Who then is left to search the scriptures? The scholars? Is it not normal for scholars to rely on the work of scholars who preceded them, like judges relying on prior rulings? What happens if successive generations rely on the work of those who preceded them and what happens if an error is introduced into this sequence early on? If an error went unchallenged long enough, it might eventually become 'accepted' as truth and correcting it would grow more difficult as time went on, since its 'historical acceptance' would become a rationale for assuming it must be true!

Clearing up a long-accepted misconception is a big challenge, but the Bible is up to it. What should come out of this is we receive the correction scripture offers and benefit from the blessings that follow when we let the Bible speak for itself.

There was never any biblical support for the John idea, as you now know. Realizing this error has fooled so many for so long should be a wake-up call to us all! Let this inspire you to search the scriptures more diligently in the future. Instead of thinking we can adopt the opinions of others on biblical matters or that the judgment of expert's is better than our own, let each of us make use of the judgment God gave to us and be open to the truth that is presented to us in God's word.

The evidence-based Bible study method used herein relies on the Bible only. But those who promote the John idea are following the teachings of men and doing so undermines the authority of God's word, yet this is not clear until we begin focusing on this issue. The efforts to defend the John idea actually reveal there is no biblical justification for teaching it. Take a look.

Those who promote the John tradition do not point to scripture to defend their belief. Instead, they defend it by citing this-or-that *non-Bible source*, i.e., an 'early church' personality, majority opinion, historical tradition, etc. But if the Bible justified this tradition, they would quote scripture and allow it to prove the point, rather than relying on hearsay and the opinions of men to make their case.

No amount of non-Bible consensus is ever sufficient to overcome the truth that is revealed by scripture! **The primary source is always the best evidence** – and on biblical matters this source is God's word.

If we look to somebody else to read the Bible and search the scriptures for us, then we will adopt their mistakes and any errors they pass along to us. Scripture shows educated religious men sometimes believe ideas and promote traditions contrary to the word of God (Mk 7:13, Col 2:8, et al.). So, belief by men is, clearly, not a reliable indicator of whether or not an idea is true.

Yet, confidence in tradition is precisely what leads many to fall for circular reasoning: e.g., '*We know John wrote it because it's his gospel,*' or '*It's called the Gospel of John, because John wrote it*' [even though the author said nothing of the kind]. Others fall prey to error in assuming '*John must have written this book*

because this is what everyone says. This still relies on others to have the truth, but it also falsely presumes a large number of people cannot be wrong concurrently. Yet, even if ‘everybody’ thinks an idea is true, agreement among men is not a reliable measure of truth.

Agreement with the whole counsel of God’s word is the test of truth.

Why have the vast majority of scholars and books misidentified the author of the fourth gospel? How could the truth have been missed by so many for so long? Besides the reasons noted above, it is possible God is opening eyes to this truth in this day to humble people and draw them to a deeper reliance on his word. At the very least, exposing the John error proves educated men have not already discovered all the truths that are in God’s word.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Some will ignore this issue and the Bible facts related to it. Still, they and any who promote the John tradition will continue to face one daunting question. Why is there not a single verse that justifies teaching this idea, if what they teach is biblical? Moreover, if the Bible can prove John was not the “other disciple,” does *this* truth not matter? In any case, some will be persuaded by the biblical evidence presented herein, and these final thoughts are directed to this group.

What should we do when scripture indicates we might be mistaken? The scriptures can prove the Apostle John was not the author of the fourth gospel. Even so, men who relied on non-Bible sources ended up attributing it to him. You have also seen there is a substantial body of biblical evidence which supports the conclusion the unnamed “disciple whom Jesus loved” was Lazarus of Bethany.

What is unique about this insight is it can be seen after two thousand years, and like a watermark of truth, it offers a powerful argument for the reliability of the Bible we have today!

Paul wrote, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness...” (2Tim 3:16), and this is still true today.

We also are told, “Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies” (Ps 40:4). Knowing the true identity of the one whom “Jesus loved” is surely not necessary to have eternal life. But **respect for God’s word is required** – for a person cannot believe Jesus died and rose “according to the scriptures” (1Cor 15:3-4) apart from the foundation of God’s word. This is why it is dangerous to intentionally ignore the truth on topics we deem are not critical. We cannot ‘agree-to-disagree’ with truth, since truth is not a matter of opinion!

The truth on this issue is important because it shows how the Bible can teach us and it shows why we must seek the truth, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (cf. 1Cor 2:13).

Respect for the Authority of God’s Word

Of “the LORD” who said, “them that honor me I will honor” (1Sa 2:30), we are also told, “...thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Ps 138:2). So, honoring God’s word will surely yield future benefits. Nevertheless, just like those in Mark 7:13 who made the word of God of no effect by their tradition, some will cling to the John idea even though it is unbiblical, and in order to justify doing so, they will go on citing non-Bible sources that agree with them. This serves as an excuse for adding John’s name to the text, but it ultimately undermines the authority of God’s word.

If discovering that the Bible can disprove the John tradition cannot motivate people to reconsider **how** they determine whether or not an idea is true, then they will reap the consequences of that decision. To

avoid having to respond to Bible evidence that might prove them wrong, some rush to brush aside the issue by asking, *'What difference does it make?'* This sets a dangerous precedent.

The danger lies in acting as if we get to decide when it is okay to ignore the truth. Those who want to stick with the John idea need a reason to avoid scripture/change the subject, so they will imply, *'It does not matter.'* However, while the truth may not matter to them, a decision to ignore the truth matters a lot! If a wrong idea is believed or taught in ignorance, this is one thing. But what about after one is exposed to the truth? Is it right to promote any idea as if it were biblical, after we come to realize we cannot cite one verse that would justify teaching that idea?

As was shown herein, testing our beliefs by the standard of God's word can correct misconceptions we may have. So, we should be less likely to assume a teaching is true and more inclined to subject ideas to biblical scrutiny. This is just one difference this insight can make. A biblically based inquiry is not a threat to the truth. However, the unguarded intake of information can be hazardous. We cannot afford to be hasty in learning or uncritical about the things we read/hear. (Read Mark 4:14-25 to see what led Jesus to warn, "Take heed what ye hear!") In Acts 17:11 and many other passages, God's word lets us know it is an honorable practice for us to use scripture to verify the truth of any idea, belief, or tradition. Even so, when traditions are treasured more than truth, discussions of the biblical evidence will be discouraged by those who pay mere lip service to the authority of scripture.

The John idea has been promoted for so long that some refuse to consider the evidence and act as if questioning this tradition is ridiculous. Others assert false teaching on this issue does not matter, i.e., it is inconsequential. The evidence shows it is possible for this type of error to be made. So, why assume *'it does not matter'* if this error continues to be taught? Might the decision to ignore scripture and go on promoting the traditions of men lead to other problems?

God's word contains warnings against adding to scripture. Yet, this happens each time John's name is added to a passage about the one "whom Jesus loved." While it is easy to slip and add our ideas to the plain reading of God's word when we are discussing biblical issues, those who love the truth must guard against this tendency. This is not meant as a condemnation of those who are communicators of God's word. Surely, teachers have a responsibility to be as biblically accurate as they can possibly be, but they can make mistakes like the rest of us. No one will always be right. So, the wise move is to invite biblical correction and receive it thankfully when God's word offers it to us.

When a question of biblical accuracy is raised, is the more God-honoring response, *'What difference does it make?'* or *'show me in scripture?'* Those who love the truth will welcome correction, while others will find an excuse to change the subject to avoid the light of scripture. Asserting it makes no difference, acts as if there is no need to pay attention to what scripture says on the topic. Sadly, many will elect to turn a blind eye to facts in the Bible that threaten to challenge one of *their* preferred beliefs. Conversely, the 'show me' response invites biblical correction.

What is at stake in this matter is respect for the authority of God's word. For when God's word says one thing, but a person who claims to believe in God's word is saying something contrary, then clearly *scripture is not their authority on that issue.* The real test on any issue is whether or not we will receive the correction that is offered by scripture. The benefit of receiving that correction (just as in the matter of "the disciple whom Jesus loved") is its ability to drive us to a greater reliance upon God's word. We are told, God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). "Diligently" lets us know mere Bible knowledge is not the goal.

What you have studied herein is not some curious item of Bible trivia. It is a serious biblical issue that confirms the reliability of scripture and the need for us to "prove all things." Even though this has been overlooked by so many for so long, the beauty of this insight is the Bible always pointed to the truth. Remember, even the disciples missed some things in scripture until Jesus opened their eyes to those

things, like we see in Luke 24:45 – “Then opened he [Jesus] their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.” Might God act similarly today and open our understanding to things we had previously overlooked?

God can still reveal truth through scripture, as this study has shown. Yet, the truth causes division, just like Jesus said he would bring (Lk 12:51). Some will unite behind the truth and others will oppose it, falling on one side or the other in response to the sword of God’s word, which is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). Love rejoices in the truth (cf. 1Cor 13:6). So, if an idea we thought was true actually turns out not to be true, let us turn away from error, get back to God’s word, and speak the truth in love. While much is said about why Jesus was born or the reason he came into the world, here too, the Bible is better than hearsay and it would be wise to align our thinking with scripture on this point also (see Postscript).

When our eyes are opened to a truth we have missed, we need to ask, if we could be wrong on *this*, what else could we be wrong about? The answer is, anything we have not put to the test of scripture! If we missed this, it indicates a better Bible study method is needed. So, let us take seriously the counsel to “prove all things” (1Th 5:21) and heed Psalm 118:8. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Gal 5:9). This is why deviating from God’s word is not a minor issue, it is a perilous habit that opens people up to deception. Let us read the Bible with care to make sure it says what we thought it said. If we find an issue where scripture proves we were wrong, let us thank God for the correction and boldly stand with the truth and say, praise be to God!

“To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecc 3:1).

Appendix

The “Other Disciple” Believed First

“Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed” (Fourth gospel 20:8). Prior editions of this book focused on why he believed. This led to a key piece of evidence being missed, the significance of **when** he believed. This is what happened to Peter and the “other disciple” on resurrection morning:

“The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So, they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home” (Fourth gospel 20:1-10).

The fourth gospel is the only book that reports the reaction of this “other disciple.” It says he out ran Peter “and came first to the sepulcher” and “he saw, and believed.” Then it tells us, “as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead” (Fourth gospel 20:9).

Neither he nor Peter were aware scripture had foretold the resurrection, and yet he believed. This is the first time after the resurrection the Bible refers to anyone believing. Thus, he believed before the rest of the disciples.

This proves he was not one of the twelve, because he believed early on resurrection morning, but they did not believe until later that day, after they saw Jesus.

This point of contrast with the apostles is seen in verses like, “Afterward he [Jesus] appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen” (Mk 16:14).

Despite hearing from those who saw the risen Jesus, the unbelief of the eleven persisted until late on that day. They could not even be convinced by the two who were taught by Jesus earlier that day on the road to Emmaus, when Jesus “expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk 24:13-27). They went and told these things to the eleven (Lk 24:33-34), but the apostles did not believe until they personally saw the resurrected Jesus.

The evidence presented in this study proved whoever the “other disciple” was, he was not John. Now, we have proof **he was not one of the apostles**. This disciple believed before he saw the risen Jesus, yet the eleven were in unbelief until they saw Jesus. He believed early on resurrection morning, and this sets the author of the fourth gospel in contrast to the unbelief of the apostles later on that same day.

The Bible Versus Non-Bible Sources

Those who stick with the John idea in spite of the biblical evidence to the contrary will surely go on citing non-Bible sources as if that justifies promoting the John tradition. But now they will have to ignore, or explain away, yet one more contrast between the “other disciple” and the twelve. Either way, it is never wise to

dismiss what the Bible says. When people quote non-Bible sources to defend an idea because they cannot cite scripture that would justify teaching what they believe, then this should tell us something. It should be a big red flag!

When we let our beliefs or the beliefs of others serve as the standard by which truth is judged, then what is our authority? The scholars of Jesus' day cited experts as the measure of truth when they said, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" (Fourth gospel 7:48) Here they relied on a non-scripture source (the beliefs of experts), rather than citing the evidence of scripture. The same thing occurs when non-Bible sources are used to sell people on the John idea.

What no one can do is cite even a single verse of scripture that would justify telling people the one whom "Jesus loved" was John. This was true of those who originated this unbiblical idea and it remains true of those who parrot their error unto this day! Therefore, this issue ultimately comes down to the Bible versus tradition (i.e., non-Bible sources). Those who ignore the testimony of scripture on this issue are granting themselves 'artistic license' to trust non-Bible sources over God's word whenever they choose to do so.

A Better Bible Study Method

Instead of relying on *men who cite other men who cite yet other men*, ask yourself, why they are not citing scripture if it truly teaches what they say it does?

As this study showed, honoring God's word as the standard for proving what is true is a better Bible study method, for it produces better results. So, what method should the followers of Jesus use when they seek to determine whether something is true or not?

We must resist appeals to man's wisdom, or we may be lured into believing things simply because others believe them. People often cite *'the commonly accepted interpretation'* or *'the consensus'* to sell an idea. The problem is, such appeals falsely imply agreement among men is a reliable measure of truth, even though one does not have to look far in scripture to disprove this notion.

Do not get stampeded into following the crowd. We ought to fear God rather than men, and it makes sense that this should apply to our Bible study also. Consider **the source**. If an idea is taught in scripture, then it is biblical. But if it is not taught in scripture, then we should not pretend that it is! The LORD said, "he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully" (Jer 23:28). So, ideas from non-Bible sources should not be substituted for, or added to, the word of God.

Moreover, we do not get to pick-and-choose when truth is important and when it does not matter. To do so is to act as if turning a blind eye to the facts in scripture is justified by declaring that truth matters only when we, or those we are following, say it does. Yet, if we grant ourselves or others the right to say when a truth in scripture can be ignored, then we are declaring that a non-Bible source is to be esteemed more highly than the word of God itself (despite the biblical warnings against doing so). We will either fall into the trap of repeating the ideas of men, or we will get in the habit of proving all things with scripture.

God's inspired writers upheld scripture as the standard of truth with their repeated use of terms like "as it is written." The word of God is always reliable. So, whenever God's word and the words of men are in conflict, we would be wise to consider the advice of Psalm 118:8, "*It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.*"

"The LORD Trieth the Hearts"

Was the John idea "from heaven, or of men?" This is answered by the biblical evidence. If a belief contradicts scripture, that idea is not from heaven. Once we realize the John idea contradicts scripture, what should we say to people who point us to non-Bible sources or urge us *not* to share this truth with

others? At that point, it may be best to respond as Peter and John did when they were told not to tell others about Jesus – “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20).

In scripture, a test is often used to prove what is in one’s heart (Ex 16:4, Du 8:16, et al.), and the choice between tradition and truth that confronts us on this issue is, no doubt, also a test. God’s will is for all men “to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1Ti 2:4). Yet, the Bible tells of many who did not do so, like those who “turn away *their* ears from the truth” (2Ti 4:4) or those who believed on Jesus but did not stand on that truth because “they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (Fourth gospel 12:42-43). Did their response matter? If God’s word challenges us on an issue, does it make a difference how we respond? One thing is sure. God’s children listen when he speaks, for Jesus said, “He that is of God heareth God’s words” (Fourth gospel 8:47). So, if we seek the truth on biblical issues, let us keep in mind the words of Proverbs 17:3, “the LORD trieth the hearts.”

Postscript

Jesus said, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (Fourth gospel 18:37).

“The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth” (Ps 145:18).

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Prv 3:5).

“Cease, my son, to hear the instruction *that causeth* to err from the words of knowledge” (Prv 19:27).

“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Prv 29:25).

“The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prv 1:7).

“He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding” (Prv 15:32).

“Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not” (Prv 8:33).

“... reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life” (Prv 6:23).

“All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Ti 3:16).

“He that is of God heareth God’s words...” (Fourth gospel 8:47).

“... the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Is 40:8).

“... thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Ps 138:2).

“... thy word is truth” (Fourth gospel 17:17).

“God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (Fourth gospel 4:24).

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true... think on these things” (Php 4:8).

Addendum

This was added to encourage readers of this study to resist the efforts of those who may urge them to keep quiet about evidence in scripture that challenges the traditions of men.

“Whatsoever Doth Make Manifest Is Light”

The Bible says, “whatsoever doth make manifest is light” (Eph 5:13). Therefore, it is a good thing if the evidence presented herein helps to make the truth manifest. So, why would anyone try to turn Bible

students away from the light of scripture? Truly, only those who give a fair hearing to the evidence are in a position to say if truth was made manifest by this exercise in searching the scriptures.

Some who refuse to look at the evidence think they are qualified to render a verdict on it. Yet scripture says, "He that answers a matter before he heareth *it*, it *is* folly and shame unto him" (Prv 8:13). No jury would be allowed to render a verdict if they refused to hear the evidence and only showed up for the jury summation. Likewise, true critical thinking on any biblical issue is not possible without first hearing the testimony of God's word on the matter.

Readers who share the truth on this issue with others will find the truth is not always welcome. But if people are offered evidence that can expose truth on a topic and their response is equivalent to saying, 'turn off that light,' then how can they grow? Dodging the issue, defensive anger, mocking, or lukewarm indifference are not responses that exhibit a love of the truth.

What should be the response when biblical correction is being shared between members of the body of Christ? How about this for starters, "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth" (Ps 86:11).

When urging believers to "walk as children of light" (Eph 5:8), Paul's advice included this step, "proving what is acceptable unto the Lord" (Eph 5:10). Testing our beliefs by the word of God is a great way to put this into practice. Moreover, a few verses earlier he offered this warning, "let no man deceive you with vain words" (Eph 5:6), and this is good counsel for every student of God's word.

Vain words would surely include promoting ideas as if they are biblical when they are not justified by scripture or, worse yet, they are actually in contradiction to God's word. A way to avoid being deceived by vain words is to get into the "prove all things" habit, and test the things we read or hear (along with ideas we have picked up in the past), by subjecting them to biblical scrutiny.

"Judge Righteous Judgment"

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (Fourth gospel 7:24). If we incorporate this principle into our Bible study method, we will be much less likely to become ensnared by superficial arguments. While vain words might appear reasonable at first glance, the light of God's word can show us if they do not line up with the truth. Therefore, we have to be diligent to judge the words of men by the word of God or we may end up doing the opposite. As this study has shown, it can *seem* wise to follow the crowd with their age-old hand-me-down teachings, but the air of truth which comes with the claim of 'consensus' is a deceptive lure. Even intellectual elites can be wrong. So, the followers of Jesus should not simply believe what a teacher or scholar says.

We need to be critical thinkers regarding everything we believe and are taught. If we want to honor the authority of God's word, then no matter who is teaching or what the issue is, we need to judge the truth by the standard of scripture

Psalm 138:2, in talking about the LORD, says, "thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." Many other verses also make it clear the word of God ought to be held in the highest esteem. The will of God is, therefore, for us to respect what scripture says.

Men who insist on promoting the John idea even after they learn of biblical evidence to the contrary, will act as if saying, *'it doesn't matter'* is a proper response. Excuses like, *'it is not a salvation issue,' 'what really matters is the gospel,'* etc. can make it sound like one is showing respect for God's word even as they trample on its authority and its offer of correction. Truly, those who say such things reveal something about themselves. They show they do not know how to properly weigh an issue, for such words undermine respect for the word of God. They do so by suggesting that certain issues mentioned in scripture are more important than the authority of God's word itself.

“Whether Is Greater”

“Ye fools and blind: for whether *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?” (Mt 23:19) This rebuke was addressed to members of the religious elite who were misleading the people. Jesus proved their opinion of what was important was not justified by scripture or logic. They usurped the authority to declare what was important, and as a result, their false teachings debased the authority of God’s word and turned people away from the truth.

As was noted earlier, it can be tempting to follow the words of men who appear to be wise. But Jesus reserved many harsh sayings for scholars and religious leaders. So, we should not think it is safe to adopt the teachings of men who hold positions of honor. If we drop our guard because we respect the person who is teaching, then we will be more susceptible to any errors they may present.

When Paul wrote about those who were “measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves” he said this was “not wise” (2Cor 10:12). Thus, following men who engage in this practice would not be wise either. But does this not describe those who think a consensus among men is a good measure of truth? If it does, then people should be wary when someone cites a consensus on any issue (as if that was an appropriate or reliable measure of truth).

In posing this question, “How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that *cometh* from God only?” (Fourth gospel 5:44), Jesus clearly implied “the honor that *cometh from God only*” is better. He also said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Lk 16:10). Moreover, we read, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Gal 5:9). So, if people cannot honor God by intentionally misrepresenting the word of God, then this would be true on every issue. Thus, it is wrong to think ‘*it doesn’t matter,*’ ‘*that is a secondary issue,*’ or any such excuse can justify the act of shutting one’s eyes and intentionally ignoring the authority of God’s word (no matter what the issue is).

The “unjust in the least” principal lets us know those who turn a blind eye to biblical evidence on one issue, will be willing to do likewise on other issues. Conversely, those who are faithful to God’s word and change their belief to align with the facts in scripture in “that which is least,” will also be faithful when it comes to more important matters.

The ability to come up with high-sounding excuses for refusing biblical correction is not the mark of one who is seeking the honor that comes “from God only.” Read Matthew 23:13-24. In that passage, Jesus’ repudiation of the religious leaders (who taught a false assessment of what is greater) was part of an overall rebuke of their teachings and methods. Rather than pointing people to God’s word and teaching them to rely on it as the standard of truth, they taught others to believe as they believed.

Jesus proved they were wrong by pointing out it is self-refuting to argue the gift could be more important than the altar, since the altar is what made the gift noteworthy. Likewise, to imply salvation or any other issue could be more important than God’s word is just as self-refuting as thinking the gift matters more than the altar, because scripture is what establishes the truth regarding salvation or any other issue.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2Ti 3:16). This is why the authority of scripture cannot be overcome by any non-Bible source – no matter what the issue is. It is also why those who seek the honor that comes “from God only” will respond to the evidence in scripture that proves the one “whom Jesus loved” was not John.

“The Fear of the LORD”

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prv 1:7).

At the very least, the fear of the LORD will move one to be as accurate as possible when representing scripture, for the LORD said, “he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully” (Jer 23:28).

Is refusing biblical correction or suppressing the truth motivated by a fear of the LORD? No, it is not.

Those who act as if loyalty to their prior beliefs is a virtue that trumps respect for the authority of God’s word are not doing so out of a fear of the LORD.

Many benefits follow from the fear of the LORD and a willingness to hear God’s word, be faithful to it, and humbly accept the rebuke and correction that it offers. The benefit of having scripture tear down a false tradition is not, first and foremost, discovering the truth on a particular issue. Rather, it is waking-up to the fact that something is wrong with our method of assessing truth!

Learning we were mistaken is not a bad thing; it is an opportunity to profit from biblical correction. Not only the opportunity to grow in knowledge on that particular issue but, more importantly, if we can figure out what led us to be misled on that issue, then we can improve our method of determining truth on biblical issues.

Non-Bible sources can make an untrue idea seem to be ‘pre-approved’ truth. But when we realize it is not safe to assume an idea is true merely because a lot of people have believed that idea, we will be less susceptible when non-Bible sources are used to sell an idea.

In this book, the case of the beloved disciple revealed the need for a better Bible study method. The next book in this series presents a collection of biblical case studies on a variety of topics. The results set forth in that book prove better results come from a Bible study method that more consistently honors the counsel of God that is presented in scripture. [Find it at ABetterBibleStudyMethod.com]

Wrong methods cause our views on God’s word to be conformed to this world, and this leads to many errors. However, we should not focus just on correcting errors on various issues; we should also identify what caused them.

A Better Bible Study Method – Book Two shows how blind spots can cause people to misunderstand scripture. It also gives the reader the opportunity to evaluate their current approach to scripture and lets them see the profit that comes from biblical correction.

For example, one of the case studies in the next book will touch on several errors that are taught about this key verse: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Fourth gospel 3:16). When this is quoted, it is common to hear added comments like, ‘*This verse expresses God’s unconditional love for you.*’ Unfortunately, such assertions typically go unchallenged. Thus, many people hold this view of the verse even though that idea is contrary to the plain text of God’s word.

It is false to imply the verse was written to tell people about an unconditional love for them because the verse is conditional. “Whosoever believeth in him” is a condition! This condition is explicit in the verse and this requirement is critical, it is not an option.

Should people conclude the benefit of “not perish, but have everlasting life” applies to those who do *not* believe in him? Not according to the verse. Why not? Because the necessary condition was not met. Here we are not talking about whatever else scripture may say in other passages. We are talking about being faithful to accurately communicate what *this* verse says.

The reason God “gave his only begotten Son” was so “that” those who meet the condition (“believeth in him”) should “not perish...” Thus, the condition is vital! To say ‘*this verse teaches God’s unconditional love for everyone*’ is untrue, and it goes against the words of the verse itself.

A case can be made that, in our day, this is the most misunderstood verse in the Bible, and the next book in this series will show this. But again, correcting a mistaken idea on any particular topic or verse is not as important as identifying the flaw in our thinking process that caused us to be misled. All of the books in this series will show how relying on God’s word to “prove all things” can both correct our errors and improve our Bible study method.

In Acts 24:16, Paul said, “I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” If we want to follow his example, we should seek to faithfully communicate God’s word and always be striving to improve our understanding of it.

“A Fool Returneth to His Folly”

“As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly” (Prv 26:11). The biblical evidence herein either proves “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was not John, or it does not do so. There is no third option. When seeking the truth, we can only judge based on the evidence we know about. When the available evidence is able to offer proof beyond a reasonable doubt, then it is unreasonable to refuse to side with that evidence.

Those who are not convinced by the biblical evidence that was presented in this book are still obliged to answer one question, Why not?

The standard is reasonable doubt. Therefore, people who choose to go on promoting the John tradition, in spite of the biblical evidence, should be able to explain why they conclude it is reasonable to do so.

One can disagree with the conclusions of this book. However, if people do so simply because they do not want to admit the John idea is a false teaching, then this is not reasonable doubt, it is sheer prejudice.

Defenders of the John tradition may choose to believe non-Bible sources are more trustworthy than God’s word on this matter. But if they do, then honesty demands they admit this is the reason for their disagreement.

Respect for God’s word and a love of the truth should lead us to be willing to say why we believe scripture does, or does not, teach an idea. If the evidence in this book was sufficient to prove the case, then this should move us to cease and desist promoting the false John tradition.

Those who stick with a false idea even after they learn about biblical evidence to the contrary can always find an excuse for doing so. “A fool returneth to his folly” (Prv 26:11). But “a wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning” (Prv 1:5). Hearing the word of God and accepting the correction it offers is, thus, declared to be the wise move. (Even on ‘little’ issues?)

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Mt 22:37), said Jesus, leaving no wiggle room for those who might think they can ignore those parts of the Bible they do not like. His words oblige us to also honor God with our words and to be as accurate as we can be when discussing scripture. Therefore, if we know God’s word can prove John was not the author of the fourth gospel, are we not obliged to stop referring to that book by the false title of ‘*John?*’ Some will say it is okay to continue using that title for convenience sake. But they cannot claim they are doing it for God’s sake, because that title helps to perpetuate the tradition of men that falsely identifies the beloved disciple.

Jesus said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (Fourth gospel 18:37). So, we should always strive to be consistent in our respect for truth. Those who choose to go on promoting an idea after they become aware the idea is not biblical are being inconsistent, as far as respect for the truth is concerned.

James 4:8 says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." This is a good reason to change when our beliefs and our ways are opposed to what scripture says. While some argue over the importance of various issues, the fact is, the authority of God's word is the critical issue.

The gospel says, "Christ died for our sins **according to the scriptures**; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day **according to the scriptures**" (1Cor 15:3-4). So, the gospel itself depends on God's word.

"Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him" (Prv 30:5). If God's word is the foundation of our beliefs, then we have no reason to fear a closer inspection of the biblical evidence on any issue. Psalm 119 says, "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." The light of scripture is a blessing to the children of light, not a threat. Good data is the key to making a good decision.

If we want good data, let us look to scripture, "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding" (Prv 2:6).

When people point us away from God's word by citing a non-Bible source (be it one person or a group of people), we should remember the counsel found in Proverbs 29:15: "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe."

[The excerpt below was added in 2020. Read more at RightLord.com]

A Sample from Book Two

Right in the Sight of the Lord, A Better Bible Study Method – Book Two includes a look at a passage that involves the "other disciple." This excerpt from Book Two was added to show how God's word can continue to teach us, even on this issue.

Check for Blind Spots

We make assumptions about what we read in the Bible. This can lead to a flawed view of God's word. For example, consider this report:

"there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*" (Fourth gospel 19:25-28).

Did Jesus want this disciple to adopt his mother and care for her from then on? No. Her other sons (cf. Mt 13:55) were not going to abandon her because their brother was killed. She would not need a caretaker for the rest of her life, so this is not what Jesus meant. How can we determine what he meant when he spoke those words from the cross?

Jesus said many things. At times he was misunderstood. This shows what people *think* Jesus' words meant may not equate to what he actually meant. The verses above say, "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" Can we know for sure what he meant when he said this? Yes, **if we let God's word teach us how to see those words from Jesus' point of view.**

Jesus knew he would rise from the dead on the third day. On multiple occasions, he told his disciples he would rise from the dead on "the third day" (Mt 16:21, et al.). They did not take this to heart. Yet this must be considered, because taking account of what he knew lets us see his words from his point of view. Jesus knew his mother's grief would be turned into joy in less than 72 hours, so he was giving the disciple "whom he loved" a temporary assignment! He was to comfort Mary during her time of grief (and this did not require her to move in with this disciple and live with him). When Mary, Jesus' brothers, and Jesus' disciples learned about his resurrection, everything would change for them. Mary was not going to be left destitute, and Jesus surely knew this. In Acts 1:14 it says, the apostles "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." Then Acts 2:44-45 tells us:

"all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need."

Practicing Due Diligence

This exercise shows how scripture can correct beliefs that come from a rush to judgment. We have blind spots when we are not considering all of the data the Bible has to offer. By taking the time to weigh Jesus' words, we could understand what he meant. This kind of insight might come from a quick read of the Bible, but it is more likely to occur when we meditate on God's word. A sermon a week is not the same as consuming daily bread! Reading the Bible and thinking on it helps us to better understand scripture, and Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy 2:15 indicates diligence is rewarded when it comes to the Bible, for it links diligence to "rightly dividing the word of truth."