

Interpretation

Josh Spoelstra | 30 July 2023

A Venn diagram on a black background. On the left, three overlapping circles in orange, green, and purple represent the Synoptic Gospels. On the right, a single large blue circle represents the Gospel of John. The text 'synoptics 68-72 AD' is centered within the three overlapping circles. The text 'John (ca. 90 AD)' is centered within the blue circle. The circles do not overlap with each other.

synoptics
68-72 AD

John
(ca. 90 AD)

Gospel	Audience	Purpose
Matthew	Jews	Jesus = Messiah/Christ
Mark	Romans	Jesus = GoodNews
Luke	Gentiles	Jesus = Savior
John	Church	Jesus = Divine-Human

Gospel of John

Author

- **The disciple whom Jesus loved** (13:23; 19:26-27; 20:2; 21:7, 20)
- **Apostle John, brother of James, son of Zebedee** (Culpepper, *John*, 31-32, 35)

Thesis

- **these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. (20:31)**

Socio-Religious Context(s)

- **Gnosticism**

- second-century AD religions whose participants believed that people could only be saved through revealed knowledge, or γνῶσις (*gnōsis*).
- An amalgamation of biblical anthropology and Platonic philosophy
- The Gnostics believed, like Plato, that the material world was an inferior and dark place, evil in its very existence,

Socio-Religious Context(s)

- **Docetism**

- A Christological heresy, promoted by Gnostics in the second century.
- So-called from Gk. δοκέω, to seem—Jesus was 100% divine and it only seemed like Jesus was a human: a hologram that never touched the ground.
- “Docetism asserts that ‘Christ’s human body was a phantasm, and that his sufferings and death were mere appearance’ thus ‘if he suffered he was not God; if he was God he did not suffer’;”

(Jacquelyn Shellenberg, “The Person of Jesus Christ,” 30)

Socio-Religious Context(s)

- **Greek Philosophy: the Logos**

- From ancient Greek and Hellenistic philosophy
Logos (Gk. word, speech) referred to an impersonal god, a divine reason which governed the world; “the explanation for order and balance in the universe as a cosmic logos.”

(B.K. Gamel, “Logos, Greek Background,” np)

John: a non-dualistic Jesus, Gospel

- **In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (Genesis 1:1-3)**
- **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being (John 1:1-3)**

John: a non-dualistic Jesus, Gospel

A Very Fleshy Jesus

- the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1:14)
- John's Jesus becomes tired (4:6), weeps (11:35), gets thirsty (19:28), makes mud by spitting on the ground (9:6-7), bids people to eat his flesh and drink his blood (6:51-56), washes his disciples' dirty feet (13:5), was pierced (19:34), his nails hole, side are touched (20:25-27)

A Very Spiritual Gospel

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A Very Spiritual Gospel

- Son of God
 - Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" (1:49)
 - [Martha] said to him, "...I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." (11:27)
- God
 - Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (20:28)

Main Themes in the Gospel of John according to thesis and cultural challenge

- Light(ness) – Dark(ness)
 - For Example: John 1:4-5; 3:19-21; 8:12
- Knowing – Unknowing
 - For Example: John 1:10-11; 1:26-33; 4:22; 6:69
- Eternal Life
 - For Example: John 3:14-16; 5:24; 6:68; 17:3

Jesus' Discourses in the Gospel of John according to thesis and cultural challenge

1. Eternal Life (John 3)
2. Living Water (John 4)
3. Resurrection (John 5)
4. Bread/Flesh & Wine/Blood of (John 6)
5. The Truth will set you Free (John 8)
6. Good Shepherd (John 10)
7. Farewell Discourse (John 14-17)

Conclusion – Thesis Again

- **these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.**
(John 20:31)
 - Identity = Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God (ultimate *Logos*)
 - Know = written so that you may come to believe...and that through believing
 - Eternal life = you may have life in his name (see 17:3)