

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

Take another look

The Bible has the answer

J. Phillips, © 2004

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The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

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DEDICATION

Thank you, God, for giving Stella a love for your Word and for the question she raised at that kitchen table Bible study when she said, "I have a problem with the Gospel of 'John'. I noticed that the author never calls himself 'John', but he refers to himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', the 'other disciple' or 'the other disciple, whom Jesus loved', but he doesn't call *himself* 'John'."

She then quoted two verses that opened my eyes. This led me to search the scriptures and I am very grateful for that. Your Word has preserved many important details for us, but I hadn't paid enough attention to them. Thankfully, she did. By raising the question, she inspired me to take a closer look at the Bible and that search for truth has resulted in a greater appreciation for your Word.

It's true, that big oaks from little acorns grow.

* * * *

Thank you to those who gave their time and resources to help in the production of this book, especially my wife Kathleen, my mother, my sisters and my friends. Your prayers, encouragement, assistance, patience and love were vital to this project and are deeply appreciated. To those who sent funds to help us print books and those who have recommend this book to others, thank you for your support. I also need to thank Meridith and Joel for our wonderful cover and Lisa for all her diligent efforts.

God bless everyone who helped this work to succeed.

PREFACE

Some thoughts to keep in mind when considering God's Word:

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." (Pr. 25:2)

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

"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man." (Ps. 118:8)

"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes." (Ps. 118:9)

"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." (Pr. 30:5)

Has God revealed things to the wise and prudent and hid them from the babes or just the opposite?
(See Mt. 11:25 & Lu. 10:21)

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

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

"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)

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

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7)

"He that is of God heareth God's words..." (Jn. 8:47)

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

THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

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INTRODUCTION

Consider the following facts connected with two very important events in the life of Jesus: [1] his transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-9, Mk. 9:2-9, Lu. 9:28-36) and [2] his prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36-46, Mk. 14:32-42, Lu. 22:39-46).

Only three disciples were present at each of these events and the Apostle John was one of them (Mt. 17:1, Mk. 9:2, Lu. 9:28 & Mt. 26:37, Mk. 14:33). John was able to give eyewitness testimony when it came to *both* of these key incidents. But notice that **there is absolutely no mention of these events in the Gospel that today bears John's name!** What can explain this omission? Would John have written an account of Jesus' ministry that failed to include his testimony pertaining to these two key events?

Also, notice the instruction that Jesus gave to those three disciples (Mt. 17:9, Mk. 9:9) – they were not supposed to keep silent about the transfiguration after Jesus had risen from the dead. *If* John wrote this Gospel, then his silence on this event would seem contrary to Jesus' instructions on this matter!

But the Apostle John was neither disobedient, nor negligent in this regard. The Biblical record can account for the fact that no eyewitness report of these two events was recorded in this Gospel. You'll learn why these omissions occurred as we search the Bible for an answer to a question that is implicitly presented in the Word of God. And that question is: **Who was "the disciple whom Jesus loved"?**

The Bible tells us that this unnamed disciple wrote this Gospel (Jn. 21:20-24). But, his identity was cloaked by a veil of anonymity throughout the pages of his own Gospel. This author used the phrases "the disciple whom Jesus loved", "the other disciple", etc. to refer to himself and, it turns out, that he had a very good reason for camouflaging his true identity.

This study will reveal his *motive* for doing so and, as we proceed, you'll gain a new appreciation for the details that God has preserved for us in the Biblical record. In this regard, notice that the author is distinguishable by the love that Jesus had for him. And notice that the Bible does record Jesus' love for specific individuals (Mk. 10:17-22, Jn. 11:1-5, etc.). Given these facts, you may be shocked to learn that **the Bible never singles out John in this manner!** Thus, it is actually unscriptural to refer to John as 'the beloved disciple' – unless one can prove that the anonymous "disciple whom Jesus loved" and the Apostle John were the same person.

Thank God, it is possible to prove the identity of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" based solely on the evidence contained in the Bible. The facts can prove that a mistake has been made; this unnamed disciple was not John. This wasn't the author's fault; for example, the 'title' "The Gospel of John" was added to his book long after he had died. But, while things like this can distort a reader's perceptions, they cannot overcome the truthfulness of the actual truth of scripture (much like a poorly translated word or a Bible typeset error). [And besides this, we know that God is sovereign, so none of these additions has escaped Him.]

Lest anyone mistake the thrust of this study, note that: **God's Word is not in error and nothing in this study suggests otherwise.** In fact, this study will cite *nothing but the scriptures* in seeking to answer this question – because misconceptions regarding a Biblical topic are best corrected by paying very close attention to every ‘jot and tittle’ of truth that God has preserved for us in the Bible.

Consider what Acts 18:24-28 tells us about a man “named Apollos”. Even though 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”, his understanding of the scriptures was lacking. We know this because when “Aquila and Priscilla had heard” what he was teaching, they “took him” and “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly”. [The Greek here says, “more accurately”.] We are told that, up to that time, Apollos knew of “only the baptism of John”. But the key point is that Apollos revised his teaching when the truth was presented to him. Thereafter, we are told that Apollos “mightily convinced the Jews” – “shewing 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?**

In the Bible the term “mystery” refers to things misunderstood or kept secret (Rom. 11:25 & 16:25, Eph. 5:32 & 6:19, 1 Cor. 15:51, etc.). The ‘mystery’ of this author’s identity presents a paradox worth considering. If this author *was* John and his true identity was widely known soon after this Gospel was written, as many teach, then the author’s effort to remain anonymous was a complete failure.

Conversely, if this author *wasn't* John, then the author’s effort was a huge success. And today, 2000 years later, many people believe that the Bible can’t reveal anything ‘new’ because the ‘scholars’ have already discovered everything of significance. But, as you’ll see, the Holy Spirit can still open our eyes to new information and teach important truths through the details preserved for us in God’s Word.

History proves that errors can become widely accepted as truth – the ‘evolution of life without God’ theory is just one example. Most people will take the ‘scholars’ word for it on such issues, assuming that what the ‘experts’ teach *is* the truth. But where the Bible is concerned, we can search the scriptures to verify whether or not what we are being taught is actually scriptural (like the Bereans of Acts 17:11).

In this study you’ll be challenged to let the words of scripture be your guide. You’ll be asked to weigh their meaning and the evidence they present, without letting others interpret these things for you. In order to render a fair and impartial verdict, you’ll have to guard against having your judgement of the facts distorted by what you’ve learned in the past. There is often a difference between what people say the Bible says and what it *actually* says. So we can best determine the truth on scriptural issues through a careful review of what the Bible itself really says.

As we seek to consider every verse in the Bible that can shed light on this topic, make sure to ask God to lead you to the truth – because our faith “should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5).

This book is based on the idea that the Bible is the best measure of truth on scriptural questions. It seems apparent that one should not be presenting the 'John' idea *as if it is scripturally true*, if there is not one verse that would justify teaching that idea. Likewise, if God opens our eyes to the fact that an idea that we assumed was scriptural actually is not, then honesty demands that we stop communicating that mistaken idea and cease perpetuating a myth. Furthermore, if we become aware that there may be a reason to question a given idea or if something causes us to suspect that an idea we've been taught may not be scripturally accurate, then it's incumbent on us to search the scriptures for the truth.

What would you say to someone who asked, "Why should people read the Bible? If the best that one can hope for is to learn what the 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?"

If the scholars can be wrong about the 'John' idea, then what else might they be wrong about? The lesson of this book should lead you to read the Bible more, to read it more carefully and to test the statements of your teachers, instead of assuming them to be true. [If you find this study to be a solid scriptural analysis, then please mention it to others. Also, if you received this book for free, then we ask you to pass it on to someone else when you finish reading it. Should you ever need to refer to the book later, you can read it online or download and print a copy at TheDiscipleWhomJesusLoved.com or TheGospelOfJohn.com.]

Chapter 1 - THE TRUTH MATTERS

The Gospel Of The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

The God inspired writer of our fourth Gospel was careful to never refer to himself by name. Since he deliberately withheld his identity, then perhaps it is not prudent to casually disregard his efforts and jump to the conclusion the author was 'obviously' the Apostle John, the brother of James. Shouldn't we wonder why God's inspired author used cryptic phrases like "the disciple whom Jesus loved" when referring to himself? *Why didn't he just use his name* [as the Apostle Paul did in Gal. 1:1 & 5:2 and as the Apostle John did in Rev. 1:1 & 22:8, for example]?

Instead of simply identifying himself by name, this author cloaked himself in a veil of anonymity. Since God did not lead the author of this Gospel to identify himself as the Apostle John, should we be so nonchalant about presuming that this was John? Why would anyone encourage a rush to judgement on this matter – especially considering the fact that the author of this Gospel went to great lengths to hide his identity?

This is not to suggest that the identity of this unnamed author cannot be determined. There is an individual who does fit with all that the Bible reveals about this author. Passages like John 20:5 & 21:21 indicate that this author was a male. Establishing his identity, however, takes more effort. In order to do so, *this study will seek to examine everything that the Bible can tell us about this individual. We will search the scriptures for an answer to the question that is implicitly presented to every reader of this Gospel: Who was "the disciple whom Jesus loved"?*

The Integrity Of The Bible

The content of our 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, nor its rightful inclusion in the New Testament. No one should think that 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 herein.

A firm reliance on the Bible as the inspired Word of God doesn't 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 that something is amiss. If you love Jesus, then you love the truth. A search for truth, utilizing *only* the evidence contained in God's Word, is what you will find in this study.

Just The Facts And Just The Bible

As 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 are likely to seem less convincing than they might have otherwise – *since his identity is the very thing that God saw fit to have him conceal*. However, as you'll see, the scriptures can reveal as well as conceal.

Those new to the Bible may be unaware that this Gospel's inspired author did not entitle his work "The Gospel of John." This title, like the chapter and verse divisions, was not the author's doing. Others added these items at later dates. But, when the text of the Gospel is considered, it becomes self-evident that this title was not a product of the inspired author. It's incongruous to think that the author would proclaim his name in a title, since the Gospel that he wrote clearly shows that he intended to hide his identity.

Ideally, this study will provoke you to examine the verses cited and think through the evidence that they present. The Bible is inspired and infallible, but hearsay evidence is not. So this case is presented without using the extra-biblical writings of individuals from the present or the past. You will not be asked to trust the opinions of "scholars" or ideas attributed to the "early church". (When considering extra-biblical sources, remember that man's wisdom is not God's wisdom – so extra-biblical writings need to conform to the Biblical record and not the other way around.)

This study will present its case using only scripture and the logical conclusions that result from comparing scripture with scripture.

Warning: Proceed With Caution

Acts 17:11 tells us 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 ought to be just as diligent as these disciples were and test everything against the Bible.

When we read a book or listen to a teaching, we should be checking the Bible to determine if we are being taught correctly. The responsibility for this 'truth test' appears to rest on those who receive the message. The Bereans are praised for checking out Paul's teaching, so how much more should we test what we are taught. Let's be as conscientious about seeking the truth as the Bereans were and use the Bible to prove the ideas that others present to us.

Christians have nothing to fear from the truth. But, since new ideas challenge tradition, they are often mocked or simply dismissed. However, unless man has discovered all of the truth in the Bible, then we should always be open to the possibility that God may, at times, have something new to teach us.

The Truth Is Our Goal

Jesus often used questions in his teaching process. Likewise, when we find something in the Bible that arouses *our* curiosity, we should take a closer look. God knew that inspiring this author to refer to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" would cause some to ponder these scriptures further. So let's look to the scriptures for the answer to this question: who was this anonymous author?

In answering this question, don't assume you can trust the opinion of others more than your own. Popular opinion can be wrong. Even if 'everybody' thinks that something is true that does not make it so – such as when 'all' the educated people '*knew*' that the earth was flat and anyone would be ridiculed if they questioned the accepted '*truth*.'

Let's follow the example of the Bereans. They didn't just take Paul's word for it. They checked the scriptures! And we should do likewise when we are told that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was John. If this teaching is true, then the evidence in the scriptures should support it. Yet, incredibly, the Bible never suggests that this unnamed author was John. Despite this, commentaries and teachers will often say that John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and they state this *as if it was a fact*. In reality, though, these assertions amount to opinion being *mistakenly portrayed as fact*. In this study you'll see for yourself that this assertion fails 'the Berean test'.

Commentaries or other books can be helpful, especially when they highlight details that we might otherwise miss. But, we need to test the statements they make. And you should treat this text likewise. **Carefully evaluate the case presented herein and verify each scripture reference in its context.**

The verses cited in this study are quoted herein, but looking up the verses will allow you to confirm the evidence in its context. By doing so you'll become more grounded in God's Word, and you will be built up in confidence and competence when it comes to discussing the topic of this study.

Finally, 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, we should be sure to ask God to guide us, especially when it is the Bible that we are seeking to understand.

Jury Duty

As you read on, imagine that you are sitting on a jury and that the Bible has been introduced as Exhibit A. Your task is to consider the facts and decide whether or not this evidence is adequate to prove the identity of "the disciple whom Jesus loved". You will be the one deciding this 'case', so it's up to you to prayerfully seek the truth and consider the factual evidence without prejudice.

The first portion of this study seeks to prove, 'beyond a reasonable doubt', that *the Apostle John was not "the disciple whom Jesus loved"*. Although 'beyond a reasonable doubt' is a very high standard, the Biblical evidence presented herein should be able to meet this standard, in your judgement. The facts will prove that the Apostle John and this unnamed author were two different individuals.

The last half of this study seeks to prove the true identity of this heretofore-misidentified "disciple" – to 'a preponderance of the evidence'. It's up to you to determine whether or not the evidence presented is sufficient to meet this standard. As you will learn, this Gospel author was one of the most noteworthy individuals in the New Testament, yet because he wrote anonymously, he has been largely overlooked.

Bible References And Quotes

The **only** source quoted in this study is the Holy Bible. The *exact wording of your* Bible may vary for some of the quotes, since there are many different versions of the Bible. Still, no matter which Bible version you use, you'll be able to verify the accuracy

and context of every passage cited. The differences in wording between Bible versions won't alter the verdict that is demanded by the evidence.

All of the quotes in this study are taken from the King James Version (KJV). Thus, you'll find some words that appear to be misspelled, like "shewed" or "Messias". These are not errors. They are the result of exactly quoting the King James Version. While the King James can seem awkward at times, it is still the most widely held Bible version.

[Ten Greek references are included for clarification. These are from the Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, published by Baker Book House, 1981.]

A Worthwhile Pursuit And A Helping Hand

Some will ask, 'If the contents of this Gospel are true and inspired by God, then what difference does it make who wrote it?' We will consider this question later, but for now let it suffice that Jesus said a number of things that should indicate to us *the truth matters* (Jn. 8:32, 14:6, 17:19 & 18:37).

The Bible certainly notifies us that the pursuit of truth is a good thing. Here is one example of this from Proverbs 2:3-5: "if thou criest after knowledge, *and* liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as *for* hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God". This suggests that we should be vigilant about seeking the truth and that doing so is a worthwhile endeavor.

We ought not to think, however, that this is a task that we should undertake alone. The Holy Spirit is referred to as "the Spirit of truth" in a verse that tells us, "he will guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). In Luke 11:13, Jesus indicated that the Father would "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him". So be sure to take advantage of this wonderful promise.

Chapter 2 - "THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED" - WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

"The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved"

John 21:20 & 24 disclose that the author of the fourth Gospel was "the disciple whom Jesus loved". This was how the author referred to himself, along with "the other disciple, whom Jesus loved", "the other disciple", etc. His use of these anonymous terms should prompt us to ask questions – such as, "Other" than what? So, let's not accept the claim that this was John, simply because someone else says that this is true. Instead of just assuming that others already have the answer, let's carefully examine the scriptural record that God has provided.

The phrase "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is notable for several reasons, but primarily because it means that his relationship with Jesus was unique. He's set apart from the rest of the disciples of Jesus as "**THE disciple**" (singular) that has the distinction of being identified as *the one* "whom Jesus loved".

How would you react if you met a man with five siblings who repeatedly referred to himself as "the child my mother loved"? This phrase suggests an exclusive relationship and, if it is true, it indicates the standing of this sibling over the others relative to their mother's love. Doesn't it seem somewhat odd that this biblical author would single himself out as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? This is easily the most prominent and descriptive term that this author used to refer to himself, yet few seem to ask why. This 'label' clearly distinguishes this individual based solely on the unique regard that Jesus had for him. Shouldn't we wonder why God's Word took the time to highlight 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. The use of this term means that Jesus' love for this disciple is a distinguishing factor – or else the phrase itself makes no sense.

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

The "Other Disciple"

John 13:23 is the first time we find the author is differentiated from the other disciples as the one "whom Jesus loved" and we also see that he was leaning on Jesus' bosom. John 18:15 tells us that Peter and "another disciple" show up when Jesus is being put on trial later that night and the next verse, John 18:16, refers to him as "that other disciple". [The literal Greek says: "the other disciple" (Jn. 18:15) and "the disciple other" (Jn.18:16).]

John 19:26 says that while Jesus was on the cross, he "saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved". John 19:27 calls this individual "the disciple" and

“that disciple”. John 20:2 tells us about resurrection morning and calls this person, “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”. Then, in John 20:3 & 4, he is called “that other disciple” and “the other disciple”, while John 20:8 calls him “that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre”.

The last mention of this disciple occurs in the last chapter of his Gospel, when seven disciples go fishing. John 21:7 tells us, “that disciple whom Jesus loved” was the first to recognize Jesus. John 21:20 again calls him “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and confirms that he was the one “which also leaned on his breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?” In John 21:21-23 “him”, “this man”, “he” and “that disciple” are also used to refer to this individual.

Finally John 21:24 says, “This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things”. The context makes it clear that the author is “that disciple” of John 21:23, who is further identified as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, in John 21:20.

As the preceding references demonstrate, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was the most revealing way that this author referred to himself. If the Bible refers to someone as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, isn’t it rational to think that this person would have played an important part in Jesus’ life? Yes. Given the uniqueness of this designation, we ought to expect that this “other disciple” would have had a perceptible role in the life of Jesus. Moreover, he absolutely must have interacted with Jesus at some point prior to the ‘Last Supper’.

Admittedly the foregoing passages do show that this author was present at notable moments of Jesus’ ministry: his last Passover, the crucifixion and the vacant tomb on resurrection morning. But read each one of these passages and then carefully consider them together. ***What is missing?***

A Look At The Scriptures

John 13:21-28 (with Jesus at his last Passover)

John 18:12-18 (with Jesus at his trial)

John 19:25-27 (with Jesus at his cross)

John 20:1-10 (first “disciple” to Jesus’ tomb - v.4, first to “believe” - v.8)

John 21:2-24 (first to identify Jesus at Galilee - v.7, author of this Gospel - v.24)

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

John 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.”

John 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.”

John 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**.”

John 20:1-10: “The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. 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 sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and **that other disciple**, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and **the other disciple** did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. 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 sepulchre, 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 sepulchre**, 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.”

John 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, an 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 shewed 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 this individual is that he seems to unexpectedly pop up from out of nowhere. It should arrest our attention when we first find out that there is no mention of anyone called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” prior to chapter 13 of the Gospel of attributed to John. This person’s history with Jesus is missing! Why?

The very first time that we read about this one unnamed disciple “whom Jesus loved” is at Jesus’ last Passover. (Notice that while the rest of the disciples are wondering if they will be the one to betray Jesus, it falls to the one “whom Jesus loved” to ask Jesus who the betrayer is.) However, before this episode, there is not a single reference to the “other disciple” or “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in this Gospel. What can account for this?

It does not make sense that some person just suddenly appeared on the scene in the last days of Jesus’ life and instantly became “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.

This person is someone who had a special relationship with Jesus and this degree of friendship is not something that can materialize out of thin air. So why is there no mention of this “other disciple” apart from the last days of Jesus’ time here on earth? The questions get even more curious.

The terms “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, “other disciple”, etc. appear in only five passages – Jn. 13:21-28, 18:12-18, 19:25-27, 20:1-10 & 21:2-24. WHY? Surely someone who was close enough to Jesus to be called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” had to have been interacting with Jesus before that last Passover. Still, there is **no** earlier indication of this “disciple whom Jesus loved” in the Gospel that is attributed to John. 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 Gospel writers avoided mentioning the presence of this “other disciple” even when we know for certain that *he was present!*

Luke 24:12 and John 20:3-10 clearly confirm this. In Luke 24:12 Peter seems to be alone when he went to Jesus’ tomb on resurrection morning. Yet in John 20 we have a description of *the same event* that shows the “other disciple” was there when Peter visited the vacant tomb of Jesus. You will see this same sort of omission if you compare scriptures for the night of Jesus’ arrest and trial.

In John 18:15-16 we can see that both Peter and the “other disciple” followed Jesus that night. 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 only tell of Peter’s following of Jesus on that night). So why would the other Gospels ignore 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 played a role during several of the weightiest moments of Jesus’ life. He was the author of one of the four Gospels. Yet **if it weren’t for his own Gospel, then we would have no way to learn of Jesus’ unique relationship with him (or to discover that he even existed)!** Does this seem strange to you? It should.

The fact that the other Gospels never refer to “the disciple whom Jesus loved” or the “other disciple” is significant. You’ll soon see that this “other disciple” was set apart from the rest of the disciples in a very special way by the actions of Jesus – a key piece of evidence that will help us identify him.

A Few More Questions Before The Answers

This unidentified disciple didn’t just suddenly pop up on the day 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 for this, which will also help to prove the author’s identity.

What can we learn from the fact that the *first reference* to this unnamed disciple appears in John, chapter 13? *Why does he appear so late in the Gospel narrative*? John 13 gives us information about Jesus’ last Passover, but it does not explain either the timing of or the reason for the sudden appearance of “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.

However, there is a very significant incident recorded in the Bible that does suggest a rational basis for answering each of these questions – and it occurred just prior to that same Passover! We’ll put the spotlight on this episode a little bit later. First, though, let’s take a closer look at the Apostle John.

Chapter 3: THE EVIDENCE PRO & CON: WAS JOHN "THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED"?

The Evidence Will Prove John Didn't Do It!

This is no reflection on John, since *there is no proof that he ever claimed to be the author* of the Gospel that came to bear his name. This was the fault of others erroneously attributing it to him.

Certainly the Apostle John can't be blamed for the mistakes of others and he is dead, so there is no way for him to correct it. The Bible, however, can set the record straight when it is carefully examined. God's Word has all the evidence that we will need to discover the truth about this author.

Let's begin by looking to see what the Bible reveals about John (the brother of James and son of Zebedee). We'll contrast this with what is said about "the disciple whom Jesus loved". As we do, time and again you will see that the evidence indicates that John and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" are two different people.

We will be analyzing a lot of information about "the disciple whom Jesus loved" as we go through this process. You will also be learning many of the facts that are needed to prove the identity of this individual as we take the time to see exactly how the evidence 'clears' John.

How Humble Was John?

In defending the idea that the Apostle John was the author of this Gospel, some will say that the reason John didn't identify himself as the author was that he was just being humble. Is this reasonable?

In the Book of Revelation the Apostle John used his name repeatedly. Was John more prideful (less humble) when he wrote *that* book? Surely not, but this contrast between the behavior of John and that of the anonymous author cannot be overlooked.

Moreover, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is not the most humble-sounding self-description. If it wasn't part of scripture, the author's use of this designation might actually seem quite immodest. Wouldn't it have been more humble for this author to have simply used his name rather than repeatedly refer to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? Those who want to attribute this Gospel to John will be hard pressed to offer an answer to this question. But it turns out that the Biblical record suggests that the actual author had a very good reason to avoid identifying himself by name.

The notion that 'humility was the reason that John did not use his name' has other shortcomings. Consider what the Bible tells us about John and his brother. They're named "The sons of thunder" by Jesus (Mk. 3:17) and we are told they sought power to call fire down from heaven to consume people (Lu. 9:54). They also proposed that *they* should be the ones sitting on the right hand and left hand of Jesus in his kingdom (Mk. 10:35-41, Mt. 20:20-24). Does that sound like humility?

Mark 10:41 says, "when the ten heard *it* they began to be much displeased with James and John". Clearly it was not humbleness on the part of John and James but a lack thereof that caused this indignation among the remainder of "the twelve"!

This does not mean that John was never humble, of course. But the preceding facts were brought up merely to show that the Bible does not give us any reason to believe that John was unusually humble. Prior to the day of Pentecost at least, it seems that humility may have not been John's strong point. Naturally, we would expect that the presence of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost would enable John to be more humble. However, that does not give us license to presume unfounded actions on the part of John or anyone else.

John used his name five times in the Book of Revelation. Moreover, *nothing* in the Bible suggests that John had a motive to hide his identity from the readers of this Gospel. Therefore, we can conclude that it is unfounded to suggest that John referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in this Gospel simply because he wanted to be humble. This idea has no scriptural support whatsoever.

A Glaring Contrast

A simple truth can sometimes go unnoticed; but when we realize it or when it is pointed out to us, then we wonder how it could have been missed. Consider, for example, the other books contained in the scriptures that are attributed to the Apostle John. Can you guess what is missing from all of these other books?

None of these other books ever refers to the Apostle John as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"! So, if the Apostle John wrote the Gospel that bears his name, then what explains this glaring contrast?

In order to claim that the Apostle John wrote this Gospel, one needs to offer a rationale as to why John would exclude the phrase "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and this key identifying relationship from other books that are attributed to him. Then again, it might be that John is not called "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in any other book simply because he *wasn't* "the disciple whom Jesus loved". We have proof that John was willing to refer to himself by name (Rev. 1:1, 1:4, 1:9, 21:2 & 22:8). So perhaps this "other disciple" was someone else – someone other than one of "the twelve".

Why Include John, But Exclude "The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved"?

There is plenty of additional evidence to show that John was not "the disciple whom Jesus loved". For example, notice how differently the other Gospel writers treat these two. As noted earlier, John upset the rest of the disciples on at least one occasion (Mk. 10:41). Still the other Gospel writers had no problem including him in their Gospels. John's name appears twenty times in the other three Gospels (excluding citations that refer to John the Baptist).

The other Gospel authors report that Jesus selected "Peter and James and John" for special duties (Mt. 17:1, Mk. 13:3 & 14:33, Lu. 8:51, etc.). Also in Luke 22:8 we see that Jesus picked "Peter and John" to go ahead and prepare the place for his last Passover. We will discuss the significance of these 'special assignments' a little later.

The point being made is that the writers of the other three Gospels are *more than willing* to tell us about John's involvement in Jesus' ministry. They openly refer to John's presence and his actions associated with various events. But there is something peculiar about this. Do you see the incongruity that this presents?

The other three Gospel writers never referred to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" or the "other disciple". As previously shown, they didn't mention his presence even when we know he was present! (For an example compare Jn. 18:15-16 to Mt. 26:58, Mk. 14:54 & Lu. 22:54-55). Despite this, the other Gospel writers seem to have no problem when it comes to revealing John's presence. Conversely, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is conspicuous by his absence (from the other three Gospels).

If "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was John, then this inconsistent treatment presents a problem. Since the other three Gospel writers mention John, but leave him out when recording events where the record in the fourth Gospel mentions "the disciple whom Jesus loved", the "other disciple" etc., *how did they know when to leave John out?* Even if they had a copy of the fourth Gospel to know *when* to leave John out, this still doesn't seem to make sense.

However, this discrepancy *does* make sense *if* John and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" are two different people. The other Gospel writers disregard the presence of "the disciple whom Jesus loved", but they cite the presence of John, the brother of James and son of Zebedee.

Does the work of the other Gospel writers support a conclusion that the "other disciple" and John are one in the same? No, it does not – and one cannot avoid this inconsistency if they wish to say that John was the "other disciple".

The other Gospels omit "the disciple whom Jesus loved". Contrast this with references to John that you find occurring in those same Gospels. This distinct treatment suggests that these were different people, not the same individual. Also, if they were *two different people*, then the reason that the other Gospels treat them differently is understandable.

The Relationship Between Jesus And John

It is taught that Jesus had an 'inner circle' of disciples. This refers to the fact that sometimes only "Peter and James and John" were permitted to accompany Jesus (Mt. 17:1, Mk. 13:3 & 14:33, Lu. 8:51). These 'special assignments' were mentioned briefly in the last section. Being selected to be with Jesus on these occasions was certainly a special privilege that Peter, James and John enjoyed over the rest of the disciples.

We need to consider John's inclusion in this so-called 'inner circle' because it has been used by many as a rationale for claiming that John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved". They argue that this shows that John had a special relationship with Jesus and this belief leads them to the conclusion that the phrase "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is properly applied to John. Unfortunately this is not good logic, nor is it scriptural.

Remember that the Apostle John is not alone in these 'inner circle' passages. While John's place in this 'inner circle' does suggest that he had a 'special relationship' with Jesus, the same could be said of Peter and James (and maybe Andrew also). There is no verse that indicates Jesus' relationship with these other 'inner circle' Apostles was notably different than his relationship with John.

Jesus did select Peter and John to prepare his last Passover (Lu. 22:8). But this one verse isn't a sufficient reason to conclude that Peter and John were the two closest disciples of Jesus. Nonetheless, many do think that Jesus' two closest disciples were Peter and John – but this is because *they've already been taught that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was John*. This idea is so pervasive that most don't notice when circular arguments are used to 'prove' that John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved". [E.G., 'Peter and John were the closest to Jesus and Peter wasn't the "other disciple", therefore this "other disciple" must be John.' Clearly, Peter wasn't "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn. 13:23-24, 20:3 & 21:20). However, this tells us nothing about John because this argument rests on a false premise.]

Although superficial 'arguments' might *appear* to support the theory that John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved", the evidence contained in the Bible proves otherwise. Furthermore, there is *no* reason for assuming that this "other disciple, whom Jesus loved" had to be one of the 'inner circle' members. As you'll see, the author called himself "the other disciple" for a very important reason – because **he was "other" than "the twelve"**.

Peter Was Foremost Among "The Twelve"

Peter was the first disciple renamed by Jesus (Jn. 1:42). Jesus called Peter blessed (Mt. 16:17). An angel mentioned Peter by name on resurrection morning (Mk. 16:7). Jesus told Peter to feed his sheep (Jn. 21:15-17). Moreover, Peter was the one chosen to give the sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14). Thus it is unmistakable that Peter was the disciple who stood out among "the twelve".

One would expect Peter to stand out from the rest of "the twelve", because that fits with what the scriptures reveal about him (but the same thing can't be said when it comes to John). When Jesus was arrested, his disciples fled (Mt. 26:56, Mk. 14:50). However, Peter at least found the courage to follow Jesus (Mt. 26:58, Mk. 14:54, Lu. 22:54, Jn. 18:15) – although his three denials did begin soon thereafter.

There was only one of "the twelve" who had a very special and distinct relationship with Jesus and that was Peter. [As stated earlier, Peter was not "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn. 21:20).] Prior to Pentecost, the scriptures do not single out John in a similar manner. Besides the fact that he participated in the 'inner circle', nothing insinuates that John was 'a cut above' the rest of "the twelve" (pre-Pentecost).

Conversely, the scriptures **do** imply that "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 you believe that John's place in the 'inner circle' provides a basis to say that he had a relationship with Jesus equivalent to that of "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? This is a huge stretch, but without it the 'case' *for* John goes nowhere.

The Behavior And Character Of John

Now we will compare the character of John to what is disclosed about "the disciple whom Jesus loved". (*Remember that we are talking about the pre-Pentecost Apostle John.*) First, let's consider the behavior of John during one of the key events in Jesus' life. The Bible reveals that when Jesus went to 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 had a simple request, "watch" (Mt. 26:38, Mk. 14:34).

Regrettably, John and the other two couldn't even stay awake for Jesus while he stepped away to spend some time in prayer. When Jesus returned he found them sleeping and his dismay was clear when he said to Peter, "could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Mt. 26:40, Mk. 14:37). Again Jesus left to pray and John let him down a second time. When he returned the second time, Jesus "found them asleep again" (Mt. 26:43, Mk. 14:40). The third time that Jesus went to pray the same thing occurred.

The point is that John didn't have the strength to stay awake for Jesus in this time of need – even though Jesus specifically asked him to do so. The subsequent trial and crucifixion of Jesus would have certainly been much more traumatic and frightening events. (In that desperate period even Peter denied Jesus, before abandoning him completely.)

Matthew 26:37-45 and Mark 14:33-41 give us a feel for just how much the 'inner circle' disciples disappointed Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane that night. Jesus knew he had been betrayed and that he would be killed before the end of Passover. But Jesus' urgent requests were not able to rouse John and the 'inner circle' to action. Immediately following this series of failures by the 'inner circle', an armed and hostile crowd surrounds Jesus and hauls him off to trial.

Since John did not have the stamina to stand with Jesus at Gethsemane, **why** should we believe that just a short time later John abruptly changed – and that John (*and only John*) found the fortitude in himself to be enduring for Jesus that fateful night?

The Bible does not indicate that John acted notably different from the rest of Jesus' disciples on that night. Yet one has to believe this if they believe that John was "the other disciple", because we know that after Jesus was arrested and his disciples fled, this unnamed individual "followed Jesus" (Jn. 18:15).

The Bible also says that while dying on the cross, Jesus saw "the disciple standing by, whom he loved" (Jn. 19:26). Therefore, the Bible suggests that this "disciple" was with Jesus for the period of time that is covered between John 18:15 and John 19:27. But this behavior stands in stark contrast to the actions of the Apostle John earlier that same evening, when John couldn't even manage to stay awake for Jesus.

The Scriptures Present A Contrast

The important thing is to note the timing – all of this happens in one night. **Earlier in the evening** at the Garden of Gethsemane, the Apostle John let Jesus down three times. **Later that same night** before Jesus was tried, the "other disciple" showed up and went in with Jesus (Jn. 18:15). And we also know that this "other disciple" was standing by the cross until Jesus gave him a different assignment (Jn. 19:25-27). This is a stark contrast. Think about this fact and then ask yourself, Does the evidence support the conclusion that the "other disciple" and John are the same person or does it indicate they are more likely two different people?

When you compare scripture with scripture you find that *the evidence indicates that John and "the other disciple" are two different individuals*. This "other disciple" exhibited a boldness and moral strength that set him apart from the rest of the disciples. He was the one that stayed with Jesus until the time of his death. He was the first of the disciples at Jesus' vacant tomb on resurrection day (Jn. 20:2-4). Furthermore when he went into the tomb that morning, the scripture says he "believed" (Jn. 20:8) – the first disciple after the resurrection to do so. Although all of this speaks well of the "other disciple", it does not in any way suggest that this person was the Apostle John. On the contrary, all of the facts indicate that the "other disciple" and the Apostle John were two different people – because they behave differently!

"And they all forsook him and fled"

It's true that the "other disciple" wasn't the only one to exhibit courage on the night Jesus was arrested. Peter too, showed up that night to follow Jesus (Mt. 26:58, Mk. 14:54a, Lu. 22:54, Jn. 18:15). However he remained outside, warming himself by a fire (Mk. 14:54b & 14:67, Lu. 22:55-56, Jn. 18:18). Then he denied Jesus (Mt. 26:70-74, Mk. 14:67-71, Lu. 22:57-60, Jn. 18:25). After he denied Jesus, Peter recalled Jesus' prophecy of this and then he "went out" and "wept bitterly" (Mt. 26:75, Lu. 22:62). All of this occurred *prior to* Jesus being taken before Pilate and might appear to suggest that, unlike Peter, the "other disciple" was always present with Jesus.

Nevertheless, we need to think of both the "other disciple" and Peter as *returning* – when they "followed Jesus" that night. This is because of some things that Jesus had said earlier that evening. In John 16:32 he told his disciples, "ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone". On the Mount of Olives a little bit later Jesus said, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night" (Mt. 26:31, Mk. 14:27). Of course, he was correct. Mark 14:50 tells us what happened just before Jesus was led away to the high priest. It says, "And they all forsook him and fled."

So we should be careful not to assume that Peter and the "other disciple" did not flee the scene at Gethsemane, as did the rest of the disciples. And yet, we do read that these two "followed" Jesus that same night (Jn. 18:15). Although this might seem to be a discrepancy in the scriptures, it is not. With regard to Peter, consider the fact that the Bible tells us that Peter followed Jesus "afar off" (Mt. 26:58, Mk. 14:54, Lu. 22:54). This could be an indication that Peter was keeping a safe distance between himself and Jesus. On the other hand, Peter might have been following "afar off" as the result of fleeing first and then turning back to follow after the crowd had taken Jesus away.

Is it plausible that Peter might vacillate like this? Well after finding the courage to follow Jesus, Peter proceeded to deny 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 very adamant, "Although all shall be offended, yet not I" (Mk. 14:29). Jesus responds by foretelling Peter's denials that were to come later that night (Mk. 14:30). Regardless, Peter continued to insist that Jesus was wrong. Mark 14:31 records Peter's rebuff of this prophecy: "But he (Peter) spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise".

Is it reasonable to suggest that Peter might have remembered these words after fleeing? Yes. Whatever the reason though, it appears that Peter initially fled with the rest of the disciples before he followed Jesus that night. Of course this still leaves us with this same apparent dilemma regarding the "other disciple". Did he flee or did he follow? As you will see later, there is an answer to this *seeming* discrepancy for the "other disciple" also.

Courage Under Fire

When we are careful not to force the identity of John on 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 that this man found the courage to follow Jesus? And what gave him the fortitude to stick with Jesus that night, when *even Peter* finally threw in the towel and left?

If the 'inner circle' disciples couldn't even stay awake for Jesus when he specifically asked them to do so, what could motivate this "other disciple" to accompany Jesus into his trial and to stand by the cross until Jesus dismissed him?

These questions raise yet another question. Is there some individual in the Bible that we could expect to exhibit these characteristics? Moreover, does the Bible give us enough evidence to explain *why* this "other disciple" behaved the way he did?

The answer to these last two questions is yes. As you will soon find out, the Bible contains the answer to all of these questions. First though, let's remove any remaining doubts about the hypothesis that John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved".

Chapter 4 - A *WRONG ASSUMPTION & MORE EVIDENCE THAT CLEARS JOHN*

“The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved” and The ‘Last Supper’

A misperception about Jesus’ last Passover has tended to give credence to the idea that John was the author of this Gospel. John 21:20 tells us, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was the one who “leaned on his (Jesus) breast at supper and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?” (Also see, Jn. 13:23-25.)

However, because Mark 14:17 states, Jesus “cometh with the twelve” and Matthew 26:20 says, Jesus “sat down with the twelve” some presume that the “other disciple” *has to be* one of “the twelve”. There are also many ‘Last Supper’ paintings that help instill an image in our mind of Jesus sitting with “the twelve” at a table having a private supper together with no one else in the room. However, these artist renditions and an erroneous assumption have led many people to accept a faulty conclusion.

Note that the Bible does *not* say that “the twelve” were the only ones present with Jesus at that Passover. *Nowhere are we told that they dined alone*. Nor will you find any verse that indicates that other disciples could not participate. Is there any reason to believe that they dined alone that last Passover? Not unless you read a constraint into Matthew 26:20 and Mark 14:17 that isn’t in the text.

Remember that it is wrong to assume that someone is not present at an event simply because a passage of scripture doesn’t mention their presence!

This was demonstrated earlier by contrasting Luke 24:10-12 with John 20:2-10. If someone had only the passage from Luke, they might jump to the conclusion that Peter was alone when he went to the tomb on resurrection morning. However, Peter *was not alone* when he visited Jesus’ vacant tomb with the “other disciple” that morning. What’s more, the person that Luke left out wasn’t some bit player! “The disciple whom Jesus loved” was a key figure in the life of Jesus. [Also, as you’ll see in a moment, Acts 1:21&22 proves that “the twelve” weren’t the only ones with Jesus throughout his ministry.]

There are additional examples, but the lesson here is clear. We must guard against presuming too much or building an argument from silence, lest we miss the truth. When the Gospels describe an event, it is wrong to assume that attendance at the event is limited to the individuals who *are said to be present* – unless the passage itself specifies this limitation.

Guess Who’s Coming To Dinner?

The scriptures do not state that “the twelve” were alone with Jesus the entire evening of his last Passover. Still, we should ask if there is anything in the Bible that implies that others might have been present? The answer is yes. There are several passages that support this idea.

First off, consider that 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). What is missing is any justification for assuming that the occupants of that home simply vacated the premises.

Moreover, the Bible indicates that Jesus was accustomed to dining with others. The residents of those households where Jesus 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". Also, Luke 11:37 states, "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 arrives in Bethany, six days before his last Passover. John 12:2 tells us that "There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him".

This suggests another question. Who *worked* at that Passover supper? We know that Peter and John had gone earlier in the day and "made ready the passover" (Lu. 22:8-13). However at the supper, who served and who did the dishes? Jesus and his disciples were houseguests at the time, so isn't it likely that their host took care of these details? And is it also possible that their host would have sat with them (as in Lu. 7:36, 11:37, 24:29-30 & Jn.12:2)?

In light of the fact that the Bible never states that "the twelve" were the *only ones present* with Jesus at the last Passover, why should we suppose that Jesus and "the twelve" spent that entire Passover evening alone by themselves?

Not Alone At The Passover

There are still more passages that indicate Jesus and "the twelve" weren't alone at that last Passover. One of these is Acts 1:21-26, which tells about the time when the eleven remaining Apostles named a replacement for Judas. They began by selecting two men. But notice what is said about the group from which these two came. Peter said that this person should be chosen from among, "these men which have companied with us at all 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" (Acts 1:21-22).

This proves that **"the twelve" were not the only ones with Jesus during his earthly ministry!** The fact is that Jesus had additional loyal disciples who accompanied him *throughout* his time here on earth – and although this point is rarely emphasized, Peter's words let us know that this was the case.

Likewise, a curious statement by Jesus also hints at the presence of others. At the 'Last Supper' the disciples were inquiring about which one of them was the traitor. Then Jesus said, "It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish" (Mk. 14:20).

Of course, "the twelve" is specific to the men Jesus personally chose to follow him. Contrast this with the term "disciples", which is used of numerous people (sometimes even including some or all of "the twelve"). [To see this, compare John 18:1 with John 6:66 which says, "From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."]

If Jesus and "the twelve" were the only ones at that last Passover, then why would Jesus need to include the stipulation "one of the twelve" in his answer? The term "the twelve" is a limiting phrase, used to specifically refer to those "chosen" disciples. And yet, Jesus used this phrase at the 'Last Supper' (Mk. 14:20). But if "the twelve" were the only ones present, wouldn't Jesus have said, 'One of you'?

In fact Jesus does exactly that in John 6:70, which is the only other verse where Jesus used the phrase "the twelve". In John 6:66-69 many disciples abandoned Jesus. He then challenged "the twelve", who declared their devotion. In reply he said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (Jn. 6:70). ["You twelve" in the Greek reads, "you the twelve".] Consequently, at the 'Last Supper' when Jesus said the traitor was "one of the twelve" (instead of saying "one of you"), it indicates that he and "the twelve" were *not* the only ones present.

Notice too, that the author didn't call himself 'one of the twelve whom Jesus loved'. [*An indication that he wasn't one of "the twelve"?*] If Jesus sat down to supper with "the twelve" and then *later* they were joined by "the disciple whom Jesus loved", then naturally this person wasn't one of "the twelve".

"After" The Supper?

When examined carefully, the record of the Gospel attributed to John offers additional evidence that argues against "the disciple whom Jesus loved" being one of "the twelve". The sequence of 'Last Supper' events is the focus of our examination here.

Consider for example, how the author begins his report on that evening – "And the supper being ended...." (Jn. 13:2) Ended? *Does the record in this unnamed author's Gospel start at some later point during that evening? As you'll see the answer is yes, but not merely by reason of this verse.*

[Various Bible versions translate this verse differently because of conflicting interpretations of the Greek word tenses involved. However, the study of things like word tenses can often end up with us having to choose between the opposing opinions of Greek scholars. So instead, let's look again to the Bible to learn what it can teach us.]

In Luke 22:17-19 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, you 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 1st Corinthians 11:25. There we read, "also *he took* the cup when he had supped, saying this cup is the new testament in my blood". [Again the Greek says, "also the cup after having supped".]

Therefore it can be seen that the timing of events that night (particularly what happened “after” the supper) has scriptural relevance. Next we’ll learn how this pertains to the anonymous author’s Gospel and see why *understanding the sequence of events helps us to identify “the disciple whom Jesus loved”*.

Where Is ‘The Lord’s Table’?

The church places great significance on the memorial custom that is referred to as ‘communion’ and/or ‘the Lord’s table’. 1st Corinthians 11:26 says, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come”. Therefore this emphasis is appropriate. Moreover, whenever one thinks about the ‘Last Supper’, the bread and the cup usually come first to mind.

The Gospel accounts of that day focus on that solemn event – but only in *three* of the Gospels! The Gospel attributed to John has no mention of this incident. Why would the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup be left out of this one author’s Gospel account (especially since this author wrote so much about that night)?

Contrast the account in John 13:3-17:26 with the accounts in Matthew 26:20-29, Mark 14:17-25 and Luke 22:14-38. The author of our fourth Gospel devotes **five whole chapters** to that night – *much more than the other three Gospel writers combined*. Yet despite this, his Gospel account is the only one which omits the ‘Lord’s table’. Certainly not because it was unimportant, so why is it missing?

Of course, each Gospel leaves out different things. So the fact that the Gospel attributed to John omits the bread and the cup is not a problem. Still, this does add credence to the theory that the author of this Gospel wasn’t one of “the twelve”. This event may have been left out of this author’s gospel simply because he was not present when it occurred, but the Bible is not explicit about *why* this author omitted it so we cannot be sure. Nevertheless, this omission is perfectly understandable if this author began his record of that evening’s events at the point where he sat down with Jesus and “the twelve” – which seems to have been “after” their supper.

Also, this author’s Gospel does not mention that Jesus sent two of his disciples to “prepare” the Passover. However, the other three Gospels refer to this in varying degrees of detail, all ending with the statement, “and they made ready the passover” (Mt. 26:17-19, Mk. 14:12-16, Lu. 22:7-13). The fact that the unnamed author omits this part of the story shouldn’t be a surprise, since this omission is also *consistent* with an account that starts at a later point that day than the other three Gospel accounts. Now let’s look at what this author’s Gospel *does* say.

The Foot Washing Incident

It is interesting to note that the very *first* event that this author’s Gospel reports from that Passover meal is the washing of the disciples’ feet by Jesus. John 13:4-5 states, “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”.

Here again the evidence is suggesting that “the supper” (or at least a portion of it) had ended, since this begins with Jesus rising “from supper”. [The literal Greek reads, “he rises from the supper”.] In spite of this, some deduce just the opposite – supposing from this passage that the supper had not yet started. They infer this because they begin with the presupposition that Jesus would have done this foot washing before the meal. But it turns out that the Bible doesn’t support this conclusion.

For example, Luke 11:37 tells of a similar situation when a Pharisee asked Jesus to, “dine with him: and he (Jesus) went in, and sat down to meat”. Then the next verse notes, “And when the Pharisee saw *it*, he marveled that he had not washed before dinner” (Lu. 11:38). So keep in mind that the Bible indicates that it may not have been customary for Jesus to wash before eating.

Also in Matthew 15:2 Jesus is asked, “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread”. Furthermore Mark 7:5 reports that a group of scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus, “Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”

These passages imply that Jesus was not in the habit of always washing before eating and that his disciples behaved likewise. [Similar divisions exist today. In some cultures people learn to wash their hands before using the restroom. This is the opposite of most Western cultures, where people wash their hands after using the restroom.]

The point is that the foot washing incident apparently occurred after the supper, not before it – given all that the Bible has to say on this subject. (There is no record of Jesus washing before eating, hands or feet.) And remember that the foot washing is the **first** event from that Passover meal that is recorded in this author’s Gospel. Once more we see that the evidence indicates that the account in our fourth Gospel begins “after” the supper.

Finally, consider this: In John 13:12 we read that after Jesus had washed the disciples’ feet, then he “set down again”. [The literal Greek says, “having reclined again”.] **“Again”?** The author’s use of the word “again” clearly reveals that *Jesus had already been sitting down* at some time earlier that night!

“Not Of You All”

Now consider John 13:4-20. First, notice that John 13:5 tells us Jesus washed the feet of “the disciples”. *It does not say, “the feet of the twelve”*. Similarly, in John 13:18 (when Jesus speaks to the disciples) he says, “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen”. This verse seems to contrast two groups: the large group, who Jesus addressed as “you all” and a subset that Jesus called “chosen”. However, if “the twelve” were the only ones present, then what distinction was Jesus making here?

Some may presume that was said merely 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 (Lu. 6:16). Also Jesus said in John 6:70, “Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” Therefore, the Bible affirms that Judas was “chosen”.

So if Judas was “chosen”, who was Jesus referring to when he said, “you all”? It seems fair to suggest that perhaps Jesus’ words in John 13:18 could be another indication that Jesus was not alone with “the twelve” at that last Passover (because he appears to refer to more than just “the twelve”).

The Sequence Of ‘Last Supper’ Events

If “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is not required to be one of “the twelve”, then the Bible seems to imply the following scenario. Early 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, Jesus got up and proceeded to wash the feet of his disciples [and the account in our fourth Gospel begins]. Jesus finished washing the disciples’ feet and 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 disciple whom Jesus loved” had to be one of “the twelve” has several problems, but the key thing to realize is that this idea isn’t dictated by scripture. Matthew 26:20, Mark 14:17 & Luke 22:14 let us know that Jesus arrived with and sat down with “the twelve”. Honest observation, however, requires us to concede that *these* verses don’t make any assertion or put forth any restriction that would limit the attendance at the ‘last supper’ to only Jesus and “the twelve”.

A Hidden Key In The Book Of Acts

[The next two paragraphs might initially seem unrelated to this ‘case’, but the information provided is critical to the upcoming analysis of the evidence.]

Besides his betrayal of Jesus, Judas Iscariot is unique among “the twelve” for one other reason. In Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:10-11 & Luke 22:2-6 we see how Judas Iscariot went to the “chief priests” to betray Jesus. Understand that besides becoming a traitor, Judas gains *another distinction* here.

Judas’ rendezvous with those “chief priests” sets him apart from “the twelve” in that those priests got to meet Judas. Nothing in the Bible specifically indicates the high priest would have known (or even recognized) any of “the twelve”, other than Judas. Once you realize this you will be able to grasp the importance of a key fact hidden in the Book of Acts. Besides the evidence presented thus far, the writer of the Book of Acts recorded some information that will help us prove conclusively that John, the brother of James, cannot be the “other disciple”.

Acts 4:1-23 tells us what happened to Peter and John following the healing of a crippled man. Peter and John were seized and brought before the “rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas...” (Acts 4:5 & 6) in order to be questioned about this miracle. [If you’re wondering how this helps to prove that the Apostle John was not the “other disciple”, then *pay close attention to **the reaction** of the high priest and these rulers just a few verses later.*]

The high priest, rulers, elders, scribes, etc. “gathered together” and began their interrogation of Peter and John (Acts 4:5-7). Peter’s answer to their question is recorded in Acts 4:8-12. The very next verse describes their reaction to Peter and John.

Acts 4:13 speaking of the high priest and these rulers says, “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 could tell that Peter and John “were unlearned and ignorant men” (Acts 4:13). [The Greek on these two points reads, “unlettered” and “uninstructed”.]

Along with any Galilean accent that Peter and John may have had, it is also possible that their vocabulary, clothing or mannerisms made it obvious that Peter and John lacked a formal education. Also realize that the Bible indicates that regional traits could be easily discerned by the people of that day (Mt. 26:73, Mk. 14:70 & Lu. 22:59).

Nevertheless, Acts 4:13 reveals that what really shocked those leaders was the “boldness” exhibited by the “unlearned and ignorant” Peter and John. Without fear, they openly stood for the name of Jesus and blamed this group for his death. Peter declared that Jesus was raised from the dead and that it was because of Jesus that the healing miracle of the lame man had occurred.

The important thing for us to notice from this is *the awareness to which those leaders had come*. Acts 4:13 goes on to say that, those leaders “took knowledge of them (Peter and John) that they had been with Jesus”. [In the Greek this verse reads, “they recognized them that with Jesus they were”.]

This verse exposes the telltale discovery that was made by those leaders. It was in that moment that they suddenly understood something like, ‘Oh, these two were followers of that Jesus of Nazareth’!

The principal thing that we need to get out of this passage is that it was at that point that the high priest and the other rulers became acquainted with Peter and John for first time. Keep in mind that the ones having this reaction were Annas the high priest and Caiaphas, etc. (Acts 4:5 & 6).

John And The High Priest

The preceding section established that the reaction of the high priest and the other rulers was *a response to new information*. It was when Acts 4 was actually happening that Annas and the others discovered the things that caused them to marvel.

Acts 4:13 informs us that the high priest didn’t know that John “had been with Jesus”. It was only then that the high priest (and those rulers) came to the conclusion that Peter and John were “unlearned and ignorant men” – and also that they “had been with Jesus”. The foregoing facts show that **the high priest did not know John (or Peter) before this incident**.

This turns out to be a key point that affirms that the Apostle John cannot be the "other disciple". In order to demonstrate how this is true we must carefully compare Acts 4 with the information that the Bible reveals regarding the night that Jesus was betrayed and taken away to be falsely accused.

John 18:13 tells us that Jesus was brought "to Annas first". Then we read about two disciples that followed Jesus. John 18:15 begins, "And Simon Peter followed Jesus and *so did* another disciple". [The Greek here states, "Now there followed Jesus Simon Peter and the other disciple".] The words that follow this, however, are what ultimately 'clear' John.

John 18:15 goes on to say, "that disciple was known unto the high priest". Also it seems that God wanted to highlight this point, for his inspired author elected to emphasize this fact by repeating it.

In John 18:16 we read, "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". Therefore, there is no doubt that the "other disciple" was known to the high priest. This "other disciple" could get into the palace and furthermore, he was responsible for getting Peter past the doorkeeper.

Consequently, **the Apostle John could not have been the "other disciple" because we know from Acts 4:13 that John was *not known* to the high priest!** [Since both Annas and Caiaphas were present during the events of Acts 4, this holds up no matter which one was high priest during Jesus' trial.]

When Peter and John were brought before them, those Jewish rulers "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Yet this "other disciple" was publicly associated with Jesus, even before he "went in with Jesus" (in John 18:15). Besides the fact that he was "known unto the high priest", something else said that night reveals that **the "other disciple" was known to be a disciple of Jesus prior to Jesus' trial**. [*But this was not true of Peter, who was later specifically asked about it!*]

In John 18:17 we see that "the damsel that kept the door" asked Peter this question: "Art not thou also *one* of this man's disciples?" She used the word "also" in reference to the "other disciple", who had just spoken with her (Jn. 18:16). Therefore, we see that even "the damsel that kept the door" knew the "other disciple" was a disciple of Jesus. However as you now know, **John's association with Jesus was not understood until Acts 4:13 occurred**.

If Not John, Then Who?

The evidence presented up to this point has demonstrated that the Apostle John [also referred to as "John the brother of James" (Mk. 3:17)] *wasn't* "the disciple whom Jesus loved". You're now aware of the scriptures involved and you've seen that this presumption fails to hold up under scrutiny. In terms of overt Biblical support, there is NO solid piece of scriptural evidence that would lead one to conclude that John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved". [And if Jesus *wasn't* alone with "the twelve" throughout his last Passover, then there is nothing that *requires* the "other disciple" to even be one of "the twelve".]

You have seen how the scriptures can show us that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” wasn’t the Apostle John. Conversely, it is appropriate to search the scriptures to see if the Bible contains additional information on this subject – including any passages that could help us to determine who this anonymous author really was. This is what we’ll do next. As we do you will discover that the Bible actually contains quite a number of facts that suggest the true identity of “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. Furthermore, you will learn that this particular individual even had a good reason to want to hide his identity.

*There is one, and only one, person named in the scriptures whose character and motivation can reasonably fit with **everything** that the Bible tells us about “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”.*

In addition, the Bible reveals that this man was publicly associated with Jesus and indicates that he also was known to the high priest.

Every reference to “the disciple whom Jesus loved” can be shown to precisely fit this one specific individual. You will see this beginning in the next chapter, as we examine the evidence that reveals the author’s true identity.

Chapter 5 - THE BIBLE *DOES REVEAL* THE IDENTITY OF THE "OTHER DISCIPLE"

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's logical that we'd begin by searching the Bible for evidence of such a relationship in the life of Jesus. Prior to Pentecost, did Jesus have this type of relationship with anyone identified in the Bible? Yes, he did – and this was so clear that simply ***referring to this relationship was able to identify one particular individual without even mentioning this person's name!*** (Jn. 11:3)

We saw that the scriptures do not teach that John had this specific type of relationship with Jesus (prior to Pentecost). John's 'inner circle' participation is not equivalent to the unique bond implied by the designation "the disciple whom Jesus loved". The label "the disciple whom Jesus loved" implies Jesus had a relationship with this disciple that was notably different from the relationships that he had with the rest of his disciples. Oddly enough, the phrase that conceals the author's identity also turns out to be the best indicator of his identity!

Hidden In Plain Sight

In fact there is actually so much evidence that points to the identity of this author that one begins to wonder how this could have been overlooked. To start with, think about the term "the disciple whom Jesus loved". More than just the author's 'handle', this is proof of *Jesus' relationship with the author*.

Does the Bible explicitly name anyone who was "loved" by Jesus? Yes. *The Bible names one, and only one, candidate who had this relationship!* Two verses confirm that this individual was "loved" by Jesus. In John 11:3, Jesus receives a plea for help from his friends Mary and Martha of Bethany, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" and John 11:5 simply says, "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus".

Lazarus is the only man named in the Bible that is also identified as being "loved" by Jesus (for the period prior to Jesus' resurrection). Twice it is stated that Jesus "loved" Lazarus – three times if we count the opinion of the Jews from John 11:36. Of course, this fact alone can't prove that Lazarus was "the disciple whom Jesus loved". However, this is certainly a lead that is worth investigating! [And as we do so you will see how each piece of scriptural evidence points to this person being Lazarus.]

Bible References To Jesus' Love

"The disciple whom Jesus loved" identifies the author as being the object of Jesus' love. Since he is not called 'the disciple *who loved Jesus*', this study does not examine any verses which deal with an individual's love toward Jesus. Also note that this study isn't meant to be a discussion on the principles of love or on the general topic of the love of God. Instead, this study will examine what the Bible says about Jesus' love for or toward specific individuals.

Following Jesus' resurrection and ascension, several passages refer to Jesus' love. For example, Paul writes of "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal.2:20), and he also tells the "followers of God" to "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Eph. 5:1-2). Paul also wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church" (Eph. 5:25). However, these verses are both post-Pentecost and not applicable to determining the identity of the "other disciple".

Before Pentecost, only fifteen verses mention Jesus' love. Three of these references Jesus' love for Lazarus and five others refer to "the disciple whom Jesus loved". The Bible has only seven more verses prior to Pentecost that overtly mention Jesus' love: Mk. 10:21, Jn. 13:1(2x), 13:34, 14:21, 15:9 & 15:12. Moreover, of these verses, only Mk. 10:21 refers to a single individual and in any case, *not one of these verses names anyone*. So let's take a closer look at Lazarus, since he was both "loved" by Jesus and identified by name.

A Sudden Appearance

In John 11:3 the appeal of Mary and Martha is, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick". This tells us that Jesus already had a close relationship with Lazarus that was in existence prior to that time.

This conclusion is also confirmed by John 11:5 which says, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus". In addition, in John 11:11 Jesus refers to Lazarus as, "Our friend Lazarus". In spite of this, there is no mention of Lazarus or Jesus' friendship with Lazarus until his name appears in the eleventh chapter of our fourth Gospel. Why is this?

Nothing in the Bible overtly explains the origin of this friendship. Notice that this curious situation strangely parallels the situation we saw regarding "the disciple whom Jesus loved"! And even more important, note that neither Jesus' friendship with Lazarus, nor the fact that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead is mentioned in the other three Gospels! This resembles their similar omission of "the disciple whom Jesus loved".

What makes this especially noteworthy is that the Bible tells of *only three people* who were raised from the dead by Jesus: *Lazarus* (Jn. 11:14-45), *Jairus' daughter* (Mt. 9:18-25, Mk. 5:22-24 + 35-42, Lu. 8:41-42 + 49-56) & *a widow's son* (Lu. 7:12-15). News of these astonishing events spread quickly (Mt. 9:26, Lu. 7:16-17, Jn. 11:45). But the raising of Lazarus was substantially different from the other two, as you'll soon see.

Jesus' Friend Becomes 'A Celebrity'

The fact that the other Gospel writers totally avoid any discussion of the raising of Lazarus is particularly striking, because of what happens *after* Lazarus comes back from the dead. John 11:45 says, "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him". (Keep in mind that *these individuals were eyewitnesses*.)

When Jesus is next in Bethany, John 12:9 tells us, "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". So, we see that Lazarus began attracting the attention of people on account of what Jesus had done for him.

This caused such a stir that, "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" (Jn. 12:10-11). Is this a report on the allure of fame or the witness of Lazarus? We lack further details as to why these people were drawn to Lazarus, but it is clear that the public was well aware of Lazarus and the miracle that raised him from the dead.

Consider also John 12:12-18, which reports about an incident that is frequently referred to as the 'triumphal entry'. Did you know that the raising of Lazarus is specifically interconnected with (and even responsible for) this event?

We read of the wonderful greeting that Jesus received from a cheering crowd as he rode into town on a donkey (Jn. 12:12-18). Notice, however, that the Bible also tells us about the crowd's motivation. Although we might assume that it was the teachings of Jesus or a realization that he was the Son of God that brought out the crowd that day, the scriptures specify the real reason for the crowd's response.

The Bible reveals that *the motivation for the crowd's reaction was the miracle involving Lazarus!* "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" (Jn. 12:17-18).

Therefore, we see that the crowd's response that day was the result of hearing that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead – because it was "For this cause the people also met him" (Jn. 12:18). And they had merely "heard"!

Now consider that Matthew was probably an eyewitness to the raising of Lazarus. This was surely a powerful and unforgettable experience, yet Matthew left this out when he wrote his Gospel. What's more, the 'formerly dead' Lazarus had such an effect on the people that the priests take the extreme step of plotting to have him killed. Lazarus was big news! *So why is it that the other Gospels fail to mention any of this?* If this seems odd to you, just think about how this parallels the way the other Gospels also omit "the disciple whom Jesus loved"!

A Sudden Disappearance

Even stranger than the silence of the other three Gospels on all of these Lazarus matters, is the abrupt disappearance of Lazarus in the only Gospel that mentions him. Despite his sudden fame and his seemingly strong influence on the Jews (Jn. 12:11), **after John 12:17 the anonymous author's Gospel never mentions Lazarus again!**

The *sequence* of these things in this author's Gospel helps highlight two important truths. The first is that Lazarus is named in only eleven verses of this Gospel (six in chapter 11 & five in chapter 12). Lazarus is not mentioned before John 11:1 – and after John 12:17 he seems to vanish.

What is even more remarkable is discovering that this friend whom "Jesus loved" (Jn. 11:5) is *last mentioned in John chapter 12* – while the obscure and unnamed disciple "whom Jesus loved" is *first mentioned in the very next chapter* (Jn. 13:23)!

If you think this is an unimportant coincidence then just wait, for there is more evidence to come. Still, many will acknowledge that this presents a significant parallel: the only man named in the Bible who is also *singled out as being "loved" by Jesus* **abruptly vanishes from this Gospel** and then the only disciple *singled out as being "loved" by Jesus* **abruptly appears in this same Gospel.**

The sequence of these things in the Bible is not an accident! Furthermore, this 'new' disciple plays an important role in the events that follow.

Some may dispute this theory, as it might *seem* inconsistent to suggest that Lazarus would hide his identity as author of this Gospel, because he used his name several times in the same Gospel. However, as you will see a little later, there is a perfectly logical and Biblically based reason why Lazarus would have done precisely that.

Others may point out that the Bible doesn't call Lazarus a "disciple"; we will also deal with this potential difficulty.

For now though, let's look at the second reason why the *sequence* of these events is important. As noted above, this Gospel does not use the term "the disciple whom Jesus loved" until after Lazarus is raised from the dead. And *this miracle was certainly a powerful act of love toward Lazarus*. In his time here on earth Jesus did not end human physical death, and the Bible tells of only three people that Jesus raised from the dead while he was here. Lazarus was definitely privileged in this regard. This is also extremely relevant to the *sequence* of Gospel events because **after Lazarus had been raised from the dead, he would never be (and could never be) the same again.**

Dead Man Walking

The raising of Lazarus is not a fairy tale. This isn't fiction. It was an important actual event. So let's take the time to *consider the reality* of this situation. Lazarus had a close relationship with Jesus, before he was raised from the dead. Their prior relationship was close enough that the sisters of Lazarus sent for Jesus when their brother was sick – and they did so with the message "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" (Jn. 11:3). We don't know the extent of this relationship, but it evidently had existed for some time.

Taking into account that Lazarus *already* had a close relationship with Jesus, what do you think his relationship with Jesus would have been *after* he came out of the grave? What would his life have been like after that?

Is it reasonable to believe that Lazarus could have simply said, 'Thanks, Jesus!' and went back to his normal, everyday life – going back to his job as a cook or a carpenter or whatever?

It's laughable to propose that Lazarus could have just brushed off the tomb dust and gone back to his normal life. Pause and take the time to really contemplate this miracle. It would surely be the most profound event in anybody's life. But, in the life of one who was *already close to Jesus*, the effect of this miracle must have been extremely transforming. How would Lazarus have been different after this?

When Jesus revisits Bethany, "they made him a supper" (Jn.12:1-2), but no rational person is likely to suggest that this one dinner was the full extent of Lazarus' effort to show his gratitude or his loyalty.

In John 6:68 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life". **Where would Lazarus have gone?** He'd not only *heard* the words of Jesus; he experienced their power firsthand (in a way that few ever had)! In light of this, which result do you think is most likely:

- A. Lazarus lives in fear of death for the remainder of his mortal existence because he realizes that this life is all that he'll ever have?
- B. Lazarus, now no longer sick, returns to his life – he remains just a normal guy who does his job and observes the Sabbath and tries to be a good person, etc., etc., etc.? - or -
- C. Lazarus is thoroughly and radically changed in response to this rare and precious gift from God?

Like White On Rice!

If we take the time to think upon these things, we realize that since Lazarus already had a special relationship with Jesus, his response to this gift from Jesus would not have ended with extreme gratitude. Without a doubt, he would have been motivated to be even *closer* and *more loyal* to his friend Jesus than he had previously been.

In fact from that day forward, Lazarus would be more likely to stick closer to Jesus than anyone – 'like white on rice', as the old saying goes. And not surprisingly, close to Jesus is exactly where we next find Lazarus!

John 12:2 tells us that when Jesus went to Bethany again, "There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him". This is one of only two verses that actually *depicts* Lazarus, John 11:44 being the other one. [John 12:9, 10 & 17 refer to Lazarus but he is not depicted as being present.] So given that this is the last time that Lazarus is depicted in the Bible, what stands out about this verse?

Where the Bible *places* Lazarus in his last appearance is the key thing that we need to get from John 12:2. The last time Lazarus is *seen*, he is **sitting with Jesus at a supper table**. The first time that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is *seen*, he is **leaning on Jesus at a supper table** (Jn. 13:23).

Is this simply another remarkable coincidence or is it part of a larger pattern of evidence?

You'll have to decide. But for now let's look at another occasion when someone seemed to stick close to Jesus. In John 18:15-16 the "other disciple" is seen sticking close to Jesus. When Jesus was arrested this "other disciple" followed Jesus and "went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest" (Jn. 18:15). Later when Jesus was dying and looked down from the cross, we are told "Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved" (Jn. 19:26). We don't find "the twelve" standing at the foot of the cross, but this disciple is there. Why? What gave this particular disciple the courage and stamina to stand by Jesus (until Jesus gave him another assignment in Jn. 19:27)?

Just the evening before, the 'inner circle' 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, yet while this "other disciple" went "in with Jesus" Peter stayed out by the fire and denied that he even knew Jesus. Soon, Peter left too. There appears to be only one "disciple" standing by the cross of Jesus. Why didn't he exhibit the fear that overcame the rest of the disciples? Why did this "other disciple" act so differently (as compared to the rest of the disciples)?

Been There. Done That.

Given their relationship, Lazarus must have known about Jesus' many miracles. Then, *on top of* hearing about or even seeing miracles, Lazarus personally experienced coming back from the dead. What priority do you think Lazarus might have put on self-preservation after he was raised?

It is true that survival is a very potent human instinct, but it's fairly easy to grasp why (the raised) Lazarus might not react in the way that the rest of the disciples did. In the most emphatic way possible, God let Lazarus know that his life could end at any time and, more important, that Jesus could give life again. Thereafter, trust in Jesus would no longer be just a *mental concept*. Lazarus had become a living symbol of the power of Jesus and every time that he opened his eyes he was likely to remember that day.

Regarding death, Lazarus was someone who could truly say, "Been there. Done that". Imagine the effect this would have had on the rest of his life. This experience could reasonably be expected to have had a significant effect on his fear of death. [Possibly even overcome it totally?]

The Courage Evidence

A simple brush with death can cause people to change substantially. Several days worth of death, reinforced by the many who came to see him thereafter (Jn. 12:9 & 17), would have given Lazarus a **wholly unique** outlook on life. Could this lead to the type of courage and character that the Bible attributes to the unnamed "other disciple"?

In John 18:15 the "other disciple" chooses to go "with Jesus into the palace of the high priest", and we know that he was a known associate of Jesus (Jn. 18:17). Unlike the rest of the disciples, he didn't act in a way that exhibited a concern for preserving his own life. This is totally understandable if this individual was Lazarus.

Furthermore if this was Lazarus, then the "other disciple" was truly at risk when he entered the "palace of the high priest". This is because these priests wanted to kill Lazarus also (Jn. 12:10)!

The Bible doesn't say if Lazarus knew of the plot against his life at that time or if he learned about this later. In either case though, the behavior befits a raised Lazarus – someone who could know that his own life was greatly at risk and still stick with Jesus. [Some may ask, 'if the "other disciple" was Lazarus, why didn't they kill him that night?' Maybe one sham trial was enough or they might have figured that getting rid of Jesus would end their troubles. But the Bible doesn't speak to this so we can't be sure.]

What Is A "Disciple"?

There is another reason why someone might question the theory that Lazarus was the "other disciple". They might point out that Lazarus is not specifically called a "disciple". This is true, yet that *doesn't* mean he *wasn't* a disciple. The Bible tells us that Lazarus was a friend of Jesus and the disciples. In John 11:11 Jesus refers to him as, "Our friend Lazarus". So we know Lazarus must have spent some time with them. The question for us is, would it be correct to refer to Lazarus as a "disciple"?

"Disciple" wasn't a rank like 'Eagle Scout'. You didn't pass a test to become one. In the scriptures disciples come (Acts 6:1) and disciples go (Jn. 6:66). Numerous verses use this term, about a wide variety of people. [In the literal Greek this word simply means a "learner" or "pupil".]

While it isn't clear precisely what made one a "disciple", to contend that Lazarus wasn't a "disciple" merely because the Bible doesn't label him as such is unreasonable in light of what we know about his appearances in the Bible. The reason our first three Gospels don't call Lazarus a "disciple" is because **they couldn't** – since *they never mention him at all* (not his friendship with Jesus, nor even the miracle that raised him from the dead). Moreover, while it is true that the one Gospel that does mention Lazarus also never calls him a "disciple", this isn't proof that Lazarus *wasn't* a disciple. Surely, if Lazarus was the author of this Gospel and he wanted to use the term "the disciple whom Jesus loved" to hide his identity, then the absence of the label "disciple" for Lazarus in this Gospel is perfectly consistent with that effort.

John 20:31 says, "these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". We'll revisit this verse later when we discuss the author's *motive* for hiding his identity. For now though, recognize that the author was only including things that he believed would accomplish this goal. As you'll see, this was reason enough for the author to avoid calling Lazarus a "disciple". [Not identifying Lazarus as a "disciple" may be the key reason that the author's effort at anonymity was so effective!]

Finally, the proposition that Lazarus wasn't a "disciple" fails the logic test. We know that Lazarus was "loved" by Jesus. He was raised from the dead by Jesus. He had supper with Jesus. Is it fair then to infer that Lazarus was *learning* from his experiences and relationship with Jesus? Yes, it is.

The Character Evidence

Coming back from the dead would certainly affect one's character. So it's reasonable to suggest that a back-from-the-dead Lazarus might exhibit a high degree of courage and unusual faithfulness toward Jesus. Neither "the twelve", nor the rest of the disciples, could be expected to exhibit these traits in the same way as (a raised) Lazarus. The question is, do we see Lazarus acting this way?

If Lazarus *was* the "other disciple", then we know that he *did* manifest these traits! So let's take a look at the behavior of the "other disciple" to see if this also points to them being the same person.

To begin with, consider the first time we see "the disciple whom Jesus loved". When Jesus said, "one of you shall betray me" (Mt. 26:21 – at the 'Last Supper'), the disciples began to inquire about who he was referring to. It was at that point that they each began to ask this question *about themselves!* "And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?" (Mt 26:22) This is not the same as asking 'who is it', since each one of them was questioning their own character! [This appears to have occurred during the supper (see Mt. 26:22 & 26, Mk 14:18 & 22).]

After the foot washing, when Jesus sat down "again" (Jn. 13:12), **the conversation returned to the subject of the traitor's identity – but this time something very different occurred.** [Note that this took place "after supper" (Lu 22:20, Jn. 13:2).].

Luke 22:23 states, "they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing". John 13:22 tells us, "then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake". At this point John 13:23 continues the story: "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".

Why didn't Peter ask the question himself? Why did "the twelve" all question their own loyalty? Peter was a member of the 'inner circle', yet when this question was raised Peter felt compelled to go *through* "the disciple whom Jesus loved"! What was it about "the disciple whom Jesus loved" that made Peter turn to him, rather than Jesus, in order to get an answer to this question?

Jesus had been speaking to them, so all of the disciples would have been near enough to pose this question directly to Jesus. They were probably afraid to do so, because they were not sure that the answer wouldn't be their name (Mt. 26:22, Mk. 14:19). But when Peter signaled "the disciple whom Jesus loved" to ask Jesus who the traitor was, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" didn't exhibit self-doubt as the rest had (Jn. 13:24). "He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" (Jn. 13:25)

Notice that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" doesn't ask, 'Is it I?' Neither did he hesitate to ask Jesus this question. [*He was sure of himself and his physical position even suggests this* – it is reported several times that he was leaning on Jesus.]

Three times the Bible describes his position at this event (Jn. 13:23 & 25 and 21:20). This wasn't just to record 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*!

John 13:28 refers to those who were "at the table", and this distinction suggests that there were others present that were **not** sitting "at the table" (with Jesus). Yet "the disciple whom Jesus loved" had a close enough *relationship* with Jesus to feel comfortable "leaning" on him at that time. This bond didn't materialize out of thin air on the night of that supper. Also, it seems to be different from the type of bond that Jesus had with the rest of his disciples, including Peter (notice that no one else "leaned" on Jesus). The quality and degree of camaraderie that is revealed in this action represent a very secure friendship and an obvious devotion.

Does The Shoe Fit?

Is it reasonable to suppose that Lazarus may have been privileged to enjoy an especially close friendship with Jesus at the time of this event? Yes, it is. And again we find that Lazarus fits with the information that the scriptures disclose pertaining to "the disciple whom Jesus loved".

As the saying goes, if the shoe fits, wear it. Does the evidence fit Lazarus? If you haven't yet been persuaded, then perhaps the evidence from the morning that Jesus' vacant tomb is discovered will convince you.

Resurrection Morning

Take a close look at the unnamed author's account of events on resurrection morning. This isn't just a confirmation of the vacant tomb. If that was all God wanted, then the author might well have been inspired to use fewer words. So, keep an eye out for the details that his words contain. There is actually quite a bit of very revealing information regarding the "other disciple" – and it **all** ends up supporting 'the case for Lazarus'.

John 20:1-4 reads, "The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. 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 sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre".

Pause for a moment and consider that last sentence. Of course, it is *possible* that the author recorded this fact merely in order to tell us that he (the "other disciple") was the better athlete. Or perhaps, the author was simply being accurate. There is, however, another possibility that 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 passion. The fact that the "other disciple" outran Peter could be an indication that he had *a more intense desire* to see the vacant tomb. If so, he would have pushed himself harder to get there quickly. As you consider this possibility, remember that it was the "other disciple" himself who wrote this and took the time to record these particular details from that day. Also note that it is *very likely* that the idea that Jesus' body wasn't in its tomb would have had a special impact on Lazarus – who had a similar experience.

Now let's continue on with John 20:5-9. "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 sepulchre, 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 sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead".

These days the 'witness of the empty tomb' has come to mean that the empty tomb itself is proof of the resurrection of Jesus. Although it may be well intentioned, this is not exactly Biblical. First, realize that the things that Peter and the "other disciple" saw that morning *did not seem to* harmonize with their understanding of the scriptures. We know this from John 20:9 which tells us, "as yet they knew not the scripture, that he (Jesus) must rise again from the dead". [This is particularly significant because these two men react differently.] More important, notice that the Bible declares that ***the tomb wasn't empty!*** Although the tomb no longer contained the body of Jesus, it did contain some very important pieces of evidence.

The Evidence *In* The Tomb

In John 20:2 Mary Magdalene tells Peter and the "other disciple" that the body of Jesus has been removed, which prompts them to rush to the tomb. "So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre" (Jn. 20:4). When the "other disciple" got to the tomb he stooped down and "saw the linen clothes" lying inside, at which point he stopped and "went he not in" (Jn. 20:5). Yet when Peter got there he didn't stop, but instead went right in (Jn. 20:6). It is "then" that the "other disciple", "went in also" (Jn. 20:8).

Why do you think the "other disciple" stopped when he "saw the linen clothes"? After Peter goes in, the "other disciple" does too. Why didn't he go in when he arrived? *He ran, so he must have felt a sense of urgency.* Despite this, he seems to 'freeze' just outside the entrance until Peter passes by him and enters the tomb. So why did the sight of "the linen clothes" cause him to stop in his tracks?

In a moment you will see that there is a potent reason why this curious behavior on the part of the "other disciple" is further evidence that he was Lazarus. But first, let's focus on the reactions of Peter and the "other disciple" to the evidence left in the tomb that morning. One of them "believed"!

"Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed" (Jn. 20:8). It was the "other disciple" who believed, but notice *when* this occurred. It happens only after he enters the tomb and sees the "the napkin, that was about his (Jesus') head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself", as described in John 20:7.

The First Disciple to "Believe"

When he witnessed those "linen clothes" and "the napkin that was about his (Jesus') head" in the tomb, the "other disciple" suddenly "believed". **Why?** *The author takes the time to precisely depict these items* (Jn. 20:7) and he calls our attention to the "linen clothes" by repeating this phrase three times (Jn. 20:5-7). This is important. We can learn about the author/"the disciple whom Jesus loved" from the emphasis he places on these things and the effect that they had on him – "he saw, and believed".

John 20:8 is the first time that the Bible uses the word "believed" after the resurrection of Jesus – and it pertains to this unnamed disciple! This is no small point. The fact that the "other disciple" was the first person that "believed" is very significant.

Do the scriptures indicate that the Apostle John would have any reason to be affected in this way by the things described in John 20:4-8? No, they do not. Furthermore, note that the Bible does not state that Peter "believed" (*at that point in time*). The vacant tomb and "the linen clothes" and the "napkin" did not have the same effect on Peter.

However, the sight of "the linen clothes" (and especially "the napkin") surely would have affected and could easily have overwhelmed Lazarus. He understood the significance of these items because he had experienced the wearing of "linen clothes". He would never forget the time that he wore "linen" – *the material that was used to wrap dead bodies!*

The "Linen" Effect

"And he (Lazarus) that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin" (Jn. 11:44). It is no accident that the 'author' took the time to mention this seemingly trivial detail of the "napkin" with regard to Lazarus also. [Recall that it was only after the sight of the "napkin" that the "other disciple" was convinced – "he saw, and believed" (Jn. 20:8).]

As for the "graveclothes", notice how bodies were prepared for burial in those days. John 19:40 tells us, "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". So, it was the custom to use "linen" as a covering for dead bodies.

Let's take a quick look at the usage of "linen" in the New Testament. The English word "linen" was used to translate several different Greek words, but *only two of these Greek words pertain to dead bodies*. These two words are both used to describe the material that covered the body of Jesus, so they may be synonyms. (Compare Lu. 23:53 to Lu. 24:12 & Mt. 27:59 to Jn. 19:40.)

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'll discuss this curious exception a little bit later. What we need to think about at this juncture is, how would Lazarus have reacted to the sight of these items (which had been covering the body of Jesus).

Consider that the first thing that Lazarus must have seen when he came back from the dead was 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 and Jesus gave the instruction, "Loose him, and let him go" (John 11:44).

It isn't likely that Lazarus ever forgot being "loosed". Therefore, it is logical to suggest that the sight of Jesus' abandoned 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" (Jn. 20:3-5). Moments later when he did go in, this "other disciple" became the first person to believe on the risen Lord – "he saw, and believed" (Jn. 20:8).

In light of this evidence and especially given his reactions to "the linen clothes" and "the napkin", can we conclude that behavior of the "other disciple" would befit Lazarus? Yes, we can. *The facts that the author reports about this event harmonize perfectly, if Lazarus was the "other disciple".*

The Fishing Trip

After that morning, the next mention of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" occurs in John 21:2-8. John 21:2-3a states, "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 catch nothing that night (Jn. 21:3b). The next morning Jesus is standing on the shore and he begins to speak to them – but "the disciples knew not that it was Jesus" (Jn. 21:4).

Jesus tells them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship" and when they do they cannot even pull the net in because of "the multitude of fishes" (Jn. 21:6). Next, John 21:7 reveals the author's presence when it states, "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." Thus "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was *the first disciple to recognize Jesus that day*. More important, however, is the list of those who were in attendance during this event.

Since "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was present, let's consider the author's list in John 21:2. **Two of those who were present are not named** – which is consistent with the author's practice of not naming himself! Still, notice that the actual presence of the author isn't disclosed until later in the passage (in John 21:7). This may explain why many have overlooked an important fact.

We see that "the *sons of Zebedee*" are named in John 21:2 and yet we know that the unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved" is present at the same time! (Jn. 21:7) This is strong evidence that the author was not the Apostle John.

One cannot say that John's presence here proves that he *could be* the "other disciple", without first explaining why the author would suddenly act in a manner that is inconsistent with his otherwise considerable efforts to remain anonymous!

The First Error

Later during this same appearance of Jesus, these disciples came to shore and dined with Jesus (Jn. 21:7-14). Then Jesus had a conversation with Peter (Jn. 21:15-19) Immediately thereafter we read, "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*?" (Jn. 21:20-21) To this Jesus replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee? follow thou me" (Jn. 21:22).

What follows this is a very strange reference to this unnamed "other disciple". In John 21:23 we read, "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?" So, here is the source of the first error that was spread "abroad" among the post-resurrection brethren – and a focus on "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was the cause!

Notice the way that the author handles this mistake. He reports the false idea that had spread among the brethren and then he reviews the facts. After noting that Jesus didn't say, "He shall not die" (Jn. 21:23a), he then repeats Jesus' words verbatim – "If I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee?" (Jn. 21:23b). This should tell us something.

The author presents the words of Jesus to his readers *without interpretation* but he does take the time to tell his readers what Jesus did not say so as to correct an interpretation that was being spread among the brethren. The author then repeats what Jesus said with no added clarification for those who would later read his 'book'. Therefore, the author must have thought that Jesus' words were sufficient. So, if the readers of this 'book' could understand Jesus' words, then *what could have caused the disciples that heard Jesus' words on that day to make the erroneous assumption that they did?*

A Telltale Rumor

We know that the author tried to rectify this misunderstanding in John 21:23 (which also implies that he learned of this rumor only after it had already been spread around). We also know that this rumor started with the group of disciples that were present that day (Jn. 21:2). So, why did some or all of those disciples assume that Jesus' words meant that this particular disciple would "not die"? The problem could not have been that Jesus' words were unclear; because this author twice quotes them in a way that indicates he expected that the readers of his 'book' would not be confused by them (Jn. 21:22 & 23).

How were the disciples who heard Jesus speak these words different from all of those who would later read these words in this author's 'book'? There is one critical difference that distinguishes between these two groups. This factor exposes the reason why the disciples misconstrued Jesus' words and it shows why the readers of this author's 'book' wouldn't have made this same mistake (even if the author had not included his refutation of the rumor).

The knowledge of the identity of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is what differentiates these two groups! The readers of the author's 'book' did not know the author's identity. In contrast, **the disciples of Jesus knew "the disciple whom Jesus loved". His identity was not a mystery to them!**

Something about this "other disciple" caused some or all of the disciples that were present at this event to jump to their erroneous conclusion – that Jesus' words, "If I will that he tarry till I come" meant "that disciple should not die" (Jn. 21:23).

The rumor "that disciple should not die" did not spring from a misunderstanding about *what* Jesus said. This error happened because of **whom** Jesus was speaking *about!*

Suppose for a moment that Peter and the rest of these disciples knew that this individual was Lazarus (who had already died and been brought back from the dead). In this case, a reason for one or more of those disciples jumping to the conclusion that they did, suddenly becomes evident.

Jesus had publicly displayed his willingness to have his friend Lazarus loosed from the bonds of death, and this miracle took place not all that long before this misunderstanding occurred. Clearly this was a very special privilege, not granted to all of the 'disciples', nor their families and friends. At that time, Lazarus was one of the few living individuals who had ever been chosen to receive this unique gift and 'everyone' knew it (Jn. 12:9, 11 & 18).

If the "other disciple" was Lazarus, then a reasonable explanation for origin of this false rumor becomes readily apparent. Since Jesus had already raised his friend Lazarus from the dead, those who knew that Lazarus was the subject of Jesus' words in John 21:22-23 had mistakenly interpreted Jesus words to mean that Lazarus would be 'exempted' from having to undergo a second physical death.

Here again, we see that the facts surrounding the "other disciple" perfectly fit Lazarus. This telltale rumor easily harmonizes with all the other evidence, if Lazarus was "the disciple whom Jesus loved". We will look at still more evidence that supports this theory, but first let's seek to answer this question: why *did this author hide his identity?*

Chapter 6 - **WHY DID THE AUTHOR REMAIN ANONYMOUS? + MORE EVIDENCE OF HIS IDENTITY**

The Motive

The anonymous author in question took the time to document his purpose for writing his Gospel, and it is from this passage that we can begin to see why this author hid his identity. John 20:30-31 says, “And 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”.

The author’s goal therefore, was to focus the attention of his readers on Jesus and to provide the information that they would need to “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”. While this may appear to be merely the author’s goal for his ‘book’, it turns out that this objective also 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 individuals in their existing circumstances to declare His will and carry it out.]

Since the author’s intent was to point people toward Jesus, then he would have certainly avoided doing anything that might interfere with that aim. And Lazarus would have had good reason to believe that his identity could have interfered with the objective stated in John 20:31. Recall what happened *after* Lazarus was raised from the dead and you will understand the problem that Lazarus had to deal with – he was a celebrity. Do you see how this might present a dilemma for Lazarus and a conflict with John 20:31?

The Fame Problem

In John 12 (which is the last place that the author mentions Lazarus), three verses indicate just how famous Lazarus became. For example, John 12:9 says, “and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead”. Think about the implications of that. “They came not for Jesus’ sake only”! How do you think this would have affected Lazarus? Would he have enjoyed the spotlight and basked in the glory this brought to him? There is no evidence that Jesus’ friend Lazarus took advantage of this situation or milked it for his own ego. (The sudden disappearance of Lazarus from the pages of this Gospel actually indicates quite the contrary.)

Prior to Pentecost we don’t read of people coming to see Peter or any of the disciples, even though they helped feed the crowds (Mt. 14:19; 15:36; etc.) and displayed power over “the devils” (Lu. 10:17). The focus of the people had always been Jesus – they came to confront, see, hear, touch or be healed by Jesus. But this changed after Lazarus was raised from the dead in front of many witnesses (John 11:44-45). Therefore, this “friend” whom Jesus “loved” faced a peculiar dilemma.

John 12:11 says, “by reason of him (Lazarus) many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus”. And the raising of Lazarus was a key reason (if not THE reason) that the crowd met Jesus when he rode in on the donkey. “For this cause the people also met him (Jesus), for they heard that he had done this miracle” (Jn. 12:18).

This may lead some to suggest that Lazarus' celebrity status was actually a good thing because it could help bring out the people, who would then get to listen to a message from Jesus. However, the only evidence we have indicates that this would not achieve a lasting result, since the crowd at Jesus' 'triumphal entry' was not there to cheer for him a few days later when the choice was Jesus or Barabbas.

There is no reason to believe that the raised Lazarus was anything but loyal to his friend Jesus. Nonetheless, Lazarus had become a novelty that people also sought in addition to Jesus (Jn. 12:9).

We should immediately recognize that this would have presented Lazarus with a huge problem. To paraphrase something that John the Baptist said, *Jesus must increase, but Lazarus must decrease*. (A paraphrasing of Jn. 3:30.) One way that Lazarus could be sure to avoid drawing attention away from Jesus would be to 'disappear'. Changing his identity or becoming anonymous would accomplish this too.

Remember that the unnamed author didn't try to report everything (Jn. 20:30). The Gospel that he wrote was intended to accomplish one purpose – that its readers "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" and "have life through his name." (Jn. 20:30-31)

This author must have had a reason for cloaking his identity. *If Lazarus was this author, then it made sense for him to hide his identity – due to the fact that Lazarus knew that he could become a distraction that might diminish the focus on Jesus.*

'What About Him?'

Even the disciples of Jesus weren't immune to this distraction effect. We can see an example of this in John 21, when Jesus visits a small group of disciples that have gone fishing. Even though there are several disciples present, the resurrected Jesus takes the time to focus on Peter in John 21:15-19. Moreover, John 21:14 explains that this was only, "the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead."

In spite of Jesus' focus on him at that time however, Peter's attention seems 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*?" (Jn. 21:20-21)

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

Furthermore, we know several disciples were present, so why was Peter motivated to focus on "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? [John 21:20 & 21 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 this mysterious "disciple whom Jesus loved".]

At that instant, *Peter bothered to refer to this one particular “disciple” only*. Why? Consider the possibility that Peter was prompted to ask the question at that time precisely **because of whom** **“the disciple whom Jesus loved” was** – since Peter would have known this man as Lazarus!

One other thing to take into account is the *particular moment* that Peter’s attention turns to this *particular “disciple”*. What makes this noteworthy is the subject that Jesus was speaking to Peter about at that moment – the topic was Peter’s death!

Jesus Foretells Peter’s Death

“This spake he (Jesus) signifying by what death he (Peter) should glorify God” (Jn. 21:19). Without getting into the particulars of Jesus’ words in John 21:18, just note that we are told that Jesus raised the topic of Peter’s death. Then Jesus had two more words for Peter, “Follow me” (Jn. 21:19).

[When the matter of his death was raised Peter *seemed to* change the subject, which might be dismissed by some as a typical reaction to anxiety. But bear in mind that the one speaking to Peter was the resurrected Jesus, who had overcome death!]

What did Peter do when Jesus told “by what death he (Peter) should glorify God”? John 21:20-21 says, “Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved... Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do*?” [The literal Greek reads, “Lord, but of this one what”.]

Why is it that upon learning “by what death he should glorify God”, Peter felt compelled to refer to this one particular individual? Was Peter merely concerned about the future of a fellow disciple or is there a more rational explanation that can account for his question?

Of course if “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was Lazarus, then there is logic to Peter’s question. Peter knew that Lazarus had been raised from the dead, so he may have been asking if Lazarus would have to die another physical death. Or because of what Jesus had just said, Peter may have wondered if he would be raised from the dead like Lazarus. But *the intent* of Peter’s question isn’t material to our study. We need to **focus on the effect of Peter’s question on “the disciple whom Jesus loved”**.

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 most striking thing about this passage is neither the topic of death, nor Peter’s turning away from Jesus. It’s the timing! As soon as the topic became death, who did Peter’s mind turn to? [Lazarus, naturally!]

This was only “the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead” (Jn. 21:14). Even so, Jesus wasn’t the sole focus of Peter’s attention. The author – who is known to us as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” – proved to be a distraction for Peter, just as he later became a distraction to those who spread the rumor that he wouldn’t die (Jn. 21:23).

Being a distraction would certainly seem to be in conflict with the author's objective (Jn. 20:31). We have already discussed how such a potential conflict provides a motive for the author's desire to remain anonymous. What you will have to decide is was this author Lazarus – *who became anonymous in order to avoid any possible hindrance to his goal?*

The Humbleness Question

The idea that Lazarus would forgo the use of his name (to avoid becoming a distraction to others) is consistent with the stated goal of John 20:31. After he was raised from the dead, Lazarus became an attraction for a number of people (Jn. 12:9). If he was also the God inspired writer of this 'book', then Lazarus would definitely have been willing to avoid claiming authorship rather than take the risk of interfering with the reader's focus on Jesus.

"The disciple whom Jesus loved" might not sound like a humble term to hide behind, but we know that it's a true description since it was written under the inspiration of God. And note the timing here too! The author began using the term "the disciple whom Jesus loved" to refer to himself *only after describing the 'fame' of Lazarus, in John 12:9!*

Many who presuppose that the Apostle John wrote this Gospel conclude that John was humble because the author was willing to remain nameless. They are incorrect about John being this author. Nevertheless consider whether this proposition may still be applicable. If this anonymity indicates that the author was humble, then it suggests this of Lazarus. Likewise, another fact may also imply humility on the part Lazarus. This Gospel tells of the raising of Lazarus and the subsequent public response, but ***the author didn't record a single word that was spoken by Lazarus.*** We have no way to know for sure that humility was responsible for this or the anonymity. Still, it is worthwhile to note these things so that you can weigh all of the data regarding the author's character [and thus, Lazarus' character].

The Name Game

The idea that Lazarus might forgo his name is not foreign to the Bible. The disciples of Jesus were quite willing to change their names. Simon became Peter (Lu. 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 scriptures often use multiple names for people. "Matthew" was also "named Levi" (Mt. 9:9, Lu. 5:27). James and John were surnamed "Boanerges" (Mk. 3:17). Thomas is "called Didymus" (Jn. 21:2). And "Judas" (*not* Iscariot) was also called "Thaddaeus", as can be demonstrated by comparing Luke 6:16 to Mark 3:18.

Thus, it is at least compatible with scripture to suggest that Lazarus may have stopped using his name. Did he do this? *If* he was the unnamed author of this Gospel, then in so far as this Gospel is concerned the answer is yes. Your duty as jury is to decide if this author *was* Lazarus. Hopefully, you have been convinced, but let's look at one final piece of evidence that may help anyone who is still unsure.

The *Other* Murder Plot

The disciples were not the only ones who found the 'raised' Lazarus to be a distraction. He was also a big distraction for "many of the Jews". John 12:11 says, "by reason of him (Lazarus) many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus".

As we saw earlier this is the reason that "the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death" (Jn. 12:10). In John 12:9, 11 & 17-19 we can discover some important information from both the reaction of "the Jews" to Lazarus and the extreme response to this by the priests.

A murder plot doesn't simply materialize out of thin air. So how long do you suppose it took for the 'Lazarus effect' to build to such a point that the "chief priests" felt they had to kill Lazarus?

We are not told how much time passed between the raising of Lazarus (Jn. 11:17-44) and the plot to kill him (Jn. 12:10). However, we know that sufficient time passed for a ground swell of interest in this miracle to develop among the people (Jn. 12:18). As word of the raising of Lazarus spread the "chief priests" and others would also have heard about this story repeatedly.

In addition, remember that the "chief priests" did not plot to kill all of the disciples of Jesus and they didn't want to murder just any random disciple. These men wanted to execute Lazarus specifically – because of the effect he was having on the Jews.

John 11:46-47, 12:9-11 & 18, all reveal one important truth. The key thing for us to realize from these verses is that the "chief priests" knew about Lazarus, the public's fascination with him and the reason that the people sought after him. Furthermore (prior to the day of Pentecost), **Lazarus was the only person in the Bible, other than Jesus, who was the object of a murder plot by those "chief priests"**.

Nothing suggests that murder was a common practice for those men. Still, they decided that their predicament warranted taking this momentous step. They knew who it was they were plotting to kill when they "consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death" (Jn. 12:10). This is very relevant because we can reasonably conclude from the foregoing facts that, **Lazarus was known unto the "chief priests"**.

Which Disciple Was "Known"?

Now recall that John 18:15 & 16 take the time to emphasize that the "other disciple" was "known unto the high priest". *If* the author of the Gospel that is attributed to John was actually Lazarus, then this evidence does not present a problem.

These same verses helped prove that John wasn't "the disciple whom Jesus loved", since in his case they presented an insurmountable problem (as shown in chapter 4). But as with all of the other evidence that we have looked at, we see that **the scriptures harmonize perfectly if Lazarus was "the disciple whom Jesus loved"**.

CHAPTER 7 - TYING UP SOME LOOSE ENDS & THE CONCLUSION

So Far (The Jury Summation)

You've considered the facts in two 'cases'. First, you looked at the 'case' as to why the Apostle John wasn't "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (who also wrote our fourth Gospel). Second, you were given the facts that indicate this unnamed author was Lazarus. Now, let's summarize the evidence that has been presented so far. Pause to pray and ask God to use His Word to lead you to the truth. [The supporting verses are not included here, since they were cited when this evidence was presented.]

The evidence shows that the Apostle John *was not* the "other disciple" because:

- *The other three Gospel writers conspicuously treat these two very differently.* They include John, but overtly omit the "other disciple". This suggests they were two different people.
- *"The disciple whom Jesus loved" wrote his Gospel with the deliberate intent of remaining anonymous, yet the evidence indicates that the Apostle John did not attempt to hide his identity.* In the Book of Revelation we see that the Apostle John was willing to openly identify himself, because he did so several times.
- *"The disciple whom Jesus loved" enjoyed a one-of-a-kind bond with Jesus.* This cannot be said of John, since not even his role in the 'inner circle' suggests that John enjoyed a relationship that was equivalent to this.
- *These two behaved differently on the evening Jesus was arrested.* John let Jesus down by falling asleep three times at Gethsemane. But the "other disciple" went into the palace of the high priest with Jesus and we only see him leave when Jesus dismissed him – at a time well into the next day.
- *The idea that "the disciple whom Jesus loved" was John is based on the mistaken assumption that this author had to be one of "the twelve".* Paintings of "the twelve" alone with Jesus at his last Passover help promote this notion. However, details in the Bible actually indicate that they were not alone (including the fact that they were guests in someone's home when this event occurred). Besides this, note the phrase "other disciple". "Other" suggests that the author was not one of "the twelve", but rather, that he was one of the additional disciples that were continually with Jesus.
- *If "the disciple whom Jesus loved" joined Jesus and "the twelve" after the supper, then this person could not be John.* Yet this is just what is indicated by the author's own record of events at that Passover – which skips the 'Lord's table' and opens with 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 the high priest was not acquainted with John and he didn't learn that John was an associate of Jesus until after Pentecost.
- *The author's aim of anonymity argues against this being John,* because the author's record of the fishing trip cites “the sons of Zebedee” while leaving two “other” disciples unnamed when “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is said to be present. This cite would seem to run counter to the author's effort to conceal his identity if this author had in fact been John.

The evidence indicates that Lazarus was the “other disciple” because:

- *They had the identical relationship with Jesus.* Jesus loved “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and Jesus loved Lazarus. Moreover, Lazarus is unique in this regard. Only one man named in the Gospels is specifically singled out as being “loved” by Jesus (the key relationship), and that man was Lazarus.
- *The other three Gospel writers treat these two alike.* They don't tell us that Lazarus was a friend of Jesus or that Lazarus had supper with Jesus or even that Lazarus was raised from the dead! Likewise, they do not mention “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and they ignore the important role that this individual played in the life of Jesus.
- *The anonymous author treats Lazarus and himself in a parallel manner in his Gospel.* Lazarus suddenly appears late in the text and he is only referred to a few times. Soon thereafter “the disciple whom Jesus loved” also suddenly appears in the text and he too, is only referred to a few times.
- *They never appear in the text at the same time.* The last reference to Lazarus occurs just prior to the introduction of “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. The author ceases all mention of Lazarus in the text, and it is only at that point that the author begins to refer to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.
- *The suddenly famous one disappears and then the suddenly anonymous one appears.* The author tells us about the public craving for Lazarus that springs up (but subsequently he never again mentions Lazarus). It is only after his report of this that the author begins to use a series of anonymous phrases to refer to himself – the “other disciple”, “one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved”, etc.
- *The experiences of Lazarus would produce the response we see in “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.* After Jesus exhibited his love for Lazarus by raising him from the dead, Lazarus was different from other human beings. And he would certainly be a different person than the man that he had been prior to this miracle. Both the relationship of the “other disciple” to Jesus and the behavior of this unnamed disciple/author befit what we'd expect from a raised-from-the-dead Lazarus.
- *The Bible reveals that both sat with Jesus.* The last time Lazarus is seen in the Bible he is sitting at a table with Jesus. Similarly, the first time “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is seen he is leaning on Jesus at a table.

- *When confronted with the “linen” evidence, the “other disciple” becomes the first to believe in Jesus’ resurrection.* This reaction befits Lazarus – the one person in scripture most likely to be profoundly moved by the sight of the “linen clothes” and the “napkin” (since he had been wearing similar items at the time that he was raised from the dead).
- *The mistaken belief of rest of the disciples (that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” wouldn’t die) points to Lazarus.* This false rumor, along with the manner in which the author handles this error, suggests that the disciples jumped to this conclusion because of something that they already knew about this person. [Jesus had given him a reprieve from death.]
- *The “other disciple” was anonymous and Lazarus had a motive to become anonymous.* The Jews came to see Lazarus after he was raised. Surely he knew the focus belonged on Jesus and not himself. Likewise, the author’s stated goal was to lead people to believe in Jesus and yet he took the effort to hide his own identity, so he must have felt that this helped him to achieve this objective.
- *When Jesus mentioned Peter’s death, Peter turned from Jesus to “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.* Peter’s response indicates that his mind associated “the disciple whom Jesus loved” with this subject. In the same way, Lazarus would be associated with this topic by all those who were acquainted with him.
- *The “other disciple” was known to be an associate of Jesus and he was known to the high priest, both of which are true of Lazarus.* He was a known associate of Jesus – it was because Jesus raised him from the dead that the public wanted to see Lazarus. Moreover, we realize that Lazarus was known to the “chief priests” and Pharisees, for they had received eyewitness testimony of this miracle and they were also plotting to kill Lazarus (because of the public’s response to him).

The First Disciple?

The Bible does contain other information that relates to the facts that you have been considering. The decision that you have reached based on the evidence presented so far probably won’t be altered by the information in these supplemental passages. The prior evidence should have been sufficient to support the conclusions that have been put forward.

Still, these additional passages are worthy of consideration, for they may be able to shed added light on this “other disciple” we’ve been studying. For example, let’s take a look at the recruitment of *the first disciple* of Jesus. In the first chapter of the Gospel attributed to John, we meet John the Baptist and read his good report regarding Jesus and learn about the subsequent progress of Jesus’ ministry. John the Baptist bears witness that Jesus is the Son of God in John 1:29-34 and, when Jesus returned on the next day, two of the disciples of John the Baptist heard him call Jesus “the Lamb of God” and “they followed Jesus” (Jn. 1:35-37).

John 1:38-39 states that these two disciples went with Jesus and, “abode with him that day”. These two were the very first individuals that the scripture says, “followed Jesus”. Now, be careful to pay close attention to what the next two verses say (and more important what they **do not** say).

John 1:40-41 reads, “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 Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ”. In the subsequent verses we read that Andrew brought his brother Simon to meet Jesus and that the following day Jesus found Philip (Jn. 1:42-43).

Furthermore, we know that those three – Andrew, Peter and Philip – became loyal disciples and they were selected to be among “the twelve” (Mt. 10:2-3, Mk. 3:16-18, & Lu. 6:14). But haven’t we forgotten someone? Did you notice that there is one person who seems to vanish from the scene?

What happened to that other unnamed disciple of John the Baptist that was abiding with Jesus in John 1:39? One could say that both Andrew and this other individual were the *first* disciples to follow Jesus. Andrew’s name is recorded and Andrew gets mentioned in all of the Gospels. Yet the other individual (who had an equal right to be called the *first* disciple) is never named. Moreover, he is never referred to at all outside of John 1:35-39. Did he simply disappear? Was he of no importance? Or is there another possibility?

Another Possibility

The other possibility is that this unidentified ex-disciple of John the Baptist was the unnamed author of the Gospel that mentions him. The only Gospel to mention the unnamed “disciple whom Jesus loved” is also the only Gospel to mention this other unnamed follower of Jesus. Is it more likely that this author might keep himself unnamed in the beginning of his Gospel also or that one of the first two followers of Jesus amounted to nothing that merited any further mention in scripture?

Earlier we concluded that the bond between Jesus and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was not the kind of thing that would just appear ‘out of thin air’. The clear indication is that this relationship was ongoing. It existed for sometime prior to the last Passover, where “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was first mentioned (Jn. 13:23). Is it conceivable that the unnamed “other disciple” was with Jesus from the very earliest days? Yes. But is there any other scripture that might help establish this? Yes.

Remember that in Acts 1:21-22 Peter refers to “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 the same day that he (Jesus) was taken up”. Can we know for *certain* that Peter is definitely speaking about that other person who was with his brother Andrew on that first day that they followed Jesus? No. Is it *probable* that this unnamed other person was one of those that Peter was referring to in Acts 1:21-22? That is for you to decide.

There isn’t sufficient evidence to *prove* that the anonymous author of this Gospel was the same one who (along with Andrew) left John the Baptist to follow Jesus on that day. However, this possibility *is* worth considering. It would of course, explain the origin of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” prior to Jesus’ last Passover supper. Moreover, if “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was Lazarus, then this early involvement with Jesus would help explain the origin of their special relationship and the reason that Jesus called Lazarus his “friend” (Jn.11:11).

Furthermore this suggests another question: If this unnamed early disciple was Lazarus, then *why* didn't Jesus pick him to be one of "the twelve"? We may never know the answer to this, but we do know that "the twelve" were picked because they were the ones that God wanted to have picked – for Jesus said, "I do always those things that please him (the Father)" (Jn. 8:29). Beyond this the Bible doesn't seem to offer any rationale as to *why* Jesus selected "the twelve" men that he ultimately chose.

Mark's Mystery Man

There may also be a unique link to Lazarus in the Gospel of Mark. Mark 14:43-53 reports about the night that Jesus was betrayed and in Mark 14:50 we read "And they all forsook him, and fled". You'd think that after the disciples fled there wouldn't be anyone left but Jesus himself. What is extremely curious, however, is what follows immediately after this verse. Mark calls attention to the fact that at that point in time, *one person 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". This is something that was not mentioned in the other Gospels. Still, since it is part of the Gospel of Mark, God must have wanted us to have this information. So let's think carefully about the questions raised by these two verses.

One question is: why would this unnamed "young man" remain with Jesus after the rest of the disciples had fled? [If this person was Lazarus, then we know why he might have remained.] But this "young man" then fled too. So how was his behavior any different from the others who "forsook" Jesus in Mark 14:50? The *motive for his behavior is different.*

Notice that Mark 14:51 takes the time to explain the details of the way that this "young man" was clothed – with only a linen cloth covering his nakedness. Also, note that Mark 14:52 says he fled away naked. 'So what', you ask? When the others "forsook" Jesus "and fled", the clear implication is that they did so out of fear for their own safety. Yet it seems that Mark may be indicating that it was *not fear*, but shame or embarrassment that caused this "young man" to subsequently "flee".

Mark 14:51 says that they, "laid hold on" this "young man". But then in Mark 14:52 we read that, "he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked". Could it be that the Gospel of Mark is telling us that this simple "linen cloth" was stripped from the "young man" as he was seized?

Though we are told that he fled also, the actions of this "young man" are set apart from the rest of the disciples that "forsook" Jesus that night. Is it possible that the fear of death couldn't motivate Lazarus, but that suddenly being stripped might cause him flee out of embarrassment? Even after Lazarus was raised from the dead, he was still a human being, subject to the influence of emotions. [*If this was Lazarus, then after quickly getting something else to wear he returned as Peter did and followed Jesus.*] Now we need to see if any evidence exists to suggest that this "young man" might have been Lazarus.

A Fashion Statement?

Besides the fact that this unnamed “young man” was the last follower of Jesus to flee from Gethsemane that fateful night, the Gospel of Mark calls attention to this “young man’s” attire! Twice we see references to the “linen cloth” that this “young man” was wearing (Mk. 14:51 & 52). And both these verses indicate that this was the only thing covering his otherwise “naked” body. Why would the Gospel of Mark bother to mention these details? (Possibly because it is in these details that we can find the clue to the identity of this unnamed “young man”.)

Earlier in this document we discussed the significance of “linen” clothes. Remember that our English word “linen” was used to translate several different Greek words, but that two of these always refer to the cloth covering a corpse – with this passage in Mark 14:51-52 being the only exception!

Why would this “young man” have chosen to wear a material that is otherwise associated only with dead people (in the scriptures)?

Is it possible that this unnamed “young man” was indicating that he’d already been dead or that he didn’t fear death? More importantly, could this have been a way of expressing the fact that he was a changed man – that reckoned himself dead to sin, but alive unto God (as Paul later encouraged others to do in Romans 6:11)?

Whatever the explanation, there is a link between this unidentified “young man” and Lazarus (the unidentified “disciple whom Jesus loved”). This link can be seen when one closely examines the “linen” evidence that the scriptures contain.

Enough Evidence?

Is this enough evidence to suggest that Lazarus was the “young man” of Mark 14:51-52? Each one of you will decide that for yourselves, since you are the jury considering this matter. However, the ‘case for Lazarus’ doesn’t depend on the identity of the “young man” of Mark 14.

The fact that the night Jesus was arrested an unidentified “young man” dressed in “linen” was the last person to leave him is not going to be enough to *prove* anything *for certain*. This is true even though the Greek word for “linen” in Mark 14 was used only in relation to Jesus’ dead body every other time that it was used (Mt. 27:59, Mk. 15:46 [twice] & Lu. 23:53).

Still, given the curious statements of Mark 14 and the truth that this “young man” is highlighted as the last person to leave Jesus at Gethsemane, this discernible link to Lazarus is worth thinking about.

Once again, however, please remember that the evidence previously presented herein regarding both Lazarus and John is intended to stand on its own. Each of these supplemental passages is being discussed simply in an attempt to tie up these few loose ends.

More Than *Just A Story?*

A passage in the Gospel of Luke has some unique parallels between the story that is told there and the facts that are reported by the anonymous author in his Gospel. As we compare Luke 16:19-31 to John 11:1-12:10, keep this in mind – although Jesus did use stories to teach, we also are told that **Jesus was a prophet!** (Mk. 6:4, Acts 3:22-26)

In the story that Jesus told in Luke 16, he referred to two characters, a man named “Lazarus” who died (Lu. 16:20 & 22) and a “rich man” who also died (Lu. 16:19 & 22). The “rich man” found himself “being in torments” (Lu. 16:23) and he then made a series of requests. To start with he sought relief and, oddly enough, in his appeal he includes the petition “send Lazarus...” (Lu. 16:24). The “rich man” is then informed why this could not happen (Lu. 16:25-26). Following this, the “rich man” makes another appeal involving “Lazarus” – “send him [Lazarus] to my father’s house: for I have five brethren; that he [Lazarus] may testify unto them” (Lu. 16:27-28).

Notice what Jesus did here with this story. The dead “rich man” is asking if someone named “Lazarus” could return from the dead to “testify” unto his “brethren”, who were still alive.

Jesus also underscores the fact that this was precisely what the “rich man” was requesting. When the “rich man” is told that his brethren “have Moses and the prophets” (Lu. 16:29) he protested, because he thought that sending Lazarus back from the dead would elicit a better response – “if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent” (Lu. 16:30).

Sadly, 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” (Lu. 16:31). Jesus ended the story here.

Now try to imagine the effect that this story would have had on those who actually heard Jesus teach it (especially his disciples). The day that the disciples heard Jesus speak these words, it’s likely that they thought that this story was no different than his other teaching stories. But what do you suppose those disciples were thinking when they later saw part of this story actually *come true* – when Jesus called a man named Lazarus back from the dead?

Who Was Jesus Speaking About?

Some will try to take the ‘moral of the story’ and apply it to the situation of the “chief priests” and Pharisees, who refused to embrace the resurrection of Jesus. While this might *appear* to be ‘a good fit’, let’s take a closer look at this.

To begin with, note the contrast between the way Jesus ended the story (“if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead” – Lu. 16:31) and the resurrection of Jesus (which has been ‘persuading’ people for the last 2000 years).

Moreover, consider this fact; in the scriptures the resurrected Jesus didn't appear to unbelievers! After the resurrection every recorded appearance of Jesus was to those that believed or would believe. He did not appear before the priests or Pharisees to “testify” unto them.

These facts seem to hinder a comparison between the resurrected Jesus and the person who was requested by the “rich man” in Luke 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” (Lu. 16:29)].

This Luke 16 passage has frequently been related to Jesus' resurrection, his witnesses in the New Testament and ‘the good news of gospel.’ But before we search for a deeper meaning in this story, consider the *possibility* that, in Luke 16:19-31, Jesus was articulating a prophecy. [Jesus' delay and words in John 11:4, 6-7 & 14-15 would support this.]

The account of Luke 16 has several parallels to the raising of Lazarus. Lazarus died (Jn. 11:1-36), was later raised from the dead (Jn. 11:36-46). Plus, although there are no words of Lazarus recorded in the Bible, it is *likely* that he would “testify” about Jesus to those with whom he spoke.

Moreover, Lazarus became a *living testimony* to the power of God. And “many of the Jews”, who witnessed the raising of Lazarus, believed on Jesus (Jn. 11:45). [Also see: Jn. 12:9-11 and Jn. 12:17-18.] But, similar to the response that Jesus described in Luke 16, the Jewish leaders were not ‘persuaded’ – even though eyewitnesses to the raising of Lazarus “went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done” (Jn. 11:46). Instead of repenting, the “chief priests” and Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus (Jn. 11:47-53). The “chief priests” also sought to kill Lazarus (Jn. 12:10). Given this, do you think the reaction described by Jesus in Luke 16:31 was a prophecy of this response? As with the other supplemental passages, it's up to you to ponder this food for thought. Now, however, we will 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 bought the idea that John was the author of the Gospel that bears his name because:

- This is what we were told;
- This is what it's ‘always’ been called;
- This is what ‘all’ the Bible ‘scholars’ teach;
- The ‘title’ of this Gospel is printed in our Bible;
- etc.

These might seem like separate arguments at first glance, but the same assumption underlies all of them. They all boil down to the same mistake – trusting someone else's judgement. These ‘reasons’ don't require us to search the scriptures; rather they rely on someone else to have already done this job.

But what if others now and in the past have done the same? Who is left to search the scriptures? The ‘scholars?’ Isn’t it normal for them to rely on the work of ‘scholars’ who went before them (like judges citing on past rulings)? What happens if successive generations tended to rely on the work of those who have preceded them? Furthermore, what happens if an error gets introduced into this sequence early on? If an error went unchallenged long enough, it would eventually become accepted as truth and correcting this error would become more difficult as time went on because its ‘historical acceptance’ would become a rationale for assuming that this idea *must* be true.

Clearing up a long accepted misconception is a big challenge, but the Bible is up to it. The origin of the erroneous ‘John’ theory really doesn’t matter. What does matter is that we show allegiance to the record of scripture that God has preserved – and the truth it reveals. There was never any *Biblical* support for the ‘John’ theory, as you now know. The fact that this error has fooled so many should be a wake up call to us all. Let this discovery inspire you to search the scriptures more diligently in the future. Instead of thinking that you have to accept the decrees of others on Biblical matters, or that some expert’s judgement is necessarily better than your own, trust the judgement that God gave to you and be open to the truth that you find in His Word.

This study presented reasoning that relies on the Bible only. On the other hand, those who seek to defend the ‘John’ idea are forced to use arguments that ultimately rest on everything but the Bible. (*But this isn’t clear until you focus on this issue.*)

The very arguments used by those who seek to defend the ‘John’ idea actually reveal that there’s no Biblical support for it. To justify this idea they cite ‘historical tradition’ or supposed quotes of the ‘early church fathers’, but they don’t offer a single verse of scripture to support this idea. The primary source is always the best evidence and the primary source in this case is God’s Word. Furthermore, no amount of extra-biblical opinion can ever be sufficient to ‘trump’ a truth that is revealed by the Bible.

If we look to somebody else to tell us what the Bible says, then we are depending on others to search the scriptures *for* us. But if we do this, aren’t we likely to adopt their mistakes and any errors that they’ve been taught? Assuming that we can rely on others to already have the truth favors tradition, not investigation. Worse yet, unless the ones on whom we’re relying can be counted on to never be wrong, we have no guarantee that we are getting the truth. This mindset also tends to use circular logic: i.e. ‘We know John wrote it, because it’s his Gospel’ and ‘It’s called The Gospel of “John”, because John wrote it’ (even though no such claim appears in the text).

Others fall prey to thinking that ‘John *must* have written The Gospel of “John”, because this is what *everyone else* thinks’. This still relies on others to have the truth, but it also presumes that large numbers of people cannot be wrong **concurrently**. However, even when ‘*all the scholars believe*’ and ‘*everybody knows*’ that something is ‘true’, we may have to look elsewhere in order to find out what is really true and the idea of ‘monkey-to-man’ evolution that is so prevalent today is just one example of this.

Why have the vast majority of ‘scholars’ and books misidentified the author of this Gospel? How could this have been accepted by so many, for so long? Besides the reasons discussed above, there is another possibility that we should consider. It may be that God is opening the eyes of people to this truth in order to humble us and draw us into a deeper reliance on His Word. And, at the very least, this omission is proof that man has not already discovered all of the truth that the Bible contains.

Where Do You Go From Here?

Some will just dismiss this issue and discount the scriptural evidence cited herein. Still others who were unconvinced will continue to face two daunting questions: (1) If the 'John' theory is true, why doesn't a single verse support this idea; and (2) why doesn't a single verse oppose the idea that Lazarus was the "other disciple"? Lastly, there will be those who were persuaded by the facts presented herein and it is to this group that these final thoughts are directed.

When we discover evidence that indicates we may be mistaken on a matter, what should we do? You now know that the evidence contained in the Bible is sufficient to prove that the Apostle John was not the author of the Gospel that is attributed to him. You also know that there is a substantial amount of Biblical evidence to support the conclusion that the unnamed "disciple whom Jesus loved" was Lazarus, of Bethany. What is unique about this insight is that it can be seen after almost 2000 years and, like a watermark of truth, it provides an inspiring argument for the reliability of the Bible that we have today.

Despite the passage of time, it is still true: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..." (2 Tim. 3:16). The truth has been preserved in the scriptures and we should not be afraid to let the Holy Spirit lead us into truth.

Is the information in this study as important as the fact that Jesus is the Son of God or the fact that he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven? Obviously not! But it is important because it makes us realize that the Bible still has things to teach us – our knowledge of God's Word *can* increase. It also highlights the importance of the details that God has preserved for us in His Word, which can help us to correct past misconceptions. Ideally, this will inspire you to explore the scriptures with a new zeal.

Furthermore, it's likely that your future studies will begin to exhibit one new trait. You should find that you are less willing to just accept someone's teaching without question. Instead, *you'll probably be more inclined to "search the scriptures"* – which will enable you to confirm whether or not the things that you've been taught are actually correct. Most important, take the time to ask God how you can use this new information to glorify Him and help others. Be encouraged as you continue to study the Bible and let the Holy Spirit guide you to the truth. Seek the truth "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (Derived from 1 Cor. 2:13).

What Difference Does It Make?

This truth ought to make a difference in your personal Bible study by increasing your appreciation for God's Word and your sensitivity to the details that He has preserved for us therein. But there is no way to tell what benefits will follow from this for any given individual or for the body of Christ *as a whole*. Thus, 'what difference does it make' is actually a question that only God can answer. However, you can use this insight to make a difference in the lives of others. By sharing your knowledge of the Biblical evidence on this issue you can encourage others to look into this matter, so that they too might learn to rely more on God's Word and less on the teachings of men.

On the other hand, there is a subtle danger if ‘what difference does it make’ is simply intended as a rhetorical question that is meant to brush aside the whole issue. The danger lies in the implication that knowing the truth on this issue has no value – which may be meant as a justification for perpetuating the ‘John’ teaching (i.e. It’s okay, because it’s harmless). If the ‘John’ idea is believed or taught in ignorance that’s one thing, but what about after one is exposed to the truth? Should any teacher imply that an idea is Biblically true, if they know there isn’t one verse in the Bible that they can cite in support of that idea?

A Biblically based inquiry is not a threat to the truth, but the *unguarded* intake of information can be hazardous. As shown herein, we cannot afford to be careless about learning or uncritical about the things we see, hear or read. We need to test these things against the Word of God. In Acts 17:11 and other verses, the Bible indicates that it is our responsibility to verify the truth of what we are taught. But if we discover that we have been taught something that is unscriptural, what should we do then? It may be that our obligation is to speak the truth in love.

However, when it comes to the ‘John’ theory, you’ll find that tradition is sometimes treasured more than truth. Even though all of the scriptural evidence is in your corner, exposing this error will not be an easy task. This idea has been accepted for so long, that some won’t even consider the *possibility* that this theory could be wrong, while others may act as if any challenge to the ‘John’ theory is impossible or inconsequential. You know that it is *not* impossible for this type of error to be made, but is it really true that teaching some errors may be inconsequential? Or might it be that overlooking the question of errors on ‘minor issues’ could lead to other problems?

Adding to God’s Word is condemned by most Bible teachers – yet, to some degree, this happens each time the name ‘John’ is added to the reading of a passage about “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. It’s easy to slip and add our ideas on a matter to the plain reading of God’s Word when we are seeking to clarify one point or another, but this is a habit that all students of the Word should seek to guard against. This is not meant as a condemnation of those who are communicators of God’s Word. Surely they have a responsibility to be as Biblically accurate as they can possibly be, but they can sometimes be fooled just like the rest of us. None of us is *always* right, so we should remain open to new ideas and respond to the truth when God places it in our path.

When a question of Biblical accuracy is being raised, which do you think is the more appropriate response: (A) ‘What difference does it make’, or (B) ‘Show me the proof’? Certainly, the first remark isn’t meant to imply that truth doesn’t matter on Biblical issues. But, this sort of reply can be used to dismiss this uncomfortable subject without actually having to cite scripture (i.e., if it ‘makes no difference’, then there is no need to give much thought to the matter). Sadly, this treats the truth somewhat nonchalantly, which could end up pouring cold water on a Bible student’s flame of curiosity. On the other hand, the later response tackles the issue head on and implies a willingness to learn. Be that as it may, realize that convincing others of this truth is not as important as encouraging them to search the Bible on this issue, because the real value in this discovery is its ability to spark a renewed interest in God’s Word.

“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Lu. 12:48). The Bible is a gift that is worthy of our time and deliberate thought (like the Bereans of Acts 17:11). Hebrews 11:6 tells us that God “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”. And Jesus tells his disciples, “seek, and ye shall find” (Lu. 11:9, also see Mt. 7:7). Thus, time spent in the pursuit of the truth is time well spent.

Moreover, note that *knowledge is not the goal*. What you’ve learned herein isn’t just an interesting Biblical oddity. Although it’s been overlooked by so many for so long, the beauty of this insight is that **the Bible has always pointed to the truth!** Still, let us remember that even the disciples didn’t realize some things were contained in the scriptures until God revealed those things to them [as in Luke 24:45, “Then opened he (Jesus) their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures”]. Might God act similarly today, opening our understanding to things that we had previously overlooked?

Even in our day, God can still reveal truth through the Bible, as this study proves. However, bear in mind that *the learning of truth* is not an end in itself. 2 Peter 1:5-7 says, “add to... knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity”. Similarly Paul wrote, “though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing”. (1 Cor. 13:2) Thank God for the knowledge, but then press on to glorify Him through your life.

If your eyes have been opened to a truth that most others have missed, then the question you’re left with is, ‘if so many could be wrong about *this*, what else could they be wrong about?’

Read the Bible with care to make sure that it actually says what you have been told that it says. Enjoy God’s instruction and love the truth.

Thank you.

Proverbs 25:2, Ecc. 3:1
Thanks be to God

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Here’s a question that you can use when you begin a discussion of this issue with your pastor, teacher or Bible study. *We’re told to “search the scriptures”, but what should we do if when we do this, we discover that there’s not a single verse to justify a tradition or teaching that we’ve previously been taught?* Or you might ask, *If one has been taught a belief or tradition and they later learn that the facts recorded in the Bible don’t support that idea, what should they do?* The best questions request scriptural guidance rather than opinion. Questions such as, “*What do you think about...*” or “*Why do some people teach...*” don’t require a Biblical response. Instead, it is better to formulate a question that requests a Biblical answer such as, “*What verse would support the idea that...*” or “*Can you help me find a passage of scripture that would shed some light on...*”

Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Lu. 16:10), which suggests being faithful to the truth is important even if so-called ‘minor’ issues are involved. When seeking Biblical truth, remember that The Bible is the primary source (as opposed to quoting non-Biblical sources, ideas and opinions). The Bible is the best evidence against those ideas that are *promoted as Biblical*, which actually are not. In Luke 12:48 Jesus said, “... unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...” and those of us who are blessed with access to God’s Word and the ability to read it have good reason to take Jesus’ words to heart!