

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, OR NOT?

Lazarus of Bethany and the Fourth Gospel

LazarusComeForth.com presents some new insights about this unique biblical character to those who are searching for information on Lazarus of Bethany or the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The focus of this study has been on Lazarus, his relationship to Jesus, how being raised from the dead would have changed Lazarus and examining how all of these facts compare to the various facts in the biblical record regarding the one whom "Jesus loved". However given the tradition that this was John, an idea which has been blindly believed without question by many for a long time, there is certainly another side to the question: Who was the beloved disciple?

There is not even one verse that would justify teaching the John idea as a biblical certainty and this alone should be sufficient reason to reconsider the man-made tradition that the "other disciple, whom Jesus loved" was John. But beyond this the Bible shows that this tradition cannot be true, because what the scriptures reveal about the Apostle John is able to prove that he was not this unnamed "other disciple". Consider the following facts regarding the beloved disciple:

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

- *The gospel writers treated them like different people.* The first three gospels totally omit the one whom "Jesus loved", but they often refer to John by name – and yet all of those events where John was referenced by name in the first three gospels are missing from the book that the one whom "Jesus loved" wrote.
- *The one whom "Jesus loved" wrote his gospel without identifying himself by name, but there is no evidence that John ever avoided using his name.* In fact, John identified himself by name repeatedly in the Book of Revelation, and this difference in behavior argues against the idea that the same man wrote both books.
- *"The disciple whom Jesus loved" enjoyed a one-of-a-kind bond with Jesus.* This can't be said of John, and the three times that Jesus took John aside with Peter and James do not single John out as having that relationship.
- *On the night that Jesus was arrested, John and the "other disciple" behaved differently.* John let Jesus down by falling asleep three times. In contrast, the "other disciple" went into the palace of the high priest with Jesus, and we only see him leave at a time well into the next day, when Jesus reassigned him.
- *The idea that the one whom "Jesus loved" was John relies on the false assumption that this author was one of "the twelve".* Paintings of "the twelve" alone with Jesus at the supper help to promote this error; but details found in the Bible indicate that they were not alone at that event, including the fact that they were guests in someone's home. Besides this, the phrase "other disciple" itself suggests that he was not one of "the twelve", but rather that he was one of the additional disciples who also followed 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 John was not known to the high priest. It was only after Pentecost that the high priest first became acquainted with John.
- *The author's anonymity argues against the John idea.* At the end of this author's gospel, he listed "the sons of Zebedee" at the same time that he listed two "other" disciples and called himself the one whom "Jesus loved". He grouped John in with the apostles, but he referred to himself anonymously at that point.

A preponderance of the evidence indicates that Lazarus was the "other disciple" because:

- *They had the identical relationship with Jesus.* “Jesus loved” the one whom “Jesus loved” and “Jesus loved” Lazarus – and they were unique in this regard. They were the only men who associated with Jesus during his ministry that were also singled out in scripture as being “loved” by Jesus (the key relationship).

- *The other three gospel writers treat these two alike.* They do not 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 never mention “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”, and they totally ignore his unique role in the key events of the closing days of Jesus’ life.

- *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 referenced a few times. In a highly similar way, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” also suddenly appears late in the gospel, and he too is only referenced a few times.

- *One seems to replace the other in the gospel.* The last mention of Lazarus occurs before the first mention of the one whom “Jesus loved”. The author ceased all references to Lazarus in the text, and it was only at that point that the author began to refer to himself as the one whom “Jesus loved”.

- *The suddenly famous one disappears, and then the anonymous one suddenly appears.* Right after the public’s desire to see Lazarus is recounted, a transition occurs: he vanishes from the text, and the term “Jesus loved” (that had only been used of him) then begins to be used by the author in anonymous references to himself – “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, the “other disciple, whom Jesus loved”, etc.

- *The experiences of Lazarus would produce the behavior exhibited by “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.* Jesus gave a one-of-a-kind gift to Lazarus when he raised him from the dead. After that, Lazarus was different from the rest of Jesus’ followers, and he would have been different from the man that he had been prior to that miracle. Jesus’ relationship to the one whom “Jesus loved” and the behavior of this “other disciple” befit what one would expect if he was the raised-from-the-dead Lazarus.

- *The Bible reveals that both sat with Jesus.* The last time that Lazarus is seen in the Bible he is sitting with Jesus at a table. Similarly, the first time the one who “Jesus loved” is seen, he is leaning on Jesus at a table.

- *When confronted with the “linen” evidence, the “other disciple” became the first one who “believed”.* This reaction befits Lazarus – the one person in scripture who was most likely to be profoundly moved by the sight of the “linen clothes” and the “napkin”, since he had been wearing similar wrappings for four days at the time that he was raised from the dead.

- *The false rumor that was spread saying that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” wouldn’t die points to Lazarus.* This telltale error about the author and the way that he dealt with it in his gospel are understandable if he was Lazarus (those who knew that he was the only one to be raised after being dead for four days had misconstrued what Jesus said about him).

- *The “other disciple” was anonymous and Lazarus had a motive to become anonymous.* When the people came “not for Jesus’ sake only” but to “see Lazarus also”, surely Lazarus knew that the focus belonged on Jesus and not on him. Likewise, the author’s intent was to lead people to Jesus, and he concealed his identity, thus he apparently felt that this was needed in order to achieve that objective.

- *When Peter’s death was foretold, Peter turned his attention from Jesus to “the disciple whom Jesus loved”.* Peter’s response suggests that his mind associated “the disciple whom Jesus loved” with the issue of death, a topic that would undeniably be forever associated with Lazarus by all those who knew him.

- *The “other disciple” was a known associate of Jesus and was known to the high priest; both criteria fit Lazarus.* Lazarus was identified as a “friend” whom “Jesus loved” before he was raised. After that, many of the Jews came to “see Lazarus”, “whom he [Jesus] had raised from the dead”. The “chief priests” also knew that Lazarus had been raised from the dead by Jesus. And later, when they saw the effect that Lazarus was having on the people, then the “chief priests” conspired to kill him also.

The Beloved Disciple

The foregoing summary comes from a free bible study on the beloved disciple that is available online at TheDiscipleWhomJesusLoved.com. The supporting verses were not included here because they were cited when each of these points were covered as the evidence was being presented in that study.

The free eBook *The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved* presents an in-depth analysis of the biblical evidence concerning the beloved disciple. By comparing scripture with scripture, it shows that the Bible has sufficient evidence to prove that this person could not have been John, and shows how all of the facts reported in scripture about the one whom "Jesus loved" fit with what scripture tells us about Jesus' "friend" Lazarus.

The bulk of this Bible study comes from that book, and if you want to see the rest of the biblical evidence on the author of the fourth gospel, then you will want to read *The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved*.

For more Bible-only based discussion on Lazarus of Bethany, the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, or the story of Lazarus and the rich man, visit LazarusComeForth.com. You will also find the free eBook with a full presentation of the biblical evidence on the beloved disciple at TheDiscipleWhomJesusLoved.com

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