

John 1:37-40

The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" And they said to him, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

One of the biggest mysteries in biblical scholarship concerns the identity of "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Martin Hengel and Graham Stanton among other scholars have reminded us in recent discussions of the Fourth Gospel that the superscripts to all four of the canonical Gospels were likely added after the fact to the documents, indeed they may originally have been added as document tags to the papyrus rolls. Even more tellingly they were likely added only after there were several familiar Gospels for the phrase 'according to....' is used to distinguish this Gospel from other well-known ones. This means of course that all four Gospels are formally anonymous, and the question then becomes how much weight one should place on internal evidence of authorship (the so-called inscribed author) and how much on external evidence.

The other three [synoptic] gospels do not give his name either. In fact, they never even mention the term "Beloved Disciple" Church tradition does provide a name. It asserts that the 'Beloved Disciple' was none other than John the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, and one of the original twelve disciples.

- ✧ The Gospel of John uses the word "disciple" to describe any follower of Jesus. Thus, the Beloved Disciple wasn't necessarily one of the original twelve.
- ✧ References to this disciple always use the words "he", "him", and "his". The person in question was a male.
- ✧ John 19:27 says that Jesus' mother Mary went to live at the home of the Beloved Disciple after the crucifixion. Acts 1:14 says that she was part of the early community of believers, known as the Nazarenes, who lived in Jerusalem during that same period. Taken together, these two pieces of information indicate that the Beloved Disciple must have had a home in or near Jerusalem
- ✧ This gospel gives a detailed description of the interrogations of Jesus by the Jewish leaders and by Pilate. Presumably this information came from this Beloved Disciple. This implies that he was able to gain access to the locations of both interrogations, and therefore must have had a personal connection with at least one member of the Jewish religious establishment. John 11 finds him quoting secret proceedings:

John 11:45-54

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him; but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." He did not say this of his own accord but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So, from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death. Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim; and there he stayed with the disciples.

- ✧ The Beloved Disciple stood near the cross during Jesus death agonies. This could indicate that he wasn't afraid of being arrested as a known follower of Jesus.
- ✧ Jesus made several visits to Jerusalem prior to his final visit during the week of the crucifixion. He could have met the Beloved Disciple during one of these earlier visits. The authors of the other gospels appear to be unaware of any earlier visits to Jerusalem [or simply do not deal with them]. That could help explain their silence about this disciple.

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- ☆ We know that Jesus had at least one ‘secret disciple’ in Jerusalem [John 19:38]. Joseph of Arimathea "was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews." This man had enough social prominence to be able to personally ask the Roman governor Pontius Pilate for permission to remove Jesus from the cross and bury him. Another influential man that Jesus knew was Nicodemus, who John 3:1-21 calls "a member of the Jewish ruling council". Thus, Jesus had at least two ‘secret disciples’ living in Jerusalem. The Beloved Disciple could have been a third.
- ☆ In John 20:2 at the empty tomb an unidentified man called “the other disciple, the one Jesus loved” appears with Peter and Mary Magdalene (which negates her as the Beloved Disciple). The identifier “the other disciple” may suggest that this disciple is not one of the twelve.
- ☆ John is the third most used male name of the time, after Judas, and Jacob – James. Mark’s name is John Mark as Caiaphas’ name was really Joseph Caiaphas.
- ☆ There is no tradition from the church fathers except John Zebedee –
 - Could he be of the priestly clan?
 - Would his family have been wealthy?

Mark 1:19-21

And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught.

- Would he have ignored many tremendous events that we know John was present to observe?

☆ **Candidates:**

- Mary of Magdala
- Lazarus
- Thomas
- John of the priestly clan – John the Elder
- Many other names are speculated over – even Saint Paul

- ☆ The evidence seems to indicate that the Beloved Disciple was a man, that he lived in or near Jerusalem and had a home there, and that he may have personally known at least to high-ranking Jewish religious officials. He was able to move about more freely than the others of the twelve and was frequently with the 12.

John 21:20-25

Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" The saying spread abroad among the brethren that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true. But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

John 13:20-32

Amen, amen, I tell you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me." After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Amen, amen, I tell you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, the one whom Jesus loved. So Simon Peter gestured to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks." So lying thus, upon the chest of Jesus, he asked, "Lord, who is it?" So, when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. After receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night

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