

The Gospel of John From an Author-Centered Perspective

The Gospel of John (written by St. John the Apostle) is a prime source to analyse from an author-centered perspective as it holds many disparities from the other Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). The Gospel of John is unique as it is written with a different audience and theme in mind; he also uses different sources to formulate his passages. Where all the gospels convey a rough chronological symmetry, the Gospel of John seems to take 'different paths' and even 'cut corners' in some places (compared to the other Gospels).

One component of the Gospel of John which provides a distinct insight into the Author's perspective, is the sources used to write the Gospel. The sources in which John used can inform us many things; not limited to his views toward Jesus' life, his relationship with Jesus and the order in which he perceived crucial events in Jesus' timeline.

The main source of the Gospel is John himself. This is shown when he writes, "This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true" (21:24). From this information we can understand that this Gospel is written through the eyes of St. John and his biases along with it. Where one primary source is used as a point of reference throughout the whole Gospel, readers can understand his view toward Jesus' life by the way he is portrayed. John describes Jesus as being an ordinary man who "dwelt among us" (John 1:14). John also claims, "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." (1:34) - showing readers that he also valued Jesus as a figure of high importance. When recalling events such as this; John shows a deep admiration for Jesus. He writes about how he addressed Jesus as "The lamb of God" (1:36). The admiration can also be shown in later passages through John's actions. He states many times that they would follow Jesus and seek his teachings.

Another way that the Author describes the relationship with Jesus is by outlining how Jesus acted back towards John and his disciples. Jesus is written as being open, understanding and compassionate - often opting to go above and beyond what the disciples expected him to do with his teachings. This is presented in Chapter 6 when the author explains how Jesus asked "Where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?" (6:35). This is in relation to the massive following that Jesus had gathered due to his performance of miracles to aid the sick. Jesus performed many miracles during his lifetime, all of which were to help other people. John illustrates Jesus as understanding, as he acknowledges that his disciples want to learn and follow in his footsteps. Jesus is progressively informing his disciples on ways in which they will attain access into the Kingdom of Heaven - as well as eternal life.

Throughout the Gospel of John, the Author develops on the interactions he had with Jesus and their wider consequences. Many of the interactions John had were to better the lives and increase the faith in other people. The Author constructs a view of Jesus which presents him as a near-perfect, trustworthy and sacred figure - of whom he looks up to.

Secondly, St. John's writings are intended for a slightly different audience than the other Gospels. This disparity regarding the intended audience can grant a glimpse into the Author's mind and allow readers to construct a vision of his perspective towards.

We can determine the target audience of this Gospel using key quotes and messages intended for the user to comprehend. Many messages throughout this Gospel are used to enlighten reader on objectives needed to be completed in order to enter the Kingdom of God. From this information, we can determine the target audience at the time of writing would have been Jewish people who wanted to witness the acts of God but could not - possibly due to location. This is also shown after the Jewish people almost stone Jesus. When John says, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" (11:8) points out Jesus is more than willing to tend to the people who need him within 'enemy territory'. It shows his compassion to help others, even if they are of odds - also highlighted later in the Gospel.

The author's perspective can be seen to be transformative and informational as he wants to transform non-believers into believers of Jesus and his miracles, as well as informing current followers of his actions and teachings to help them through their own respective paths in life.

Furthermore, the author of the Gospel of John conceived the text with many key themes in mind - all of which can enlighten us into his thought processes.

The main theme of the Gospel of John, is the relationship between divine characters and humans. This theme is explored constantly throughout the Gospel - most commonly during times

when Jesus performs a miracle or provides a teaching. Chapter 6, "But there are some of you who do not believe" (6:64) shows this through the unnatural abilities Jesus is in possession of - which he does not directly show others. Where Jesus can detect who does not believe in the fact that he is the Son of God and not outwardly showing it; reflects on the authors mindset during writing. St John wanted to highlight this fact within the scripture to further emphasise the importance and humbleness of Jesus (this displays the authors view on who he was as a person).

Moreover, an additional theme of eternal life is profoundly exhibited continuously within the text - hinting at a desire for the author / John to achieve this goal. Where the ideology of eternal life is repeatedly brought forward, it can be assumed it has some greater significance. During the time of the events of Jesus, religion was a major part of daily life. Many streets and towns had temples and places of worship to practice their belief in a God-like figure. This relates to John and his mindset through dedication to Jesus and attaining the goals he set out to be possible (this is known as John was made a disciple to spread and preach the message Jesus conveyed). One way this is expertly laid out, is when Jesus rises from the dead. In chapter 20 Jesus says "I have not yet ascended to the Father" (20:17) alluding to him having eternal life as he has not yet reached his purpose.

Lastly, the idea of Jesus being the Messiah can provide useful insight into how John formulated the text to push his messages and teachings. The descriptive and narrative language used is tailored to inform the reader of Jesus' purpose. Alongside being described as a miracle worker and Rabbi (Hebrew word for teacher); the word ²Messiah means promised deliverer of the Jewish nation as prophesied. At various points in the text, John can be seen to have written about Jesus this way. A continuous example of this (shown throughout) is how all the disciples constantly turn to Jesus for answers and advice. The author does this to put on display the true purpose of Jesus. Where he has been sent to the Earth by God as a deliverer of the promised land; an almost infinite knowledge can be expected of him due to it being needed complete his operation; and this is expertly portrayed throughout when John highlights the fact that Jesus already knows the answer even before he asks the question. Within Chapter 21 where Jesus is scribed to have said "Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" (21:5) foreshadows the event in which he will tell the 'children' to cast their nets to the other side and catch a sufficient amount of fish - hinting that he already knew they would be there.

St John writes this in such a way that assumes Jesus did not make it happen (but knew they would succeed in their task). Where readers can now determine through hindsight that Jesus, possibly with the help of God, did make it the Fish present on the other side of the boat; further fortifies the link between Jesus being humble and an ordinary man because he did not openly express his intentions to do so.

The language used by John to relay Jesus' messages and teachings were selected to provide deeper meanings to the readers. The author chose this particular formulation of language to further supplement and enhance the lessons and morals behind his everyday teachings.

Near to the start of the Gospel; John writes Jesus to have said "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (3:5). This implies that to get into the 'Kingdom of God', one has to experience multiple 'births'. This teaching can be interpreted furthermore, as being 'born of water' could represent a natural birth - from two parents. This symbolises a baseline needed as it provides the gift of life. The second part of the teaching (being born of spirit) relates to a spiritual uplifting and realisation of a belief in God. This teaching is arguably one of Jesus' most important teachings; as it outlines an 'end goal' for believers. The deft use of this expertly crafted language provides a concise control for most of Jesus' future endeavours.

In addition to previous points, when Jesus says, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (4:9) is another manner which accentuates the teachings of the Messiah through hidden meaning. During the time of which Jesus lived, Jews had no commerce with the Samaritans making it very unusual for a Jew to ask for help from them. The author recited this piece of dialogue to relate to a teaching of compassion and acceptance - two more qualities of which could be argued to be vital to enter the Kingdom of God. St John's main goal of this interaction was to inform readers of the value of overlooking differences or separations in society and helping out the fellow human to achieve a common goal.

To conclude, a piece of literature specifically as informative and educational as the Gospel of John, holds many exquisite qualities produced by the author and articulated through his perspective. Not only does the Gospel relay crucial events from Jesus' life; it also allows future

generations to understand and develop a deep-sought knowledge of the belief in divine figures. The authors view on the events has allowed a scripture to be created which reflects his own personal views of and towards Jesus. This unique view provides readers with the ability to step into his shoes, and relive the events he lived through.

Bibliography:

¹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 1998. Gospel According to John. [Online]. [23 May 2021]. Available from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Gospel-According-to-John>

Bible References Bible Project. 2021. John [Online] [23 May 2021]. Available from: <https://bibleproject.com/learn/john/#>

Cliffs Notes. 2020. New Testament of the Bible [Online] [23 May 2021] Available from: <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/n/new-testament-of-the-bible/summary-and-analysis/the-gospel-of-john>

² Google Dictionary. 2021/ Messiah [Online] [23 May 2021] Available at: <https://www.google.com>