

Sources in John

1. Prologue
2. SQ (Signs Source)
3. Discourse Source
4. Passion Source

THE PROLOGUE OF JOHN'S GOSPEL: CHIASTIC STRUCTURE

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

4 What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, HE GAVE POWER TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

15 (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'")

16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

A) The Word with God (vss. 1-2)

B) Role in creation (vs. 3)

C) Gift to humankind (vss. 4-5)

D) Testimony of John (vss. 7-8)

E) The Word enters the World (vss. 9-11)

F) Through the Word, we become God's Children (vss. 12-13).

E') The Incarnation (vs. 14)

D') The Testimony of John (vs. 15)

C') Gift to humankind (vs. 16)

B') Role in redemption (vs. 17)

A') The Son at the Father's side (vs. 18)

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” ²¹And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” ²²Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.

THE ORIGINAL OPENING OF JOHN’S GOSPEL?

SECTION D OF THE HYMN

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness (μαρτυρίαν) to (ἵνα) testify (μαρτυρήσῃ) to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify (μαρτυρήσῃ) to the light.

SECTION D' OF THE HYMN

¹⁵John testified (μαρτυρεῖ) to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’”

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EXPLANATION

John's prologue (1:1–18), very likely existed elsewhere as a hymn or creed, and which he inserted into the front end of his gospel. For all the beauty and power of him identifying Jesus as the eternal word of God, for example he never again picks up the steam or refers back to it anywhere throughout his gospel. Why would he do that?

Likely because the prologue was added *after the gospel was written* and taken from another source as noted. It seems that the reason for adding this prologue would be to ensure that the emerging gnostic Christians could not read John's Gospel as a gnostic text.

From the very start, we know that Jesus is "The word made flesh" (V. 14). Thus, any attempt to see in John's Gospel on gnostic redeemer myth pushed onto Jesus is obfuscated. So, this appears to be "source" that he used. A hymn or creed already known to his community which he cites and places up front in his gospel.

SIGNS SOURCE

Group Exercise

- Read John 2:1-12
- Then Read John 2:23-25
- John 4:46-54

What is the problem?

John did not use Q. We know that because none of the sayings within Q are in John!

However, he did have his own sources one of which we call SQ, which means "Signs Source" because throughout his gospel he seems to intersperse seven "signs" which other gospels call "miracles" into his narrative. We believe this is a source, and not something that he simply wrote by hand because of the way they fit (sometimes awkwardly) into his gospel.

For example, after the **FIRST SIGN**, the wedding of Cana (cf. Jn 2:11), John tells us in 2:23, "during his stay in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he did..."

Later, and John 4:46–53, John narrates the **SECOND SIGN** (the cure of the royal official's son). Immediately following he says in 4:54, "this new sign, the second Jesus performed on his return from Judea to Galilee."

Notice, after the first sign, the wedding of Cana, John tells us that Jesus performed **MANY OTHER SIGNS** which caused people to believe in him (2:23). Then, in John 4, he tells us that Jesus performed the cure of the royal official's son which was his "second sign."

But, how could that be his "second sign," if he already told us that between the wedding of Cana and this sign Jesus performed many others that caused people to believe? So, we see hear a clear contradiction and this is what we call literary seams — places within the gospel in which it appears that the various signs that Jesus performs are inserted and, in some cases, break the rhythm of the gospel much the way sewing a polka-dot fabric in between two pieces of corduroy would look out of place.

So, while John clearly used different sources than the Synoptics which explains why he is so different, he certainly did use sources and we think we can identify a number of them in addition to SQ identified here.

FIRST SIGN (2:11)

MANY SIGNS (2:23)

SECOND SIGN (4:54)

DISCOURSE SOURCE

Read John 14 – 18

Notice at the end of chapter 14 Jesus says, “come now, let us go” only then to keep talking for four more chapters. This is an example of a “literary seam” where it appears that everything after Jn. 14:31 (“Come now let us go.”) is inserted as they do not, in fact, depart until the beginning of John 18,

PASSION SOURCE

Finally, it seems to be the case that his entire passion narrative, which is the most similar section of his gospel to the Synoptics, was likely drawn from a similar background to that which informed the synoptic gospel passion narratives.