

THE APOSTLE JOHN AS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH

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The Gospel of John is very different from the synoptic Gospels. There are numerous reasons for this. One reason is that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were all written early (perhaps prior to 41 AD) and focus on the offer of the kingdom to the nation of Israel; they were not written from a perspective that presupposes Israel's rejection of Christ and the subsequent birth of the Church (cf. 1Cor2:6-8). In contrast, John was written late (c. 85-90 AD) and presupposes Israel's rejection of Christ from its beginning (cf. Jn1:11). Thus, John includes a major focus on the dispensational changes that will come after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and His subsequent sending of the Holy Spirit (John 13-17). Consistent with this, the Apostle John can be viewed as a type of the Church in the following ways.

- 1) John is unnamed in his own Gospel, even as the Church was a "mystery ... hidden in God" (Eph3:9-10) until after the cross (Rom16:25-26; 1Cor2:7-8).
- 2) John is "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn13:23; 20:2; 21:7,20); this is not to suggest that Jesus did not love His other disciples, but John is presented as a special object of His love. In an analogous way, "Christ also loved the church" (Eph5:25).
- 3) John's name¹ means *Jehovah is gracious*. John's message emphasizes the "fullness" of God's grace (Jn1:14,16-17). The "Church" is built (Matt16:18) during "the dispensation of grace" (Eph3:2) and preaches "the gospel of grace" (Gal1:6) in which "grace did much more abound" (Rom5:20).
- 4) At the last supper, it was John who was seen "leaning on Jesus' bosom" (Jn13:23), which is the position of a bride (cf. Song8:5). The Church is destined to be the "bride" of Christ (Eph5:23,25,32).
- 5) John had a personal assurance in his relationship with Christ that the other disciples seemingly did not (Cp., Matt26:22 vs. Jn13:25). The Church possesses eternal security, guaranteed by a permanently indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph1:13-14; 4:30), a privilege not enjoyed by O.T. saints (cf. Ps51:11; Jn14:17).
- 6) John personally suffered "tribulation ... for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev1:9). In an analogous way, the Church is promised to experience persecution/tribulation during this present age (Jn16:33; 1Thess3:3-4; 2Tim3:12).
- 7) Despite diabolical persecution/tribulation, Jesus cryptically suggested John might live to see His return (Jn21:22); that the return of Christ might have occurred during John's lifetime is consistent with the doctrine of imminency (Cp., 1Cor15:51-52; 1Thess4:17). In a mystical sense, this was fulfilled in the fact that John outlived all the other apostles and received the Book of Revelation from the glorified Lord Jesus Christ before he died. In an analogous way, the Church is promised to endure (Matt16:18) until the Lord returns for her (Jn14:2-3).
- 8) John is caught up to heaven before Daniel's 70th Week begins (Rev4:1), just as the Church will experience a pre-tribulational rapture (1Thess4:13-18; 2Thess2:2-3; Rev3:10).

¹ John is a contraction of Jehohanan (cf. Neh12:13).