

Dr. Dave Turner, John, Session 2, Introduction Part 2, Historical and Textual Matters Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Turner, John, Session 2, Introduction Part 2, Historical and Textual Matters, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Turner's lecture, the second session on the **Gospel of John**, shifts focus from theological and literary aspects to **historical and textual matters**. He explores the **authorship of John**, considering both early church testimony and internal clues within the text, such as the identification of the **beloved disciple**. The session then discusses the **intended audience** of the Gospel, contrasting theories of a narrow, specific readership with the idea that it was written for **all Christians**. Finally, Turner examines the **textual history of John**, highlighting key **manuscript variations** and debates surrounding passages like John 1:18, the healing at the pool of Bethesda (John 5), and the story of the adulterous woman (John 7-8).

**2. 49 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Turner, John, Session 2 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →
Gospels → John).**



**Turner_John_Session
n02.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Turner, John, Session 2, Introduction

Part 2, Historical and Textual Matters

Briefing Document: Introduction to the Gospel of John - Historical and Textual Matters

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the key themes and important ideas presented by Dr. David Turner in the second session of his teaching on the Gospel of John. This session focuses on the historical setting of the Gospel, its authorship, intended audience, relationship to the Synoptic Gospels, unique geographical emphasis, and significant textual criticism issues. Dr. Turner emphasizes that this is an introductory overview and not an exhaustive study.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. Introduction and Scope:

- The session aims to explore the historical and textual aspects of the Gospel of John, building upon the theological and literary aspects discussed in the first session.
- Dr. Turner acknowledges the depth of the Gospel, stating, "we could drown in this, it gets very deep." The goal is to introduce key areas for consideration rather than providing comprehensive coverage.
- He echoes the sentiment at the end of John's Gospel regarding the impossibility of recording everything about Jesus, quoting, "everything that needs to be said about the Gospel of John we can't say or else the whole world would be filled with things that should be said."
- He recommends Craig Blomberg's book on the historical reliability of John's Gospel as a valuable resource.

2. Authorship:

- The discussion of authorship relies on both **external evidence** (early church testimonies) and **internal evidence** (clues within the Gospel itself).
- **External Evidence:** Early church fathers like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Papias (as cited by Eusebius) in the 2nd and 4th centuries spoke about John's authorship and its connection to Ephesus.

- Papias' reference to both "John the disciple" and "John the Elder" raises questions about whether these refer to one or two individuals, a matter of ongoing scholarly debate.
- Dr. Turner believes that the Gospel is "certainly tied at the very least indirectly to John the apostle, the disciple of the Twelve." He suggests the teaching reflects Jesus as filtered through John's perspective and represents the tradition stemming from him.
- **Internal Evidence:** The author claims to be an eyewitness, stating, "we beheld his glory."
- The frequent references to the "beloved disciple" (who reclined on Jesus' breast at the last meal - John 13) strongly suggest a close, personal associate of Jesus as the author. Dr. Turner mentions unpacking the significance of the triclinium arrangement later.
- John 21:25 is cited as further internal evidence of the author's presence during Jesus' ministry: "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that should be written."
- The author's identity is described as "oblique testimony" and "qualified anonymity" through the figure of the beloved disciple. The early church largely identified this figure as John, one of the Twelve.

3. Intended Audience:

- There has been a significant debate regarding whether John's Gospel was written for a wide or narrower audience.
- **Narrower Audience Theories:** Ancient traditions link John to Ephesus, suggesting an initial focus on the church in that region.
- J. Lewis Martin proposed that John was written for Jewish Christians facing exclusion from synagogues across the Diaspora due to their faith in Jesus. He points to texts like John 9 (blind man), 12:42 (secret believers), and 16 (persecution including synagogue expulsion) as supporting this view.
- **Wider Audience Theories:** Richard Bauckham argues in "The Gospels for All Christians" that all four Gospels were written for the entire Christian community, not just small local groups.

- Bauckham critiques the "vicious circle" of redaction criticism where theorized communities dictate the interpretation of the Gospel. He calls this "confirmation bias."
- He suggests that the differences between the Gospels arise from the individual authors' emphases and their understanding of what the wider church needed.
- Dr. Turner notes Bauckham's points about the circulation of ancient literature, supporting the possibility of wider dissemination of the Gospels relatively quickly.
- Dr. Turner observes the Jewish character of John's Gospel, noting the frequent allusions and quotations from the Old Testament and its connections to Genesis 1, Moses, Malachi, and Isaiah 40 in the prologue.

4. Relationship to the Synoptic Gospels:

- The unanimous tradition suggests John was written later, possibly as a supplement to Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
- Most scholars date John to the late first century (around 90 CE), with some (like John A.T. Robinson) proposing an earlier date before 70 CE, though this is not widely accepted.
- The discovery of the P52 fragment (dated around 125 AD) provides a "terminus ad quem," indicating John was written some decades prior. By the mid-2nd century, John was well-known.
- Dr. Turner raises key questions about the relationship between John and the Synoptics: common content, level of historical interest, geographical orientation, literary structure, storytelling approach, and theological emphases.
- He notes that both traditions cover Jesus' public ministry in Galilee and his passion in Jerusalem leading to resurrection.
- A key difference lies in the geographical movements of Jesus: the Synoptics depict a Galilean ministry culminating in a final trip to Jerusalem, while John portrays Jesus moving back and forth between Galilee and Jerusalem multiple times early in his ministry.
- The cleansing of the temple, placed near the end of Jesus' ministry in the Synoptics, occurs early in John's Gospel (chapter 2), leading to scholarly debate about its timing (single event placed differently or two separate events).

- Approximately only 10% of John's content overlaps with the Synoptics (around 170 out of 778 verses).
- Dr. Turner lists examples of overlapping material, including John the Baptist's testimony, temple cleansing, healing of the official's son, feeding the multitude, walking on water, plotting to kill Jesus, anointing at Bethany, triumphal entry, Peter's denials prediction, betrayal and arrest, trial before the high priest and Pilate, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and post-resurrection appearances.
- He quotes Clement of Alexandria (via Eusebius) who described John as composing a "spiritual gospel" conscious that the "outward facts had been set forth in the Synoptic Gospels." Clement used the terms "somatic" (outward/corporal) and "pneumatic" (internal/spiritual) to distinguish them.
- While acknowledging potential reservations about Alexandrian hermeneutics, Dr. Turner agrees with the observation that John's approach is more selective and focused on Jesus' signs leading to faith and life in him, contrasting with the Synoptics' broader focus on the Kingdom of God and Jesus' teachings.
- The "spiritual" nature of John is evident in its prologue connecting Jesus to creation, its use of metaphorical language (e.g., Nicodemus and being born again, destruction of the temple as Jesus' body, living water for the woman at the well), symbolism, and intentional double meanings.

5. Geography in John:

- The main geographical difference is Jesus' multiple journeys between Galilee and Jerusalem, contrasting with the Synoptics.
- John highlights various Jewish feasts that Jesus attends, implying a three-year ministry due to the mention of three Passovers.
- Dr. Turner provides a brief overview of the geographical layout of Israel (Galilee, Samaria, Judea, Jerusalem) and then presents an eastern-oriented map, emphasizing the Mediterranean Sea as the frontier.
- He points out key locations mentioned in John around the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River Valley, the Dead Sea, Nazareth, and Jerusalem.
- Specific sites in Jerusalem mentioned include the Pool of Bethesda, the Pool of Siloam, the Temple Mount, the Fortress Antonia, the traditional (though biblically inaccurate) location of the Upper Room on "Mount Zion," the Mount of Olives

(including Bethany on the other side), and the traditional location of the Garden of Gethsemane.

- He discusses the traditional sites of Jesus' crucifixion and burial, contrasting Gordon's Calvary/Garden Tomb with the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, noting the latter's stronger historical tradition.
- The Via Dolorosa is mentioned, with a discussion of its traditional route from the Fortress Antonia, which may not align with the more likely location of Jesus' trial before Pilate in Herod's Palace near the Jaffa Gate.

6. Textual Matters:

- The earliest New Testament manuscript fragment is Papyrus 52 (around 125 AD), containing a small portion of John 18:31-33 and 37-38. Dr. Turner shows both the recto (horizontal fibers) and verso (vertical fibers) sides, highlighting the fragmentary nature and the few Greek words preserved.
- Papyrus 66 (around 200 AD) contains a much larger portion of John, including the title and the beginning ("en arxe en o logos") as well as a passage from John 1:12. He points out the ancient practice of "nomina sacra," the abbreviation of sacred names (like "theou") using the first and last letters with a bar across the top.
- Codex Vaticanus (around 350 AD) is presented as an example of later, more elaborate manuscripts, showing the beginning and end of the Gospel of John.
- The discussion moves to the era of the printing press, with a look at the beginning of John's Gospel in the Gutenberg Bible (1455) in Latin ("in principio erat verbum").
- Dr. Turner addresses three notable textual variations in John:
- **John 1:18 (The One and Only):** The reading "son" (uios - υἱός) versus "God" (theos - θεός).
- External evidence shows both readings in ancient manuscripts, with older ones often favoring "God" and later minuscules favoring "son." The difference in Greek is a single letter (Upsilon vs. Theta).
- Internal evidence considerations include Johannine vocabulary ("monogenous" - one and only/only begotten, often with "son") and which reading better explains the origin of the other. Dr. Turner suggests "one and only God" might have been

considered unusual and intentionally changed to the more common "one and only son." Unintentional scribal errors are also a possibility.

- He emphasizes that both readings affirm a high view of Jesus.
- **John 5:2-4 (The Stirring of the Waters at Bethesda):** The inclusion of a passage describing an angel periodically stirring the pool, with the first person entering being healed.
- External evidence shows fewer, more ancient manuscripts omitting this longer reading, and more, but later, manuscripts including it.
- Internal evidence suggests the passage was likely intentionally added or removed due to its length. Dr. Turner questions its theological consistency with the character of God and the role of angels in Scripture, finding it potentially "cruel" if healing was limited to the first to enter. He suggests it might have originated as a marginal note reflecting popular superstition.
- **John 7:53-8:11 (The Woman Caught in Adultery):** The story of Jesus' interaction with a woman accused of adultery.
- External evidence strongly suggests this pericope was not originally part of John. It is absent in the most ancient manuscripts, appearing in later ones (including those used for the King James Version). It is also found inserted in other Gospels in some manuscripts, indicating it was a "floating scene." Some manuscripts that include it have marginal markings indicating a disputed reading.
- Internal evidence includes unique vocabulary not typical of John.
- Dr. Turner finds the pericope disrupts the narrative flow between John 7 and 8, creating abrupt shifts in the scene.
- However, he notes that the content of the pericope resonates with Jesus' character and teachings elsewhere (balancing justice and grace, merciful to sinners, challenging religious leaders).
- He concludes that while likely representing a genuine tradition about Jesus, it was probably not originally in John's Gospel but circulated separately before being added to later manuscripts.
- Dr. Turner suggests teaching the passage while acknowledging its uncertain place in John's original text, taking a more moderate approach than strict sola scriptura might dictate.

Conclusion:

Dr. Turner concludes the session, expressing hope that the introduction to the historical setting, geographical context, and textual issues of the Gospel of John will be beneficial for the audience. He announces the upcoming session on John chapter one.

4. Study Guide: Turner, John, Session 2, Introduction Part 2, Historical and Textual Matters

Study Guide: Introduction to the Gospel of John - Historical and Textual Matters

Key Concepts

- **Authorship of John:** Understanding the internal and external evidence related to who wrote the Gospel of John.
- **Internal Evidence:** Clues within the Gospel of John itself that suggest the author's identity (e.g., eyewitness accounts, reference to the "beloved disciple").
- **External Evidence:** Information from early church fathers and historical writings that discuss the authorship and origins of John's Gospel.
- **John the Disciple vs. John the Elder:** The debate surrounding Papias' reference to these two figures and their potential connection to the Gospel.
- **Intended Audience of John:** Examining theories about whether John was written for a specific community (e.g., Jewish Christians in Ephesus) or a wider audience of all Christians.
- **Redaction Criticism:** A method of gospel study that emphasizes how authors edited their sources to meet the needs of their communities.
- **Relationship between John and the Synoptic Gospels:** Analyzing the similarities and differences in content, historical interest, geography, structure, and theological emphases.
- **Common Content:** Identifying the events and teachings shared between John and the Synoptic Gospels.
- **Unique Content:** Recognizing the material found primarily or exclusively in the Gospel of John.
- **The "Spiritual Gospel":** Exploring Clement of Alexandria's description of John and the reasons behind it (e.g., metaphorical language, symbolic use).
- **Geographical Differences:** Comparing the presentation of Jesus' movements between Galilee and Jerusalem in John versus the Synoptics.
- **Jewish Feasts in John:** Understanding how the mention of these feasts contributes to the understanding of Jesus' ministry length.

- **Textual Criticism:** The discipline of studying and comparing ancient manuscripts to determine the most likely original wording of the biblical text.
- **Manuscript Evidence:** Examining key early papyri (e.g., P52, P66) and codices (e.g., Vaticanus) of the Gospel of John.
- **Nomina Sacra:** The ancient practice of abbreviating sacred names in manuscripts.
- **Textual Variants:** Specific instances where different ancient manuscripts of John have different words or phrases.
- **John 1:18 (theos/huios):** The textual variant concerning whether Jesus is described as the "one and only God" or the "one and only Son."
- **John 5:3b-4 (stirring of the waters):** The longer reading describing an angel stirring the Pool of Bethesda and its textual authenticity.
- **John 7:53-8:11 (pericope adulterae):** The story of the woman caught in adultery and its disputed place in the Gospel of John.
- **External and Internal Evidence in Textual Criticism:** How manuscript tradition and the content/style of the text inform decisions about textual variants.

Quiz

1. Describe the two main categories of evidence used to determine the authorship of the Gospel of John, providing an example of each.
2. Explain the significance of Papias' writings in the discussion about the authorship of John, and what exegetical challenge arises from his statements.
3. Summarize the contrasting views of J. Lewis Martin and Richard Bauckham regarding the intended audience of the Gospel of John.
4. According to the lecture, what is the approximate percentage of material in John that overlaps with the Synoptic Gospels, and provide two examples of this shared content?
5. Explain Clement of Alexandria's characterization of John as the "spiritual gospel" and give one example from the text that might support this description.
6. What is a key difference in the geographical presentation of Jesus' ministry between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels?

7. How does the Gospel of John provide an indication that Jesus' public ministry lasted approximately three years?
8. What is Papyrus P52, and what significance does it hold for the dating of the Gospel of John?
9. Briefly explain the textual variant in John 1:18, outlining the two main readings and the primary point of contention.
10. Summarize the main reasons why many scholars doubt the authenticity of the passage John 7:53-8:11 as originally part of John's Gospel.

Answer Key

1. The two main categories of evidence for authorship are **internal evidence**, which comes from within the Gospel itself (e.g., the author being an eyewitness and referring to the "beloved disciple"), and **external evidence**, which comes from early church writers who discussed John's authorship (e.g., Irenaeus attributing the Gospel to John).
2. Papias' writings, as cited by Eusebius, link John to Ephesus and its authorship. The challenge arises from his reference to both "John the disciple" and "John the Elder," leading to debate about whether these were two distinct individuals or the same person using different titles.
3. J. Lewis Martin theorized that John was written for Jewish Christians facing exclusion from synagogues due to their belief in Jesus. In contrast, Richard Bauckham argued that all four Gospels were written for all Christians, with the differences stemming from the individual authors' emphases rather than specific community needs.
4. Approximately **10%** of the material in John overlaps with the Synoptics. Examples of shared content include the testimony of John the Baptist to Jesus and the event of Jesus feeding the multitude.
5. Clement of Alexandria called John the "spiritual gospel" due to its use of **metaphorical language, symbols, and intentional double meanings**. For example, Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus about being "born of water and the Spirit" utilizes symbolic language that requires deeper understanding.
6. A key geographical difference is that in **John, Jesus travels back and forth multiple times between Galilee and Jerusalem throughout his ministry**, whereas

the Synoptics primarily depict a ministry in Galilee leading to a final trip to Jerusalem.

7. The Gospel of John indicates a roughly three-year ministry for Jesus by mentioning his attendance at **three different Passover feasts** (John 2:13, 6:4, 12:1).
8. Papyrus P52 is the **earliest known fragment of the New Testament**, containing a portion of John 18:31-33 and dated to around 125 AD. Its existence confirms that the Gospel of John was written and circulating decades before this date.
9. The textual variant in John 1:18 involves the description of Jesus as the "one and only **Son**" (huios) or the "one and only **God**" (theos). The main point of contention is determining which reading is original based on manuscript evidence (older manuscripts favor "God," while later ones favor "Son") and internal considerations of Johannine theology and scribal practices.
10. Many scholars doubt the authenticity of John 7:53-8:11 due to **its absence in the most ancient manuscripts (external evidence), the presence of unique vocabulary and stylistic differences compared to the rest of John (internal evidence), and the way it seems to disrupt the narrative flow between John 7 and John 8 (internal evidence)**. Its placement in various other manuscripts also suggests it was a separate tradition that was later inserted.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the arguments for and against the traditional Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel, considering both internal and external evidence presented in the source material.
2. Compare and contrast the views of a narrow, community-specific audience versus a broad, all-Christian audience for the Gospel of John. Discuss the implications of each view for interpreting the text.
3. Discuss the relationship between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels, focusing on both the common elements and the significant differences in their presentation of Jesus' ministry and message.
4. Evaluate the role and significance of textual criticism in understanding the original wording of the Gospel of John, using the examples of John 1:18 and John 5:3b-4 to illustrate your points.

5. Examine the textual issues surrounding John 7:53-8:11. Analyze the external and internal evidence and discuss the implications of considering this passage as either original to John or a later addition to the manuscript tradition.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Authorship:** The identity of the person or people who wrote a particular text.
- **Beloved Disciple:** A figure prominent in the Gospel of John, traditionally identified with the Apostle John, but whose specific identity is debated.
- **Codex:** An ancient manuscript in book form, made of bound pages, as opposed to a scroll.
- **Diaspora:** The dispersion of Jews beyond Israel.
- **Ephesus:** An ancient Greek city in present-day Turkey, where early church tradition places the Apostle John's later ministry.
- **Exegesis:** The critical interpretation and explanation of a text, especially of scripture.
- **External Evidence:** Information about a text that comes from outside the text itself, such as historical records and the testimony of early writers.
- **Internal Evidence:** Clues and information found within the text itself that can provide insights into its authorship, audience, and purpose.
- **Johannine Community:** A hypothetical early Christian community associated with the Apostle John and believed by some scholars to have influenced the writing and reception of the Gospel of John and related writings.
- **Manuscript:** A handwritten document, especially an ancient one.
- **Minuscule:** A style of Greek handwriting that developed in the 9th century AD and was used for the majority of surviving New Testament manuscripts.
- **Nomina Sacra:** (Latin for "sacred names") The practice in early Christian manuscripts of abbreviating certain frequently used sacred names (e.g., God, Jesus, Christ, Spirit) by using the first and last letters with a horizontal bar over them.

- **Papyrus:** A material made from the pith of papyrus plants, used in ancient times as a writing surface.
- **Pericope:** A self-contained passage or section of a text, often used in biblical studies to refer to specific stories or teachings.
- **Redaction Criticism:** A method of biblical study that analyzes how the writers of the Gospels edited and shaped their source materials to convey particular theological and literary aims to their intended audiences.
- **Scribal Error:** Mistakes made by individuals copying manuscripts by hand, which can lead to variations in the text.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which share a significant amount of common material and present a similar overall view of Jesus' life and ministry.
- **Textual Criticism:** The scholarly discipline that aims to reconstruct the original wording of ancient texts by comparing and analyzing different manuscript versions.
- **Textual Variant:** A difference in wording or phrasing between different manuscripts of the same text.
- **Triclinium:** A formal dining room in ancient Roman and Greek houses, featuring three couches arranged around a low table.
- **Terminus ad quem:** (Latin for "the end point to which") The latest possible date by which something must have existed or occurred.

5. FAQs on Turner, John, Session 2, Introduction Part 2, Historical and Textual Matters, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Gospel of John

1. What kind of introductory information does this session on the Gospel of John cover?

This session serves as the second part of an introduction to the Gospel of John, focusing primarily on historical and textual matters. It delves into questions surrounding the authorship of the Gospel, the historical setting in which it was written, the intended audience, its relationship to the Synoptic Gospels, key geographical aspects, and how the text has been transmitted to us through manuscript evidence and textual criticism. It builds upon a previous session that covered theological and literary aspects.

2. What is the evidence, both internal and external, regarding the authorship of the Gospel of John?

External evidence, dating as early as the 2nd century, from figures like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Papias (as cited by Eusebius), consistently points to John and the city of Ephesus in Western Asia Minor. Papias' mention of "John the Elder" introduces some complexity, with debate over whether this refers to the Apostle John or another individual. Internal evidence within the Gospel suggests the author was an eyewitness ("we beheld his glory"), a close personal associate of Jesus identified as the "beloved disciple," who reclined near Jesus at the Last Supper. While the author doesn't explicitly name himself, the Gospel concludes with a reference to the beloved disciple whose testimony is affirmed as true, implying a qualified anonymity tied to this figure, traditionally understood to be John, one of the Twelve.

3. For whom was the Gospel of John likely written, and what are the differing scholarly views on this?

There's ongoing debate about the intended audience. Early traditions suggest the Gospel was written for the church in the region of Ephesus. Some scholars, like J. Lewis Martin, proposed a narrower audience of Jewish Christians facing persecution and exclusion from synagogues for their faith in Jesus. These scholars point to texts referencing being thrown out of synagogues. However, Richard Bauckham argues for a wider audience, contending that all four Gospels were written for all Christians across the Roman Empire. He suggests the differences between the Gospels stem from the individual authors' emphases and their understanding of what the broader church

needed, rather than being solely dictated by specific community needs. Regardless of the specific primary audience, the Gospel clearly contains many Jewish features and alludes extensively to the Old Testament.

4. How does the Gospel of John relate to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) in terms of content, geography, and purpose?

The Gospel of John shares some common ground with the Synoptics, particularly regarding the public ministry of Jesus in Galilee, his passion in Jerusalem, and the resurrection. However, John presents Jesus' movements between Galilee and Jerusalem quite differently, depicting multiple trips early in his ministry, unlike the Synoptics which largely focus on a Galilean ministry culminating in a final journey to Jerusalem. Notably, John places the temple cleansing incident at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, while the Synoptics place it near the end. Despite these differences, Clement of Alexandria noted that John, aware of the "outward facts" presented in the Synoptics, composed a more "spiritual" (or somatic/pneumatic) Gospel, focusing on signs to promote faith in Jesus as the source of life. Only about 10% of John's content overlaps with the Synoptics, but key events like the testimony of John the Baptist, the feeding of the multitude, the anointing at Bethany, the triumphal entry, the Passion, and the Resurrection are covered in all four Gospels. John seems to be more selective in the events he recounts, aiming to reveal Jesus' identity and inspire belief.

5. What are some key geographical differences and insights provided in the Gospel of John compared to the Synoptics?

A major difference is Jesus' repeated travel between Galilee and Jerusalem early in his ministry, contrasting with the Synoptics' more linear progression towards Jerusalem. John also highlights various Jewish feasts that Jesus attends in Jerusalem, which inadvertently suggests that Jesus' ministry spanned three years (due to the mention of three different Passovers). The session also provides a geographical overview of the Holy Land, emphasizing the relative proximity of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, and highlighting specific locations within Jerusalem mentioned in John, such as the Pool of Bethesda, the Pool of Siloam, the Temple Mount, the Mount of Olives, and the traditional (though debated) sites of the Last Supper, Gethsemane, and Jesus' crucifixion and burial. The discussion also touches on the historical plausibility of certain traditional locations within Jerusalem.

6. What are some of the earliest and most significant textual witnesses for the Gospel of John, and what do they tell us?

The earliest known manuscript fragment of the New Testament is Papyrus 52 (P52), dated around 125 AD, which contains a small portion of John chapter 18. While fragmentary, its existence demonstrates that the Gospel of John was circulating decades prior. Papyrus 66, dating to around 200 AD, provides a much more substantial portion of John's Gospel, including the title and the beginning of chapter 1. Codex Vaticanus, from the mid-4th century, is another important early manuscript containing a complete Gospel of John with more ornate script. These early manuscripts, along with later ones, form the basis for understanding the textual history of the Gospel. The practice of using "nomina sacra" (abbreviated forms of sacred names with a bar across the top) is also evident in early manuscripts like Papyrus 66.

7. What are some notable textual variations in the Gospel of John, and how do scholars approach them?

Three significant textual variations are discussed: * **John 1:18**: The reading of either "one and only Son" or "one and only God." Early, more ancient manuscripts tend to support "God," while later, more numerous minuscules often read "Son." Textual critics consider both external evidence (manuscript tradition) and internal evidence (what John was likely to write and which reading best explains the other). The reading "one and only God" is seen by some as the more difficult reading, potentially explaining why scribes might have changed it to the more common Johannine expression "one and only Son." * **John 5:3b-4**: The addition describing an angel stirring the waters at the Pool of Bethesda and the first person entering being healed. While some later manuscripts include this longer reading, earlier and more ancient manuscripts omit it. Scholars often favor the more ancient testimony. Internally, the description of angelic intervention in this manner raises theological questions about God's character and methods. The longer reading is considered likely to be an intentional addition, perhaps a popular explanation for the perceived healing properties of the pool. * **John 7:53-8:11 (The Pericope Adulterae)**: The story of the woman caught in adultery. This passage is absent from the most ancient and reliable manuscripts of John, and some manuscripts that do include it place it in different Gospels (John or Luke). Additionally, the vocabulary and style differ somewhat from the rest of John. Internally, the pericope seems to disrupt the flow of the surrounding narrative in John 7 and 8. While most scholars doubt its original inclusion in John, the story itself is often seen as consistent with Jesus' character and teachings found elsewhere, suggesting it may represent a genuine tradition about Jesus that was later inserted into the manuscript tradition.

Scholars utilize textual criticism, considering both the age and quality of manuscript evidence (external evidence) and factors within the text itself, such as style, vocabulary, narrative flow, and theological consistency (internal evidence), to determine the most likely original reading.

8. Given the textual variations, how should one approach teaching or understanding potentially non-original passages like the story of the adulterous woman?

While the story of the adulterous woman (John 7:53-8:11) is likely not original to the Gospel of John based on significant external and internal evidence, its content strongly resonates with the character and teachings of Jesus as portrayed elsewhere in Scripture, emphasizing both justice and grace. Therefore, a moderate approach to teaching this passage might involve acknowledging its uncertain place in the original text of John while still recognizing its potential value in illustrating Jesus' interactions and theological themes. It can be presented as a tradition about Jesus that circulated in the early church and eventually found its way into some later manuscripts of John, allowing for a nuanced understanding that respects both textual scholarship and the potential for spiritual insight within the passage.