

APPENDIX

Summary of the Life of the John the Apostle

Galilean Period (12-33 CE, age 0-21):

12 CE: John was born in Bethsaida, youngest son of Salome and Zebedee, younger brother of James. Zebedee was a successful fisherman, who owned boats and had a fishing license from the government of Herod Philip. His partners were Simon Peter and Andrew from Bethsaida and he also had employees. Philip was a Greek-speaking friend and neighbour. As an employer and boat-owner, Zebedee probably had a significant role in the community: he could have been an elder on the local synagogue council. The task of marketing the fish from his boats would have brought him, and his sons, into frequent contact with people at the regional fish-processing centre at Magdala (Tarichaea in Greek) and with the wider world of Jerusalem and even Damascus.

29 CE: John, Philip, Simon Peter and Andrew became followers of John the Baptist.

30 CE: Jesus of Nazareth called John to be one of his twelve apostles, and included him in an inner circle of three intimate companions, along with Simon Peter and James, John's elder brother. They accompanied Jesus in his ministry from beginning to end (around 3 years).

33 CE: Passion, death and Resurrection of Jesus.

Jerusalem Period (33-63 CE, age 21-51):

33 CE: John moved to Jerusalem, where he established a home for his mother and brother James, and also for the mother of Jesus, and probably for Jesus' brothers too. This would have become the first house-church in Jerusalem, where some of the post-Resurrection

appearances of Jesus took place and also the first Pentecost. It is thought to have been located adjacent to the Essene Quarter on what is today called Mt Zion.

33-42 CE: Following Pentecost, John accompanied Simon Peter on evangelizing missions in Jerusalem, Samaria, and in the coastal cities. He was one of the ruling council of 'apostles and elders' in the Jerusalem church, mentioned in Acts. It was during this time that he may have received a comprehensive scribal education from an Essene scribe who had joined the Christian community.

42 CE: John's brother James was martyred by King Herod Agrippa "to please the Jews" and a new persecution broke out against the believers, including Simon Peter. James, the brother of the Lord, became the official leader of the Mother Church in Jerusalem.

47 CE: Bringing famine relief from the diaspora, Paul visits Jerusalem, where he finds Peter, James and John and refers to them as 'the pillars'. The famine relief was handed over to the 'elders'.

49 CE: John was surely present among the 'elders and apostles' when Paul and Barnabas came to seek a decision about the Gentile converts at the Jerusalem Council. Later, John implicitly relies on the recommendations of this Council in his letters to the seven churches in Asia.

57 CE: John was probably present with 'James and all the elders' when Paul and Luke visited Jerusalem with more gifts from the churches in the diaspora.

62 CE: James, the official head of the Church, was martyred on the orders of the high priest, Annas II. Josephus also reports the start of the extraordinary mission a simple prophet called Jeshua son of Ananias, who, over a seven-year period until his death, unrelentingly prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and her temple.

Ephesus Period (63-98 CE, age 51-86):

63 CE: John migrated to Asia Minor, via Caesarea Maritima, perhaps at the same time as Justus Barsabbas, Aristion, Philip and his daughters. He settled in Ephesus, where he became the leader of the church established there by Paul about 12 years before. He regularly visited the many other churches in Asia Minor, exhorting and correcting the

communities, instructing and appointing leaders. Due to his age and dignity, his previous role in the ruling council of elders, and due to Paul's identification as "the Apostle", John was known as "the Elder".

70 CE: Following the destruction of Jerusalem and her temple, many Jewish refugees from Judaea settled in Asia Minor, some of whom would have become Jewish Christians owing to John's preaching.

81 CE: Emperor Domitian came to power and acted to strengthen the pagan character of his reign by asserting his own divinity, reviving attendance at pagan rituals and building new temples. He financed this by applying Vespasian's temple tax on the Jews 'with utmost rigour', including children, women and old men, even hunting down those who had not paid before, such as non-observant Jews and gentile proselytes who lived secretly as Jews. These measures would include Christians of Jewish and gentile origin, whom the Romans did not yet distinguish from Jews. Payment of this tax allowed Christians to practice their religion legally as a branch of Judaism, exempt from any obligation to participate in pagan rituals. Towards the end of the decade, John established a scribal centre in Ephesus for copying manuscripts, in order to provide Gospel and Pauline texts for the rapid expansion of the Christian churches in Asia Minor at this time. This is the renowned "Johannine school".

90-95 CE: (1) Jews started to strengthen their identity under Rabbi Gamaliel II, head of the ruling council in Jamnia, denying that Jesus is their messiah. The Jewish Scriptures were defined, sectarian books were prohibited, new Greek and Aramaic translations were commissioned, and the *Birkat haMinim* petition of the thrice daily prayer (the *Amidah*) was pronounced in the synagogues. This initiated a crisis of loyalty among Jewish Christians: they now had to choose between the Synagogue and the Church. Many abandoned the Church and returned to the Synagogue (Pliny the Younger later refers to an exodus of Christians 20 years before the year 110). They were also drawn back by a revival of hope in national restoration, including the rebuilding of Jerusalem and her temple. It marked the beginning of the 'parting of the ways'.

90-95 CE: (2) The clarification of the boundaries of the Jewish community (probably involving registration of members) also caused trouble for Christians of Gentile origin, who could not now claim to be

a branch of Judaism and therefore lost their protection as a 'legal religion' under Roman Law. This gave the Jews a new power over the Christians: they could report them to the Roman administration for 'claiming to be Jews but they are not'. The Christians would then be charged as members of an 'illegal association' and be compelled either to participate in pagan rituals (especially the so-called 'imperial cult') or face the death penalty. As a result, various kinds of accommodation between Christians and pagans arose, claiming to be 'apostolic' teachings, that allowed participation in pagan rituals, no doubt based on a development of Paul's teaching of 'freedom from the law' (e.g. the 'false-apostles of the Nicolaitan sect). In this period, John wrote his second and third Letters (2John and 3John), showing his concern for right doctrine and for missionary activity in the face of strong challenges. Judging from the size and format of these two letters, it is highly likely they were written in ink on small sheets of papyrus, paving the way for the development of the papyrus codex, by the "Johannine school", around the years 95-96 CE.

95 CE: Outbreak of severe local persecution against those who were not observing pagan customs and rituals (unless they were registered as Jews and paying the temple tax) by an increasingly tyrannical Emperor Domitian, who even banished his niece Domitilla and killed her husband Clemens (his cousin and a Roman Consul), their children (his heirs) and several senators for abandoning pagan customs and 'falling into Jewish ways', by which he likely meant sympathy with the Jews and/or Christian conversion. This same year, John was reported to the Roman authorities on an unknown charge, but most probably motivated by his success in bringing pagans to Christ. As a circumcised Jew, he was obliged to pay the temple tax to the Romans, but could not be forced to observe pagan rituals or be charged with membership of an 'illegal association'. The only charge they could have brought against him was 'causing a disturbance of the peace by his preaching'. The Provincial Governor was told that he was the 'high priest' of their branch of Judaism and it was accepted. Because of his high status, he avoided the death penalty and with written authorization from the Emperor he was punished with exile on the Isle of Patmos. A century later, he was remembered as the 'one who wore the *petalon*' (an engraved gold insignia worn on the high priest's head-dress).

95-96 CE: John saw and wrote the Revelation while in exile on Patmos. The letters to the seven churches in Asia exactly describe the triple hardship endured by the early Christian communities in Asia at this time: the death penalty from the Romans for refusal to participate in pagan rituals ('atheism' or 'impiety' to the Romans), the strong temptation to compromise with the pagans and the imperial cult and the insulting provocation from the Jews who would report Christians to the Roman authorities and see them punished as members of an 'illegal association'.

Autumn 96 CE: The Emperor Domitian was assassinated in Rome. The elderly Senator Nerva became Emperor and immediately cancelled Domitian's decrees and 'abolished the abuses of the temple tax', most probably in response to Gamaliel II's visit to Rome in 95 CE. John was released from his exile on Patmos and returned to Ephesus, where he resumed leadership of the Church. He was presented with a copy of the three Gospels and 'welcomed' it, arguably because it had been produced in the newly invented papyrus codex format. He also testified to the truth of the three Gospels, but when he complained that they were not complete, he was promptly exhorted to write his own Gospel.

97-98 CE: The Book of Revelation was copied at the scribal centre in Ephesus, bound in a small papyrus codex format and then circulated to the seven churches. John's Gospel was drafted and nearly completed.

98 CE: John died, aged 86, soon after the start of Trajan's reign (98 CE) and was buried in Ephesus. His Gospel was completed and distributed by his assistants at the scribal centre. Within a short time, it appeared as the Fourth Gospel in a papyrus codex with the other three Gospels or, alternatively, with John's three Letters and the Book of Revelation, in a separate Johannine corpus of writings. The Johannine writings were rapidly acknowledged and accepted as the work of the apostle John. The earliest papyrus fragment of the Fourth Gospel (p⁵²) was discovered in Egypt and has been dated to around 125 CE, only 25 years after the first copies.