**What You May NOT Know About the Real Jesus”: The Amazing Story by Yohhannan Ben-Zebedee**

Part 1

**Why Should We Trust This Gospel?**

**Introduction**

Yohhannan Ben-Zebedee was a friend of Jesus. They were very close; perhaps best friends. Yohhannan Ben-Zebedee wrote a special biography of his friend, Jesus, which was different from anything others had written, even other close friends. In the English language spoken today, Yohhannan Ben-Zebedee is known as “John the son of Zebedee”, a disciple of Jesus; and today we call his book about Jesus: “the Gospel of John”. This Gospel has been characterized as capable of allowing a child to wade in it or an elephant to swim in it. Another image for illustrating the Book is: It is like artwork that has appeal to a child or an art critic. People at the extremes of theological scholarship and lay simplicity undoubtedly have found it equally inspirational and instructive. On a narrative level the Gospel of John the Evangelist describes the events and statements, which he believes will help readers understand and feel committed to the Person and Ministry of Jesus. Additionally however, he uses a theological framework and juxtaposition of the stories that add deeper, spiritual dimension to the narrative.

Unfortunately criticism of the Book by certain Bible scholars, which deny that it is a record of actual, historical events, have threatened to strip the Gospel of its authenticity and therefore its due revered status in the Church of God. Even if you are not aware of their comments it is good to know that the Christian faith has faced challenges from within it’s own ranks, which may be considered damaging.

But are these scholars right? How can average readers of the Gospel of John be sure the Gospel is not, as the critics claim, a composition by someone or a group other than John the disciple whom Jesus loved? What about the view that John wrote something he put together himself, and not a biography as such. Now if John did not write the Gospel, what can one make of its story as a documented record of actual history? These scholars had impressive resources from their knowledge and other documents. What chances do people like us with none of this academic power have of proving whether or not these biblical scholars are correct? Is there any way the ordinary reader can tell whether the Gospel, as we have it, is true so we can rely on what we read about Jesus? It turns out there is! Therefore it is of paramount importance to settle the matter of what clues or evidence inside the Book itself tells us whether or not we can accept it as a reliable record of historical events. Come along first on an educational exploration of the eye-opening themes, which shed light on the authenticity of the book, followed by those that reveal what the book says about The Real Jesus.

**A Detailed Look into the Historical Authenticity of the Gospel**

*Evidence from outside the Gospel*

First, let’s examine whether the Gospel of John is an actual historical record or just spiritualized fiction. On this point some theological scholars have described the fourth Book in the New Testament (NT) as “charismatic history”, “creative reinterpretation” or in more euphemistic terms as a reformulated version of the original historical version. Such descriptions cast outright doubt on the historical authenticity of the Gospel. To begin with, the content of the three preceding Books in the NT is very similar, which is why they are called “synoptic Gospels”. That is, the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, theological history like John’s, describe the events in Jesus’ life using much the same content and narrative structure. The Gospel of John however, is quite different in both content and style. Does this difference mean that Gospel is unreliable?

Clearly, from this unique Gospel more than from the synoptic Gospels, we get a captivating picture of how strong is the love and need God feels for us, to take the step of sacrificing His Son to bring about reconciliation with us. More powerfully than do the other Gospel writers, John the Evangelist provides posterity with an understanding of the significance of the Salvation Plan to God Himself. Accordingly then the details in the telling of such a Story deserve a place of historical confidence within the Christian faith. The storyteller has to be believed intellectually and emotionally.

A question that the critical explanations beg in opposing John’s Gospel as containing historical facts is: Why was it necessary for John to do this – to leave the path of the historical facts of the life of Jesus he knew intimately in order to tell a story made up of non-facts or of a fabrication? Moreover, why would he do so, also knowing other followers of Jesus were closely privy to the same facts? St Matthew who wrote the Gospel, which is first on the list of Gospels was the disciple also known as Levi who left his job at the tax collection booth when Jesus called him. The other two synoptic writers were also disciples though not among the twelve disciples (the Twelve) that Jesus specially chose. Other members of the Twelve, Peter and James, wrote three Books in the New Testament and along with John were Jesus’ inner circle. Besides these was Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, who wrote a whopping thirteen of the twenty-seven Books of the New Testament, which contain a vast amount of information about Jesus was a convert from Judaism to Christianity. And then there was Jude or Judas believed to be the youngest brother of Jesus, who wrote the NT book by his name. It just is not reasonable to believe, despite the knowledge of these witnesses (at least some of whom would read John’s Gospel) and the mountain of factual information they had published, that John the Evangelist would take it upon himself to invent the content of his own narrative about the same Jesus.

And if John “the disciple whom Jesus loved” did not write this Gospel why would it have been necessary for that imagined author to build a fantasy, anyway? Is the message in such a point of view that the actual Life of Jesus did not have enough detail, depth or believability by Itself? Why would the Christian Church accept a non-historical account in light of the historical accounts of Jesus’ Life and Ministry referred to in the previous paragraph? Pressing forward looking for a justifiable reason for believing John or the Church of his day wrote a fake biography of Jesus, making the Gospel more acceptable to readers, could not be one.

It is not reasonable to believe that the Gospel of John the Evangelist as it stands is not a true record because it is different from the other three. Since John and the synoptic writers did not go around with Jesus, holding their various recording devices it is natural that they would remember things differently. Moreover John had a special purpose for writing. Evidently these truths do not permit the view that this Gospel in particular is constructed or re-constructed “elaborations” by John to be explained as John preaching a sermon on the actual statements of Jesus, as has also been suggested. Preaching on a text never grants a license to attach an invented history to the text!

The New Testament books were written many years after the death of Jesus, with John’s Gospel believed to be about ninety years since Christ lived on earth. The Gospel writers would have strung together actual words and actions of Jesus in the most likely context in which they severally remembered them occurring. This however is to be expected of a recounting of information from any source; but it is a far cry from deliberately rewriting the facts differently from the way they were known to have happened.

Besides, the whole Bible being a theological rather than secular history of God’s Love relationship with His creation, Holy Spirit guided the various biblical writers to present their message within that framework. With this consistently maintained theme (3:16) and his specific focus (20:30-31) the Evangelist may have juxtaposed events and teachings in the Life of Christ for theological reasons, which probably as a result, has made his account seem unhistorical to some. So if we must, we may accuse him of structuring (for the purpose organization) but not of contriving his account. Furthermore, it is to be considered that very likely John wrote this Gospel after he participated in the vision on the island of Patmos described in the Book of Revelation, which he also wrote. As at least one commentator has suggested, that mystic experience would account for the book’s distinctive emphasis on the divinity of Christ and its marked spiritual flavor.

 It probably also needs to be conceded that whenever a Gospel writer, including John, introduces a question or statement from “the people” or “the crowd” (and in John’s case when he is not referring to “the Jews”, a special group of Jesus’ opponents who as such had a united message) we may conclude that the writer is extrapolating from typical comments people around Jesus made or is interpreting common sentiments about public reaction to Jesus’ statements and actions. The concession here is that such reports cannot be seen as necessarily verbatim from an amorphous crowd and to that extent the writer may be said to have “constructed” these crowd comments. Consequently it is probably permissible to see these comments (without the benefit of the details) attributed to a group as John’s attempt at moving the story along by summarizing the main sentiments expressed among members of the crowds Jesus addressed.

Indeed John’s Gospel needs to be accorded a rightful status of historical authenticity; and Christians deserve to be able to claim a trustworthy document of their Savior’s life in which they can have pride and rely on as a transcript of facts. It is fundamentally important to the faith of Christians that their beloved Lord Jesus Whose Life-Story John the Evangelist told is unquestionably the Son of God Who did turn water into wine; the One Who really brought back to life a man dead for four days who eyewitnesses said would be rotting by then; the same Jesus Who actually fed at least five thousand people, though probably more like eight thousand, out of fives loaves of bread and two fish; and Who gave sight to a man born blind. It is the truth of these accounts that will make us understand and believe Paul when he talks about “*… even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*” (Romans 4:17) In other words: “… that same God Who gives life to the dead and capable of calling non-existent things into being”.

That’s the kind of God John tells us Jesus is. Therefore a lot in our Christian faith hangs on the Gospel of John being a historical presentation of Jesus’ Life.

The way we understand the meaning of the term “historical” in this day and age cannot always be applied to biblical narratives from the point of view of a blow-by-blow, real time description of past events. Far from that, the Bible is a compendium of actual words and actions of God that definitely occurred at some point in or before the lifetime of the human writers but meant to depict His Nature of Love and His ultimate intention in creating human beings and his world – that is, to have His own to love and they to love Him in return by choice. It is a document portraying a spiritually inspired and faith-based perspective of the history of this relationship. So then what is “historical” about it? Is it the content of the faith story? In other words was there an event that inspired a common faith as portrayed in the narrative? Is it the sequence of the actual occurrence of the events in that portrayal or both (recognizing the limitations on our knowing today what constitutes a “blow-by-blow” record in ancient Middle Eastern mentality and reporting)? The point is then to decide to which of the Bible’s accounts to apply the description “made up” and therefore “unapproved” as opposed to “historical” and therefore “acceptable”.

Authoritative, theological, church leaders guided by Holy Spirit made the decision to accept the whole Book of Books, each “as is”. Although written over a period of about 1500 years, with an interval of 400 years between the last Old and first New Testament Books, by a variety of authors from different strata of society, the endorsed Bible, or canon of Scripture presents an integrated unity with every word God-breathed and intended to determine, inform and nurture a Christian’s faith.

Chief among these theologians are: The First Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 and the First Council of Constantinople (both in Turkey), which in A.D. 381 decided which books met the criteria to be included in the canon. The Synod of Hippo, comprising a council of bishops listed and approved a Christian Biblical canon in 393 CE. This canon was later approved at the Council of Carthage (397); both meetings were in northern Africa. Upon final agreement on the Books of the Bible St. Jerome published the first formalized edition of the Bible in Latin (The Vulgate) around A.D. 400 with 39 books of the Hebrew Old Testament and the 27 books of the Greek New Testament. God breathed life into (inspired) the original versions of the Books of the Bible and nothing in the compiled Bible is untrue or misleading.

The Books of the Bible are all different; and among the Gospels John’s is distinctively so. It must not be missed that John very likely wrote this Gospel in his old age, many decades after the death of Christ. As such some of the issues of his day were not a part of the lives of the writers of the Synoptic Gospels. Clearly St John the Evangelist had a theological purpose for writing this Gospel. He tells us that his work is a selected collection of events and statements put together to convince readers “… *that Jesus is the Messiah* (or Savior), *the Son of God*”, a conviction that will lead to Eternal Life with God (20:30-31). So then we are to expect an orderly biographical account of the life Jesus only in so far as such details align with the stated purpose of the Gospel writer. In that regard these verses in chapter 20 are also important because they provide a basis to explain at least some of the ways in which this Gospels differs from the others and therefore may also assist in adjudicating the Gospel’s historical reliability.

Indeed it is not easy to understand why it is believed a fulltime eyewitness who had a close relationship with Jesus and was present in almost all of the events in the Lord’s ministry would choose not to tell the most amazing, mystery-laden story for which he was blessed by God to be a specially-picked witness and messenger; but rather chose to “retell” it (that is not tell it like it actually happened but how he wanted it to look). Would it not have occurred to this very holy Spirit-bound Evangelist that the task he had undertaken was ordained by the Triune God and that it was not up to him to alter the story as he chose? Because such a lapse is unbelievable and unlikely it is easier to believe that spirituality rather than creativity was his driving force.

I wonder why it is not enough to believe that the Evangelist had more information about and from the Lord than the writers of the other three Gospels. After all, he could have learned more things stated in private being a member of the inner circle and the Lord’s favorite. In that case John’s information would also include the asides he heard because of being in close proximity with Jesus likely most of the time. As such all in all his special relationship with Christ and his probable Patmos experience would have provided him with a better or different insight about their Leader than the other Gospel writers had. After all he was not the disciple whom Jesus loved only in name! And does it mean anything that he stood by our Lord till His last breath, as he was the only disciple at the foot of the cross next to Jesus’ mother? If the foregone statements are true they are compelling reasons to accept the Gospel of John not only as spiritual and theological but logically, as also (to state it once more) definitely historical.

Are there issues in John’s account that are objectively suspicious, unlikely or untrue? Or were there problems about the ability of the accepted, largely factual makeup of the Synoptic Gospels that do not inspire faith, which the Evangelist was presumably trying to avoid by fabricating his own Gospel? A positive response is at best debatable whereas a negative one affirms the uniqueness of John’s Gospel. Finally in questioning or denying the historical reliability of the fourth Gospel – and in some cases of all four Gospels – do some scholars believe Christianity itself is man-made and has no historical truth? In other words is the belief that there was no actual mysterious occurrence of God becoming man in order to re-instate a broken relationship by sacrificing Himself for all wrongdoing that did or could ever again separate Him from His greatly loved creation.

If these skeptics are right, the Gospel Evangelists and John in particular have done a fantastic job of powerful propaganda for their Stories to have survived about 2000 years so far. And are all the historical references by non-theologians to the life and times of Jesus cleverly planted lies that have fooled the best historians till today? Not a single ecclesiastical theologian of those who participated in the several Synods and Councils (for example as referenced earlier) that put the Bible together has come forward to denounce any part of the Bible or in particular, the Gospel of St John. How could that be the case, if this Gospel is invented or just “make-work theology”?

If the Gospel is not factual we must dismiss John the Evangelist’s declaration in 1 John 1:1-4 – one of three Letters he wrote in addition to the fourth Gospel - unless there is evidence to the contrary. So let’s look at his assertion. He states:

*From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in - we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now the information we bring is that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we're telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of a common alliance with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is that you may fully share our joy.*

What do you make of John’s affirmation? On what grounds can it be said he is not speaking historical truth here? None that is obvious. If there are no convincing facts or reason why this statement is untrue it seems reasonable to draw a logical conclusion that he is also speaking historical truth when he wrote his Gospel that adds detail to this truth. And then here’s corroboration from Peter another of Jesus’ disciples who even adds detail that speaks convincingly to Jesus’ historicity, as follows:

*When we told you about the power and the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, we were not telling clever stories someone had made up. But with our own eyes we saw his true greatness. God, our great and wonderful Father, truly honored him by saying, "This is my own dear Son, and I am pleased with him." We were there with Jesus on the holy mountain and heard this voice speak from heaven* (2 Peter 1:16-18)*.*

 In a sense, these points may be seen as internal as against external support for the Gospel being a true report of the Life of Jesus.

*Evidence from inside the Gospel*

The story of the healing of the Herodian official’s son (John 4:43-54) is important for a few reasons including the following:

It happened in Galilee, where the people had recently acquired a newfound faith in the Lord partly from His turning water into wine in Cana. Now He performs the healing of a Roman official’s son. The message to heal the son goes out from Cana where his father made the request of Jesus, to Capernaum, sixteen and a half miles away where his son was dying. Here then, the Evangelist is reporting an equally spectacular miracle that gives ‘proof’ of Jesus’ divinity, though directly to only one person. One would expect that a contrived story to showcase an important but faked quality of an invented Jesus would be described as witnessed by many more people to give the story greater self-promotion and believability.

Before the healing Jesus offers a rebuke to the father for seeking “signs and wonders”. Since by then word would have spread through the servants who filled the jars and the disciples about the previous miracle in Cana, Jesus’ statement about lack of faith was probably aimed directly at the father and his circle mostly. Then why did Jesus indulge him by granting the healing? Could it be because he was a valuable witness who represented the royal house and a Gentile group? While it may sound frivolous the closest modern-day answer to why Jesus chooses a Herodian heathen to reveal His divinity is likely for strategic celebrity value. The Gospel would have a much greater chance of spreading among the upper Roman echelon when transmitted by an influential official. A creation by a Church or individual would want to make this contrived storyline easy to follow, as the validity of the composition would hinge on its clarity.

As it stands the story contains a message that shows faith always makes it possible for grace to be received. Because the father had faith to ask (though he was waiting for the other shoe to drop, so to speak, before showing complete faith), the son is healed. God’s benevolence (grace) was already launched anyway. Jesus’ salvation is for everyone who believes and is independent of group or other membership or how faith was kindled. The fact that the father was keen to find out when his son became well seems to indicate that he did indeed want to know if the healing came from Jesus. If so then his interest was not just in his son being healed but also in Jesus’ divinity. The scenario may go something like: “I wonder if this man is really the Jewish Messiah”; or “I doubt He is. I’ll go ask Him for healing anyway; if He is the so-called Messiah it will happen if not, then nothing is worse for my son”. Finding out the healing came from Jesus made him a believer. If he were already one there would have been no need for him to want evidence as to whether the healing came from Jesus. He would be sure! So he received the Grace of God before he became a Christian, since Jesus knew he would eventually believe.

The Evangelist shows that the Lord’s grace preceded the arrival of the man’s faith, which Jesus “helped” (hence His comment in vs. 48 implying that, at that point the official was only interested in seeing whether a miracle would happen to his son). So what we have in a few verses is a significant theological portrayal of a demonstration of divine largess and foreknowledge. Of course the eventual belief of the official is very important but does not appear to be the crux of the story. A more significant issue for John appears to be his presenting evidence of Jesus showing He is God in more ways than one. The point the Evangelist seems to be making here is: One way or another the Messianic identity of Jesus was being revealed and accepted; whether on the spot as at the wedding at Cana, among Galileans who at first were rejecting or by a government representative of a powerful foreign nation and his “household”. And this much evidence of Jesus’ divinity is clear after only the two miracles so far presented (vs.54). This message fits directly with the Evangelist’s declared intent in the Prologue and in 20:31, which provides evidence of its reliability.

The report John provides right after the story of the Messianic-filled miracle at Cana is that Jesus went with His family and disciples to spend some time together in Capernaum (2:13). This also presents Jesus as God-man (or Theanthropos). It is as if the Evangelist does not want his readers to miss the reality of the dual nature of the real Person behind the events of Jesus’ life. Another passage in John’s account of the life of Jesus that appears to relate to historicity is John 6:29-33. The request from the crowd, at this point, for a miraculous sign seems ironic in two ways. Firstly, the Evangelist’s purpose has been to show Jesus as the Christ by presenting a deliberate selection of “miraculous signs”; and yet, even after he already presented and reported on several examples of Jesus’ Messianic identity he adds this request to provide exactly that – a “miraculous sign“. Why then did John introduce that request now? A plausible explanation of this seeming lack of fit is perhaps, again, that the Evangelist is being true to the historical context of the events he is reporting. People did not necessarily behave in parallel with John’s narrative insight.

Secondly, Jesus was opposed to people whose need is not His teaching but something else (for example, entertainment or nourishment. 4:48, 6:26). This time however, He accepts the question favorably. He does so probably because in this case He could tell that the people were showing genuine readiness to accept His Message; and the Evangelist had to say it like it happened. If however, the account were a case of the Evangelist creatively framing a request by the people for Jesus to appear divine, why would he then report that an uproar followed Jesus’ statement of divinity? In other words would John contrive a story to show Jesus’ divinity and then proceed, with arguments he gives to the crowd, that Jesus could not possibly be divine. As a true record of facts such a reaction would be typical from people who knew of Jesus’ local background but not about His Ancestry.

Let’s examine the account of the man who was born blind and healed by Jesus, for clues about its reality (9:1-34). In this story the man sarcastically asks his interrogators: “Do you want to become His disciples too?” (9:27) That question showed not-so-veiled contempt for the line of questioning the religious leaders have used so far. The angry response of rejection from his questioners however, did not help his cause, either. Was this element “planted” in the story to support John’s purpose? Hardly. The leaders’ contemptuous response practically nullified any such argument that John “contrived” it to support his case that Jesus is the Son of God. What then would contriving this presentation that rejected Jesus’ divinity be intended to achieve? Only that it happened that way seems to make sense for reporting it – another checkmark for the historicity of the Gospel. Moreover, from the viewpoint of the entire account (the whole Chapter), the man’s statements and behavior fit in well and are effective, as a disciple of Christ.

Another detail of interest appears in the description of the Raising of Lazarus. Despite John’s well-constructed account of Jesus’ outstanding act of bringing Lazarus back to life he could not avoid acknowledging an irony in the air (11:37), as to how the same divine Jesus who gave sight to a man born blind could not have healed a dear friend and stopped his death. A storyteller intent on presenting Jesus as divine, such as John was, would likely not have considered to add this type of information if he was composing the narrative as he thought fit, to satisfy the goals of his “sermon” (as some would have people believe). It seems that a master biographer though he is, his spiritual integrity does not allow him to gloss over such an obvious issue that was not in keeping with his portrayal of Jesus’ divinity, unless he had no choice but to stick to the historical facts; and today that adds to the credibility of his Gospel. Since Jesus explained the instructional importance of His delay the reader understands the deliberateness in His action. Jesus’ unexpected Revelation of His identity as a Life-Giver however gives the account even greater credibility “as is”.

In 3:22-26 the Evangelist went from reporting an argument between John’s disciples and a Jew about purification in one verse, to a seemingly unrelated topic, about Jesus attracting followers. It is the same topic (ceremonial washing) that we expect the disciples to bring up with John the Baptist right at that point. The sudden change of topic to how popular Jesus is becoming is unexpected and appears to be out of place. If one goes with the view that John’s Gospel is not historical reporting but a fabricated presentation, what do we make of this story? Do we call it very sloppy “preaching”? Would a “very creative” writer not have put together a smoother transition? As a scene from real life however, it is conceivable that the Baptist’s disciples finished or interrupted the conversation with the Jew and turned their attention to another matter that was concerning to them, probably because at that point they had opportune access to their leader. With this analysis the juxtaposition of apparently unrelated content may be seen as the Evangelist in fact faithfully reporting an actual event in the manner it occurred. Therefore as a record of the actual events this somewhat jagged transition to a different topic is completely acceptable in the context of its real life sequence. This explanation then gives the incident significance as an indicator of the historical authenticity of the Gospel.

Here is another transition or juxtaposition argument in favor of John’s Gospel being authentic history. Two events (Feeding of the 5000 and Walking on Water) could be seen as lacking the deliberate compositional smoothness of a self-created sequence of events. With a deliberate plan of using only seven miracles or signs to support his evidence for Jesus’ divinity it does not seem sensible for John to put two of the seven so close together. An experienced writer with a purpose such as John’s would have strategically spaced the signs. Their placement is perfectly understandable however, if the progression John gives these events was being guided by how they actually happened. Accordingly this presentation format does not suggest intentionally making up or “re-telling” the Gospel story without its historical basis. Again, it makes sense if John was being historically accurate.

Basing the query of this Gospel’s historicity on its uniqueness is almost pointless considering that even contemporary accounts of contemporary events may differ simply from standpoint with no intention of willful reconstruction. We encounter this phenomenon quite frequently in many eyewitness reports of accidents, for example. In other circumstances in my own life I have listened to snippets of stories told by my siblings about our deceased parents that do not match my recollection; and I know there is no intention of fabricating. That’s just the way life is seen and gets told sometimes. Often reality depends on vantage point. The real consequential matter in the case of John’s Gospel is probably the theological intention behind the telling; and here John the Evangelist has shown he was close and perhaps closest to his dear Friend and Savior; he wanted posterity to know Jesus as unmistakably the Son of God, as clearly as possible. In his telling John definitely has succeeded in doing so! He did not need to fabricate any aspect. John tells us that his story of Jesus is guided by a theological purpose, which led him to pick and choose what to report.

An example of John choosing what to tell of the Story of Jesus is from his account of “The Last Supper”, which seems to have been given barely an honorable mention. Instead he reports about Jesus washing His disciples’ feet. What is it that makes this story that much more important to tell than about the supper itself? There may be much more than meets the eye here.

In John 13:1-17, Jesus shares a supper with His disciples “… before the feast of the Passover“. He prepares Himself and proceeds to wash His disciples’ feet. He teaches that His action is a deliberate lesson: but on what? The simple answer, “humility” seems too obvious for Jesus to tell Peter: “*You do not understand what I am doing right now but you will come to make sense of this at a later time*” (vs. 7). The reason for His action seems to be connected with the Evangelist’s comment that: “… *having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*” (vs.1). In other words with His washing of the disciples feel He was dramatizing the full extent of His love (vs. 1). Admittedly the signal event that marked Jesus’ Love for His own people in the world is His crucifixion. The feet washing however is still a remarkable example of the same truth of the extent of His Love displayed in a different context that Peter and the rest of the disciples were to understand, later. The context of this supremely incredible, loving act (referred to in vs. 1) is in the subtext, “*… and His own did not receive Him*” (1:11), as stated in the Prologue.

Now that which the disciples had yet to “understand” and “make sense of” was most likely that this act of washing their feet right before His death was a commentary on the motivating power of Jesus’ Love from the beginning to the end of His Life. John seems to be reporting that even at this dismal point Jesus was still focused on equipping with a profound lesson on humility those who would take the Message of His Love to the rest of the world. Indeed humility, obedience and love are cornerstones of the Salvation Mission. Jesus undertook It in obedience to His Father and as Paul explained (Philippians 2:6-8), He: “*Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*.”

The following is a paraphrase:

“*Who [Jesus] though He existed as God’s divine Image, which He came by naturally did not consider that status of equality with God as being something He was being robbed of [or needed to hang on to desperately]; instead He relinquished this divine Status and came as a human being, right down to His bodily figure. While in human form He chose to be humble (not allowing His divinity to block this characteristic), which enabled Him to be obedient to God’s(love-motivated) Plan, right up until His dying on the cross.*”

This passage probably captures the essence of the motivation that allowed Jesus to undertake and accomplish His Mission, which He intended to impart definitively on His disciples. The magnitude of the importance of this lesson to His disciples is based on His humility, obedience and love. By His washing their feet Jesus demonstrated these necessary qualities His disciples needed to learn in order to truly convey the Salvation Message to others. For the Evangelist this motive was likely reason enough to “hype up” this incident in the place of the well-known symbol of the Holy Eucharist about which all the other Gospel writers had recorded anyway. And John had introduced the significance of the Eucharist in a public discussion about Jesus as the Bread of Life (especially 6:52-59). Only someone who was present and therefore able to understand the nuance in Jesus’ Action on that night could have chosen to record the explanatory details of Jesus’ washing of their feet the way it happened. Someone or a group would have needed to legitimize this put-together account in place of the already familiar Synoptic account of the Last Supper. The record of this extremely profound lesson crowns all the arguments in favor of this Gospel being written by John, Jesus’ disciple, about the real Jesus.

I write this defense to contribute to the message that the fourth Gospel was written by the John the Evangelist, disciple of Jesus named Johhannan Ben Zebedee, whom Jesus loved; and is a true record of the actual words and actions of Jesus of Nazareth, our Lord and Savior.

I trust that this effort will add confidence to the faith some Christians already have and bridge the gap of faith others may need in order to believe in the reality of our Savior and of the author of His fourth Gospel.

John the Evangelist has played a central and crucial role in telling this historical and prophetic story of our Salvation from start to finish. He was specially commissioned and as such divinely equipped and strategically positioned for historical authenticity, given his long life, closeness to Jesus for factual accuracy and a deep spirituality to be entrusted with these truths of heaven. These credentials make John the Evangelist the only candidate suited to write this Gospel; and he could not have made anything up.

This Evangelist, whom Jesus loved, was a witness in the innermost circle of Jesus’ friends and was in a position to observe and be privy to many happenings in the life of Jesus. Jesus also directed him along with the rest of the twelve disciples: “*And you, too, must speak about me, because you have been with me from the very beginning*.” (15:27) Therefore a Story about Jesus by a person with such impressive credentials cannot be anything but reliable.

At this point it is reasonable to conclude that since the stories that make up the Fourth Gospel are historically reliable then the major characters in them also have historical reality. Therefore John’s reports are about a real-life Jesus, Who described a real God and Father of all and gave us Holy Spirit. This same Jesus went around with twelve disciples and clashed with actual Jewish religious leaders.

So then in the work of Yohhannan Ben Zebedee, this Evangelist has left us with an excellent and cherished legacy of love, faith and obedience direct from the Master Himself!