



# *Iohannes*

*"John"*



*In the city of Copenhagen, Denmark there lies a rather plain looking Lutheran Church, called "Vore Frue Kirke"; however, within it's walls lie some of the most beautiful sculptures of the Savior and His apostles. The famous statue called the "Kristus" lies at the head of the Church, while the apostles stand along the side walls. The above picture is Thornvaldsen's sculpture of the apostle known as "John the Beloved".*

# John the Beloved

The Book of the Revelation of John, which is typically called "**Revelations**", was written by John, the son of Zebedee, better known as John the Beloved, or the Revelator, at approximately 94 AD.

The author, John, is usually depicted as a young man, without beard. He is usually shown as the only one of the original twelve apostles that did not wear a beard. Of course, that fact cannot be verified at this time. In art, John is usually represented with an eagle by his side. Eagles represent power and immortality. Artists usually associate John with this symbol because of the gift of translation that was promised to him of the Savior during His ministry.

The recorded information about the author is limited to a few details. The first recorded information we have about the author is his call to apostleship by the Savior. After the Savior had been baptized by John the Baptist, he began his formal ministry. *"And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them (Matthew 4:21, see also Mark 1:19)".* Scholars believe that John was most probably from a wealthy, or at least well-to-do, fishing family. One support of this is that John's family apparently owned their own fishing operation in a partnership with Peter and Andrew. As the Lord called Peter, who is also called Simon, it is written, *"And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon (Luke 5:10-11)".* At any rate, when John and his brother James received their call from the Master, they, like Peter, dropped their nets and started their ministry with the Savior.

John eventually became part of the Savior's inner circle as a member of the twelve apostles. The Bible lists the original twelve apostles as follows; *"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him (Matthew 10:2-4)".* In Mark's accounting of the names of the twelve, he says this of John, *"And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder (Mark 3:17)".* Such a title was most likely given to James and John for their forthrightness and eagerness to serve and spread the gospel. As we will find, both James and John firmly grasped the gospel and seemed almost electrified in their desire to learn and serve; hence, they were nicknamed, **"The Sons of Thunder"**.

From the circle of the twelve apostles, an elite three were formed. They would later go on to form the presidency, or presiding authority of the church. John was included in this inner circle. First indications that his call was different from that of just apostleship might be found in the fact that the presidency accompanied Christ to what has been called the mount of transfiguration. *"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James,*

*and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light (Matthew 17:1-2)".* It was on that mount that they saw angels, and received endowments and knowledge from on high.

At the raising of a young damsel from the dead, Christ was very specific that only the presidency of his apostles accompanied him. *"And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James (Mark 5:37)".* The presidency was taught privately by the Savior. They were included in instruction that was not immediately made available to the twelve. On one occasion we read, *"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately (Mark 13:13)",* and they were then instructed privately concerning the signs surrounding the second coming of the Lord.

I get the feeling that John was a very humble, and dedicated follower of Christ. His humbleness and dedication made him submissive and teachable. During the first years of his service to the Master, John appeared to still be learning the principles surrounding the gospel of Christ. One example relates a brief accounting between the apostle John and the Master. *"And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me (Mark 9:38-39, see also Luke 9:54-56)".* Though John was still learning the doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ, John's testimony of the Savior was solid. His desire was to serve the Savior and to find an eternal place by His side. In his naiveness *".....James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John (Mark 10:35-41)".* What a beautiful desire, that if John could have had anything of the Savior, it would be to sit at his side through the eternity's. The question John asked was asked with the sincerity and innocence of a child. Oh, that we could all be like unto John, submissive, teachable, and desirous of following our Savior to the end.

As the end of the Savior's Life approached, he sent two of His dear companions to prepare what has become known as the last supper. It was the meal of the Passover, and the last meal that he would share with His apostles. *"And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat (Luke 22:8)".* During that dinner, the apostles were taught the ordinance of the sacrament, and most likely given special instructions that would assist them in fulfilling their callings after the Savior's death. During the course of the evening it is written that *"there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one*

*of his disciples, whom Jesus loved (John 13:23)".* Here again, we see the love that John had for his Master. Like a child that wants to be held by his father before the father leaves on a trip, John sat with his head on the Savior's chest. I can imagine the sadness that filled his heart as he tried to comprehend the events that were to follow.

As the days of the Savior's life progressed, the time for the atoning sacrifice that the Savior was to offer on behalf of mankind, was at hand. The Savior took His apostles *"and they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch (Mark 14:32-34)".* John was privileged to be present for the most important event that ever occurred on this planet. He witnessed an event that occurred in a small garden, void of the masses; yet, gave eternal life to man. John witnessed the Savior of the world bleed from every pore, and hang from the cross at Golgotha as he paid for the sins of this world.

Afterwards, the Savior was taken prisoner by a mob of disbelieving Jews, and an anxious group of apostles watched and waited to see what would come of their Master. John, who must have had influence in the hierarchy of the Jewish religion, was allowed to be present at the trial of the Savior, while Peter waited outside. As the trial proceeded it is written, *"Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter (John 18:14-16)".* Obviously, John possessed some social stature among the Jews. Some claim that this was a result of his family's money. Whatever the reason, we know that John was accepted by much of the Jewish community.

The Savior was eventually condemned to die a death of crucifixion. As He hung on the cross and looked down upon his sobbing mother *"and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home (John 19:26-27)".* This act by the Savior not only displayed His love for His mother, but His trust in John. Even in the agony of hanging on the cross, he had concern for his mother's welfare after His death. Knowing the caliber of man that John was, and his unwavering devotion to Him, He formally adopted John as His mother's Son.

After the death and burial of the Savior, Mary Magdalene came to visit the tomb of her friend only to find *"the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in (John 20:1-5)".* Knowing the love that John had for the Savior, and his faith the gospel, I can only imagine the adrenaline that rushed through His body as he ran

to the tomb of the Savior. What Joy he must have felt when he later felt the prints in the hands and feet of his resurrected Master.

After the Savior's return to heaven, the apostles were left to govern the affairs of the Lord's kingdom here on earth. John was involved in the governing of the kingdom as second counselor to the prophet and president, Peter. Not much is written of John's activities between the ascension of the Master and the Martyrdom of Peter in 64 AD. We can assume that he was involved in missionary work like Peter and Paul. We can also assume that he was involved in governing and counseling the members of the church to which he had stewardship.

As the great apostasy began to darken the world, the prophets and apostles were eliminated one by one. The population of the church diminished due to persecution, murder, and the preaching of all manner of false doctrine. It was at this point that many suppose John was the last remaining apostle. Many believe that he occupied the seat of president and prophet. There were but seven congregations of the church that remained on the earth in the 90's AD. The Roman empire sentenced John to a life time banishment on the isle of Patmos for his beliefs and conviction of the truthfulness of the gospel. Legend has it that Caesar attempted to kill John by placing him in a cauldron of boiling oil. Through the power of God he was unharmed. Caesar, thus being convinced that he could not kill John, banished him the prison isle of Patmos. It was from this isle that the prophet John lead the remains of the Lord's church. It was also from this isle that he received one of the greatest visions ever given to man. The teachings of which were recorded in letters that he sent unto the seven churches, and eventually became part of the Bible as the Book of the Revelation of Saint John the Divine.

The events that follow John's vision on the isle of Patmos are vague. It is suggested that the first, second, and third epistle of John were written several years after John's vision, as was the Gospel according to John. It is assumed that the church finally dwindled between 100 and 125 AD. We have no details as to what happened to the great apostle John. We know that the Savior had promised John that he could remain on earth, going about the Lord's work until the second coming of the Savior. The book of Revelation makes inference to the fact that John was translated on the isle of Patmos, making this promise a reality. What the apostle has been up to since that time we do not know. In the latter days, the prophet Joseph Smith said, "*that John the Revelator was then among the Ten Tribes of Israel who had been led away by Salmanasser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion (History of the Church, Joseph Smith, volume 1, page 176)*".

In closing, John the Revelator, the disciple that Jesus Loved, numbers with some of the greatest men that have ever been sent to this earth. His greatest desires were to serve his Lord, and obtain place in His eternal rest. He even went as far as asking for the gift of translation, that his days of service to God here upon the earth might not be limited to his mortal probation. He diligently sought the knowledge of the gospel, and defended it even to his banishment to the prison isle of Patmos.

The apostle John was a man of God. He lived, he served, and he blessed the lives of many men, including every man that reads the words of his great vision.