

John

His father's name was Zebedee (Matthew 4:21). His mother seems to have been Salome (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40), who, by comparing John 19:25, seems to have been a sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. If so, John was a cousin of Jesus, and, being about the same age, must have known Him from childhood.

John was a business man of some means. He was one of five partners in a fishing business that employed "hired servants" (Mark 1:16-20). Besides his fishing business in Capernaum, he had a house in Jerusalem (John 19:27), and was a personal acquaintance of the high-priest (John 18:15,16).

He was a disciple of John the Baptist (John 1:35, 40). If he was a cousin of Jesus, as seems implied in passages above cited, then he was kin to John the Baptist (Luke 1:36), and must have known of the Angelic announcements about John and Jesus (Luke 1:17, 32). So when John the Baptist appeared, crying that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, John the son of Zebedee was ready to take his stand with him.

On the Baptist's testimony he became an immediate disciple of Jesus (John 1:35-51), one of the first five disciples, and returned with Jesus to Galilee (John 2:2, 11). Then, it seems, he went back to his fishing business. Later, probably about a year, Jesus called him to leave his business, and go about with Him. He was thenceforth with Jesus continually, and thus was an eyewitness of what is written in his Gospel.

Jesus nicknamed him "Son of Thunder" (Mark 3:17), which seems to imply that he had a vehement, violent temper. But this he brought under control. The incident of forbidding the stranger to use the name of Christ in casting out demons (Mark 9:38), and the desire to call down fire on the Samaritans (Luke 9:54), are interesting side-lights on his nature.

He was one of the three inner circle disciples. And was recognized as the one closest to Jesus. Five times he is spoken of as the disciple "Whom Jesus Loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). He must have been a man of rare qualities of character to thus attract the Companionship of Jesus.

He and Peter became the recognized leaders of the Twelve, and, though utterly different in disposition, were generally together (John 20:2; Acts 3:1, 11; 4:13; 8:14).

For a number of years Jerusalem seems to have been his chief residence. According to well-established tradition, his later years were spent at Ephesus. Nothing is known of his activities or whereabouts in the interim. At Ephesus he lived to great age, and wrote his Gospel, three Epistles and Revelation.

The Date of his Gospel is usually assigned to about A.D. 90. Some think that John originally wrote this Gospel much earlier, while he was still in Jerusalem, soon after the Resurrection, in Hebrew, and in later years, issued, in Greek, the Ephesian edition, which was the parent of all extant manuscripts.