**Against Lazarus as Author of John**

It has been proposed that “the disciple whom Jesus loved (lit., was loving)”, the author of the Gospel commonly attributed to John (21:24), cannot have been John son of Zebedee.

The basic argument goes like this. The “disciple whom Jesus loved” is equated with the disciple who let Peter into the high priest’s quarters – a disciple known to the high priest personally. However, Peter and John were unknown to the high priest per the Acts 4 incident following the healing of the lame man at the Temple in Acts.

I agree that the disciple who let Peter into the high priest’s compound was not John of Zebedee. Here is how this unnamed disciple is described:

* 18:15 but Simon Peter was following Jesus, and **another** disciple, and that disciple was known to the high priest, and he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest
* 18:16 Peter was standing at the door outside *it*. Therefore, went forth the **other** disciple who was known to the high priest, and spoke to the door-keeper and brought in Peter

There is nothing in the language that suggests that this disciple should be identified with “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. It is true that Jesus loved Lazarus – also Martha and Mary – but Lazarus cannot have been “that disciple … known to the high priest”. The chief priests had hatched a plot to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (12:10). So how could Lazarus have escaped the high priest’s house, if he was a “wanted man”? No, “the other disciple”, like several others whose activities are described in the Gospels, remains unnamed. If anyone behaved like a wanted man, it was Peter!

How many disciples were there? We need to think about this question in terms of selectivity. There was the inner circle of the Twelve, of course, but within that circle was an even more intimate circle of Peter, James and John, who witnessed things withheld from the remaining nine. Then there were the 70, whom Jesus appointed and sent out 2 by 2 (Luk.10:1, 17). There were also the 120 disciples of Acts 1:15. A survey of the word “disciple” in John, shows that many are references to the Twelve (e.g., 2:2), while some cannot even include the Twelve (6:60), and others are ambiguous as to the number. When Lazarus is mentioned by name, there is no description of him as a “disciple”. Why not, if he was “the disciple whom Jesus loved”?

Getting back to the authorship of John’s Gospel, so-called. We find Peter and John closely affiliated in the events of Acts 3, 4 and 8. They were both in that Inmost Circle of 3. And the unusual episode at the close of John’s Gospel involves Peter and “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:15-24). How many disciples were at the Last Supper with Jesus, and how many feet did He wash? All that we have record of is the Twelve, representative of the twelve tribes (Mat.26:17-20; Mar.14:17; Luk.22:14). Note that in Luke’s account Peter and John are named as the two disciples sent to prepare the Passover. Could others have been present? Possibly, but that is purely speculative. At the Supper itself only Peter and Judas are mentioned by name – and “the disciple whom Jesus was loving”. In the discourse following the meal, Philip and Judas (not the Iscariot) are mentioned by name. The only mention of John by name in the whole book is an oblique reference to “*them* of Zebedee” in the event of the 153 fish. Can it be possible that John wrote this Gospel at a time when he had learned to be a little less boisterous about himself and his ambitions?

Finally, if we are going to throw out the name “John” from the Gospel bearing his name, we might as well do the same for Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, 1, 2 & 3 John.

(see separate file Disciples in John’s Gospel.docx for raw data)