John the Beloved is the author of five New Testament writings—a Gospel, the Revelation (Apocalypse; see JOHN, REVELATIONS OF), and three letters. Although the author identifies himself as John in the Revelation (Rev. 1:1, 4, 9), he is known only as “the Elder” in the letters and as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in the Gospel. Ancient tradition and elements of style have supported the common authorship of these writings, but some argue that “the Beloved” and “the Elder” were two different people.

John emphasizes spiritual qualities in his writings, including some contrasting pairs of qualities that illustrate the two opposing spiritual forces in the world. Examples include light and darkness, love and hate, truth and falsehood, and God and the devil (see OPPOSITION). John also emphasizes such ideas as bearing true witness, knowing the Lord, enduring to the end, and being raised up by the Savior.

John and his brother, James, were sons of Zebedee (some feel that Salome was Zebedee’s wife, basing their identification on Matt. 27:56 and Mark 15:40), and the men of the family were fishermen at the Sea of Galilee. Their business prospered to the extent that they employed servants (Mark 1:19–20) by the time Jesus called the brothers to the full-time ministry. Although the Gospels of Matthew and Luke list Peter, Andrew, James, and John at the beginning of their lists, Mark and Acts place Peter, James, and John at the beginning of the list of the Twelve. These three apostles were alone with Jesus on special occasions, such as at the raising of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:37–43), on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–9), and at Jesus’ suffering in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37–45). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that these three ancient apostles received the keys of the priesthood during the transfiguration experience (TPJS, p. 158).

John is usually identified as one of the two disciples of John the Baptist mentioned in the Gospel of John who became disciples of Jesus after his baptism (John 1:35–40). James and John were called Boanerges (“Sons of Thunder”) by Jesus, perhaps because of their strong and impulsive personalities. Either they (Mark 10:35–40) or their mother on their behalf (Matt. 20:20–23) asked Jesus to grant them places of honor in his heavenly
kingdom. Although rebuked for their ambition, they averred their willingness to share in his trials and suffering, and Jesus affirmed that they would do so.

John describes himself as “leaning on Jesus’ bosom” during the Last Supper (John 13:23); later, when Jesus was bound and taken to the high priest, John (who “was known unto the high priest”) and Peter followed along (John 18:15). John continued to follow the Savior through the ensuing events and was the only one of the Twelve recorded as being present at the Crucifixion. Jesus asked him to take care of his mother, Mary, and John took her to his own home (John 19:26–27).

Following the resurrection of Christ, Peter and John ran to the tomb when told by Mary Magdalene that the covering stone had been removed. John ran faster and arrived first at the empty tomb (John 20:1–8). Later, the Lord told Peter that John would remain (on earth) until the Lord’s second coming (John 21:20–23), giving rise to the early Christian tradition that John did not die. The Prophet Joseph Smith confirmed and corrected that tradition in a revelation that states that John, having been given “power over death,” remains on earth “as flaming fire and a ministering angel . . . for those who shall be heirs of salvation” until the Savior returns (D&C 7; see Translated Beings). The resurrected Christ also mentioned John’s continued earthly ministry during his visit to the people of the Book of Mormon (3 Ne. 29:6–8).

Peter and John appear together in many events of the early chapters of Acts, and some time after James’ death (Acts 12:1–2) these two apostles were joined by another James, the “brother of the Lord” (Gal. 1:19), in a presiding responsibility over the Church; James, Peter, and John were the recognized “pillars” (Gal. 2:9).

After Peter’s death (traditionally dated about A.D. 67), John would have been the senior and presiding apostle. Many sources state that years later John lived at Ephesus, was exiled to Patmos (c. A.D. 90) by the Emperor Domitian, and returned to Ephesus during the reign of Nerva (A.D. 96–98), Domitian’s successor. During his exile to Patmos, John received the Revelation, which he was directed to send with cover letters to seven churches of Asia Minor. The importance of the Revelation to the Latter-day Saints is underscored by the vision of Nephi in the Book of Mormon, where that prophet was told by an angel not to write all he had seen, for the record of the last days would be made for the world by John, an apostle of the Lord (1 Ne. 14:18–27; cf. Ether 4:16).

After returning to Ephesus, John wrote the three letters that bear his name in the New Testament. Some think he also wrote his Gospel in Ephesus at this late date, but others date it earlier. Other writings have been ascribed to John, including the apocryphal Acts of John, and various versions of the Apocryphon [secret writing] of John, but none of these has been generally considered an authentic writing of the apostle.

In May–June 1829 the three ancient apostles, Peter, James, and John, appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, ordained them to the Melchizedek Priesthood, and gave to them the same keys they had received on the Mount of Transfiguration (see D&C 27:12–13). Joseph Smith later received a revelation, parts of which paralleled the prologue to the Gospel of John, and was told that “the fulness of John’s record” would be given at some future date (D&C 93:6, 18).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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JOINING THE CHURCH

Converts to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have various motivations for their initial interest in the Church, and many factors influence them in the conversion process. However, they generally share three common experiences as they seek baptism and membership in the Church. First, most of those interested in joining the Church meet with missionaries for a series of brief lessons on basic LDS beliefs and religious practices. Second, all prospective converts must demonstrate in a prebaptism interview with a Church representative that they are making an informed decision of their own free will and that they willingly fulfill the baptismal requirements. Third,