



## Abiding in the Love of Jesus Creates Friendship Historical Criticism of John 15:9-17

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**Abstract** In everyday conversation the word “criticism” usually has an unfavorable or negative meaning. This word is often associated with a negative or bad assessment of something. But this can also have a positive impact. For example, art, literature, music, etc. In this case, criticism is a type of interpretation that seeks to systematically emphasize the properties of something. When applied to the Bible, this approach is often understood as a passive effort. However, this textual critical approach is a systematic effort to understand the Bible by examining its form, content, and context, studying it, explaining it, and exploiting the benefits of understanding it from everyone’s point of view. Regarding the Gospel of John, there are several things you need to know about his theology. Jesus had several titles that need to be looked at and studied to know their true meaning. The author uses qualitative methods to examine the history in which Jesus faced the Jews and the Roman empire. As well as the teachings that Jesus gave to His disciples.

**Keywords:** Love, Jesus, Joy, Gospel of John

### INTRODUCTION

Historical criticism (higher criticism), known as the method of historical criticism or high criticism, is a field of criticism that examines the origins of ancient texts to understand the “world” behind the “text”. The aim of historical criticism is to discover the original meaning of a text in its original historical context. Historical criticism is very important, where this criticism obtains or leads to theological explanations.

In today’s life, friendship is no longer based on the love of Jesus. All parties hope the best for all parties. Friendships often form because they have the same hobbies such as fishing, playing games and so on. Someone wants to be friends because he gets certain benefits, such as in business. People who make friends because they want to gain some benefit or pleasure are humanistic in nature. For this reason, this research aims to contribute thinking about historical criticism or situational conditions in the Gospel of John in order to bring readers to an explanation of how abiding in Jesus produces friendship.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The method used in this research is a qualitative method (explaining behavior, cognition, motivation, etc. In relation to language and in a certain natural context). Sugiyono said that the definition of a qualitative research approach is based on the philosophy of positivism which is used by researchers to study the condition of certain natural objects, and is not an experiment. This research applies theological study of John 15:9-17 to offer a new view of “abiding in the love of Jesus” making everyone a friend who must be loved.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In general, the Gospel of John describes Jesus’ journey from the beginning to the crucifixion and resurrection. This Gospel is philosophical in nature, addressed to philosophers and priests. The term in Greek Λόγος (logos) is the word being a specific term. John gave this evangelism so that philosophers would understand the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel of John was published around 100 or towards the second century after John died. According to church tradition, in 69 BC when Jerusalem was about to be besieged by the Roman army, Christians fled to the village of Pella east of the Jordan (cf. Matt. 24:15). John and several of his friends fled to Ephesus and settled there in 80. It can be concluded that the Gospel of John was also written in Ephesus. In this Gospel, John wants to reveal to the readers that Jesus is the Son of God. Living in Jesus, you can live according to what Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Jesus showed several miracles such as changing water into wine symbolizing that He changed the old into the new (the Torah into the Gospel). Jesus fed 5,000 people which indicated that He was the true Manna or Bread of Life. Jesus healed a blind man which symbolizes that He is the Light of the world. He also brought about the resurrection of Lazarus which symbolizes that He triumphed over death. The culmination of all miraculous signs was the resurrection of Jesus. All these miraculous signs show that Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus is the Savior of the world. The purpose of writing the Gospel of John was to produce faith in Jesus as Christ and son of God, so that this faith would properly present and greet the Greek world. At that time Christianity had entered the Greek world. For this reason, this Gospel aims to illuminate heretical teachings and wrong ideas in the church.

In particular, the Gospel of John reports that Jesus is the Son of God. John also wants readers to be continually strengthened by faith so that they can obtain eternal life. In this Gospel, John highlights that Jesus is the Word who became flesh, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). This highlight is the center and beauty of the Gospel of

John. Jesus often used the expression “I am” about Himself, such as I am the bread of life, I am the shepherd, I am the way, the truth and life, and so on. Jesus equated Himself with God (John 5:17-29). Jesus has similarities with God in nature (Jesus is no different from God’s work, John 5:17-19), in power (God resurrected Jesus as well, John 15:21 cf. 5:28-29), in terms of authority (judge together, John 5:22 cf. 5:27), and both have life in themselves (John 5:26). John also noted several words that Jesus often used, such as the word “signs” to declare the miracles of the Lord Jesus (cf. John 2:11,23; 4:48; 12:37; 20:30) to reveal Himself. The word “believe” emphasizes that those who believe become followers of Christ, while those who do not believe oppose Him. The word “life” concerns the human response to Christ and the word “life” also concerns the divine nature given to believers to receive life which means becoming children of God by being born again (John 3:3; 15-16). The Holy Spirit will work in everyone who has received life (John 7:37-39). In this Gospel, Jesus gives the final message to His disciples to love each other, serve each other, and imitate the love of Christ (John 13:1-38, 15:9-17). Jesus will leave the disciples and will return to welcome them into the Father’s house (John 14:1-14). The Holy Spirit will be sent to replace Him, therefore the disciples do not need to be afraid because they are not alone (John 14:15-31; 16). Finally, in this Gospel, the importance of personal service such as Andrew (1:35-42, 6:8-9; 12:20-22), Peter (1:42, 6:68-69; 13:36-38; 18: 15-180), and Nicodemus (3:1ff, 7:50-51; 19:39-42).

In the Gospel of John 15:9-17 Jesus emphasized that the disciples must love one another. Jesus has taught the true meaning of love according to the standard of ἀγάπη “agape” (the essence of God) because God is love. Agape is not just love that is born from feelings but a movement of will or choice that is deliberately carried out and is related to obedience, commitment, and not always with emotional feelings. Abiding in the love of Jesus is His command so that the disciples can love each other. Jesus gave His Spirit so that the disciples were enabled to practice this love (1 John 3:23-24). Based on John 15:9-17, Jesus promises four blessings to believers, namely: First, everyone will rejoice which is given by God. Second, every believer will become a friend of Jesus and can enjoy His presence in every situation in life, whether bitter or sweet, happy or difficult. Jesus is always present (Psalm 25:14). Third, every believer is called to serve Him amidst his limitations and imperfections. Jesus deserves, chooses, determines, and enables humans to carry out His commands (to be witnesses of God preaching the Good News and producing fruit). Fourth, believers are blessed to be a blessing.

## **1. Author of the Gospel of John**

In general, the Gospel of John is very different from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The opening in the Gospel of John places the story of Jesus in the context of the creation of the universe. Jesus' conversation in the Gospel of John is very different, both in style and content.

There are many opinions about the author of the Gospel of John because the author's name is not mentioned. However, referring to the Gospel texts contained in the Gospel of John, he was a faithful witness (21:24), who stood under the cross (19:35), looked at the empty tomb (20:8), and was a disciple who loved by Jesus (13:23; 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20; James and John). According to the tradition that developed during the time of Irenius, a church father who lived in the 2nd century (180 AD) said that the author of the Gospel of John was John bin Zebedee. However, there are still many debates about the evidence regarding the accuracy of the author of the Gospel of John. According to tradition, the author of the Gospel of John is compared to "the disciple whom Jesus loved." This figure begins to appear in John 13:23-25; 19:26-27; 20:2-8; 21:18-25. According to the Synoptic Gospels, the disciples who were most close to Jesus were Peter, John son of Zebedee, and James (Matt. 17:1; Mark 5:37; 14:33). However, in this case it is very likely that the author of the Gospel of John was not Peter, because this disciple is contrasted with Peter (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:20). Not even James, because according to Acts 12:2 James was killed around 41 AD. Meanwhile, according to John 21:22-23, this disciple (John bin Zebedee) lived quite a long time and John was the author of the Gospel of John. The above opinion is reinforced by Arthur E. Zannoni that the authors of this Gospel were from various facts "the community of the Apostles." This community is of course followers of John himself. Leon Morris agrees that the writer of the Gospel of John was someone who showed himself to be a "disciple who loved Jesus" therefore he testified against Jesus.

The author agrees with the opinion of E. F. Wescott who asserts that John the son of Zebedee wrote the Gospel of John. He was one of the disciples closest to Jesus. This evidence is in accordance with the Gospel of John himself, namely: a Jew from Palestine, an eyewitness, an apostle and of course he is the apostle John. The proof that he was a Jew is the many mentions of Jewish customs, topography, culture and Jewish history.

## **2. Time and place of writing**

When the Gospel of John was written is not known for certain, but there are several different academic theories. It is very possible that the time when this Gospel was written was between 68 AD and 70 AD. As support for this reference is the "Pool of Bethesda" which is

mentioned in John 5:2. The Pool of Bethesda that appears in John 5:2 was destroyed on the edge of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70. John 5:2 has the adjective “there is” used to describe the pool, as if it was still there at the time of writing. Therefore, logically the Gospel of John was written before 70 AD. All the Synoptic Gospels were written before or after the terrible destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This event certainly greatly influenced Jewish thought patterns. This implies that the Gospel of John was written before or after the destruction of Jerusalem. In accordance with the findings above, it can be said that the Gospel of John was written in the 100s. To support this opinion, the church fathers said that the Gospel of John was written between 70-100 AD. According to church tradition, in the year 69 when Jerusalem was about to be besieged by Roman troops, Christians fled to the village of Pella east of the Jordan(cf. Matt. 24:15). John and several of his friends fled to Ephesus and settled there in 80. It can be concluded that the Gospel of John was also written in Ephesus.

### **3. Purpose of writing**

The Gospel of John contains spiritual truths so that every reader can “live” through faith. Miraculous signs were recorded so that everyone would believe that Jesus was the Messiah and believers would have life through His name (John 20: 31). The author of this Gospel also depicts Jesus not only as seen by the outward eye, but as interpreted by the Spirit and adapted to faith. All true history must involve subjective as well as objective elements. Through growing faith one can see the true glory of Jesus, see Jesus as the Son of God and not only as the human Messiah, but also the ability to see miracles and understand the signs they contain and even see Jesus as the glorified Son of God as He hangs on wooden cross.

In particular, (John 13:1-16:33 and chapter 17) tells of the conversation between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus taught his disciples various important points, one of which was the commandment of love. The disciples were taught to remain in fellowship and always serve believers as Jesus remained in fellowship and serving the Father. In John 15 Jesus’ love is demonstrated as the love of someone who lays down his life for his friends. Everyone must abide in the love of Jesus because they are no longer slaves but friends. No friend is equipped and respected in such a special way, for this reason Jesus warns the friends about their election (verse 16) only because of God’s grace. After the selection of the disciples is followed by the determination to bear fruit. The fruit produced is respect or obedience to Allah. In this passage it repeats what has happened before but advances the idea of the vine and the branches. The reality behind this symbol is close friendship. Jesus invites eternal love to Him.

#### **4. Cultural, social and political analysis**

##### **4.1.Cultural analysis**

###### **a. Dualistic symbol**

The Gospel of John is presented in a dualistic structure, describing two situations in which humans live. This structure is symbolically expressed in all themes: light and darkness, above and below, and on the one hand the life of a person who does not believe, but on the other hand lives in faith. The implication of this dualism is very clear, because what John means is that there is no position between light and darkness, and one must choose one. This dualism is motivated by the influence of Gnostic and Platonic thought. Bultman states that John's Gospel took the Gnostics and turned them into Gospels. The Gospel of John contains Plato's dualism (the opposition between the real world and the visible world). For Plato, this is the dividing line. However, the idea of Jewish influence on the dualism of the Gospel of John can be seen from information from the Dead Sea scrolls. In this text we see the contrast between the spirit of truth and the spirit of deception, between the children of light and the children of darkness. For example, the Dead Sea text in the Gospel of John includes doing what is right (John 3:21), walking in darkness (John 12:35), children of light (John 12:36), the Spirit of Truth (John 12:36). 14:17). The dualism between light and darkness, truth and error is an ethical dualism, different from the dualism of the world of Greek and Gnostic philosophy which emphasizes metaphysics.

The uniqueness of this Bible is seen in the idea of all religious systems which are presented within the framework of dualism. The following is a partial list of some of the opposing symbol pairs used in the Bible, light darkness (1:5, 8:23), above-below, spirit-flesh (3:6), (eternal) life (3:36), death, truth (8:44), falsehood–lies, heaven–earth (3:31), God–satan (13:27), Israel (1:19,47), “The Jews” (occasionally). For example, the word “world” used by John does not always have the same meaning. What does he mean by “world” in each case (1:10: 3:16; 8:12; 8:23; 9:29-41: 11:9-10, 12:25; 12:31-33; 12:46; 13:01, 14:17; 14:31; 16:7-11; 18:36). It is used in the context of judgment with Satan (9:39: 12:31, and 16:11). This symbolizes a way of life that opposes God and the plan of salvation for humans. This summary of the dualism of the Gospel of John regarding the “world” as the place where the kingdom of God takes place (God, light, from above, truth, spirit and life), and the word “world” is also meant in the sense of (satan, from below, falsehood, darkness, flesh and death).

###### **b. Jewish tradition**

Although the Gospel of John was written in Greek, it was heavily influenced by Aramaic. This is evidenced by the emphasis on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies,

which may give the impression that this Gospel has a Jewish background. This becomes clear from an analysis of the Greek used in this Gospel, showing its closeness to Aramaic. For example, in Aramaic, namely Kefas, Gabata or Rabuni, Messiah (John 1:42; 19:13; 20:16), even the meaning of Messiah is explained clearly (John 1:41). The Jewish character of the Gospel of John is widely known, as most of the text contains content about him. There is also an anti-Jewish nature, as evidenced by the frequent insults of Jews (5:16,10:31,18:36). More clearly, the “Jewish” group was a group that was hostile to Jesus (8:22, 59; 18:12; 19: 12; 10:31). However, on the one hand, the term “Jew” is used for people who believe (11:45, cf. 4:22), and also those who accept Jesus’ teachings (cf. 5:46; 8:39). From the explanation above, it is clear that the Gospel of John was written by someone who consciously lived among the Jews, of course he was a Jew. The author of the Gospel of John may also have ceased to be a Jew because he was excommunicated (apostata) (cf. John 9:22; 6:2). Because the writer of the Gospel of John was a Palestinian Jew, of course his Jewishness was still inherent in him. So the theology in John’s Gospel is influenced by Judaism, so that the word appears in (18:36) as an antagonist to Jesus.

#### **4.2 Social Analysis**

The early Christians came from Jewish tribes that were still associated with Jewish traditions, but at the same time adhered to the Christian faith. Christians were independent of Judaism, and this led to a split with the Judeo-Christians in Jerusalem around 49 A.D. In the early 60s and the question of Judaism was resolved in the early 60s. In John’s Gospel we see that the division of the synagogue was a new phenomenon. John’s Gospel confronts a new community that had been excluded from the Jewish community of faith, and the church of John’s day had emerged from the womb of Judaism.

When the Gospel of John was written, the church was dealing with the Jewish community because the Jews had accepted the Torah and upheld the prophet Moses, whom they believed had been appointed by God to lead the nation of Israel. So the Jews agreed that everyone who claimed Jesus as the Messiah would be excommunicated (cf. John 9:22). The Gospel of John raises christological, eschatological and ecclesiological issues after leaving the synagogue which was always controversial with Judaism. This controversy is reflected in the narrative that Jesus’ kingdom is not of the world (18:36) and the Jews claim that they have no king except Caesar (19:15). This statement reflects their rejection of Jesus and abdication of their role as God’s people in the eyes of the evangelist. This statement implies that John’s relationship to Judaism had become one of hostility (as defined by the characteristic dualism in John’s Gospel), so that in this case the Jews represented a world that rejected Jesus.

Likewise, John's letter reflects the situation in the church which was always fighting against Judaism, heresy, and church order. On the other hand, the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation evidence the controversy between Jews and Jewish Christians (cf. John 8:3).

The Gospel of John and Jewish Christianity maintain a view of Christ (christology) as characteristic of Jewish Christianity. The Fourth Evangelist clearly establishes a christological formula adopted from Jewish Christian sources. The first section announces that Jews who recognized Jesus as the Messiah were expelled from the synagogue (9:22; 12:42,16:2). Excommunication from the synagogue as a result of the recognition of Jesus' Messiahship was a unique experience for Jewish Christians. The second passage in this Gospel shows that Jewish believers in Jesus were not only expelled from their synagogues, but were also subjected to harsh discipline and even persecution to the point of death. Persecution of Christians did not only come from the Jews, but also came from the Roman authorities. This persecution occurred because of faith in Jesus, because Jesus is the Son of God and in Him the truth of God can be seen and known.

#### **4.3. Political Analysis**

During Jesus' ministry, many Jews became followers and believed in Him as the Messiah. Therefore, the Jewish officials felt challenged because they believed Jesus to be someone who insulted YHWH, because He claimed to be the son of God and "King of the Jews." This caused Jewish officials to accuse Jesus of trying to form a separatist group within the Roman empire. Meanwhile, at that time, several small groups had formed in the Roman empire which often tried to revolt and cause trouble against the Roman empire. Before arresting Jesus, the Roman empire itself had arrested a person who was considered a political rebel who was called a criminal. In His teachings, Jesus often emphasized the reference to the "kingdom of God" in the three Gospels. The Kingdom of God is the basic message from Jesus (Matt.4:17; Mark.1:15), Jesus' message to His disciples (Matt. 10:7; Luk.10:9-11) that the Kingdom of God is near. Therefore, Jesus taught His followers to pray for the coming of the kingdom (Matt. 6:10 Luk. 11:2). When the time comes that God's will will be done on earth, only those who live according to God's will will enter it (Matt. 5:3-10: 7:21-23). Matthew's Gospel often uses the term "Kingdom of Heaven." Meanwhile, Mark and Luke always use "Kingdom of God". John also uses the word Kingdom of Jesus (cf. John 18:36). In the previous description, the author explained that Jesus' title as the Messiah is the king of the Jews or King of Israel. The presence of His kingdom created a religious conflict for the Jews

because He called him the Son of God, and a political challenge for Roman power because He was called “King”

## **5. The concept of friendship of Jesus Christ**

### **a. Friendship brings joy**

John focuses believers on the blessings of salvation, he grounds joy in the ideas of Old Testament prophecy. John represents salvation as joy. Christians also experience full joy (Acts 13:52; Rom. 15:13; 2 Tim. 1:4). Jesus found joy when He was in the Father’s love and when He carried out the Father’s commands. So abiding in the Father’s love produces joy. Joy is John’s expression of the highest implications of Jesus’ self-revelation (cf. 3:29; 16:24; 17:13; 1 John 1:4).

### **b. Love and forgive each other**

Love is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) which is patient, not easily angered, and humble (1 Cor. 13:4-8). People who live in love live in the Spirit who are humble, easy to apologize, and willing to forgive. God is the source of love as our example to love. Everyone is directed to love those who make mistakes, those who demean, ridicule, and hurt. In the sermon on the mount Jesus said “blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Meaning that everyone must love peace in life together. The Apostle Paul also said “as much as possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone” (Rom. 12:18). So in a friendly life, we must fight hatred and selfish behavior as proof that we give our hearts to Jesus. Everyone whose heart has been surrendered to Jesus can view suffering as a blessing because the fruit it produces is joy, peace, and an intimate relationship with Jesus.

### **c. Live together every day with His word**

The unity of believers with Jesus is described by a vine (John 15), which is also given a different description but with the same meaning to the Galatians. Paul said, “But I live, but it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). If life is rooted in Jesus, it will live full of love. This is what Jesus poured out on the community of believers to become a paradigm of the reciprocal love that is expected of them.

## **CONCLUSION**

Historical criticism is very important in building theology. There are many texts in the Bible that need to be researched to find out their true meaning. Historical criticism is very necessary because it supports the theological process because the results of historical critical

investigations can become new knowledge. Historical criticism is really needed to determine or apply it in modern times. Jesus is the source of the example of love and through this example Jesus can be known among humans. Jesus lived in His Father's love, obeying His Father's commands until the end of His life. He gave His life through love and He is the reality of love. The Father loves Jesus and Jesus loves the disciples. Thus the disciples are called to participate in the unity of love between the Father and the Son. So the love of Jesus. This is achieved through dedication and faithfulness, especially by obeying His commands. The goal of all this is so that the joy of Jesus is real and complete in the human life.

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