

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

I. Authorship and canonicity (authenticity).

- A. John the apostle has traditionally been accepted as the author of the fourth gospel since the early Church fathers.
 1. Irenaeus, circa 200AD, a leading theologian of an authoritative canon of Scriptures, accepted John as the author of the Gospel of John.
 2. Clement of Alexandria, 150-200AD, a Christian apologist and missionary to the Hellenistic (Greek) culture, produced many writings certifying John as the author of this gospel.
- B. Authorship by John is further substantiated in the writings of the Muratorian Canon dated 180-200AD. (This is a Latin list of New Testament writings regarded as canonical and discovered by the Italian, Lodovico Musatori, and published in 1740.)
- C. External sources of canonicity are attested by the Egerton Papyrus 2, dated before 150AD (C.H. Dodd, *New Testament Studies*, 1953 pp 1552) and also attested by Tatian in his writing, *Diatessaron*, circa 200AD. (This writing is a combination of the four gospels in one narrative.)
- D. Internal attestation of both authorship and canonicity is seen in a classical formulation from B. F. Westcott and J. B. Lightfoot, (*Biblical Essays*, 1893, pp 1198) where it is demonstrated that the gospel was written:
 1. By a Jew. Jn.1:19-28 references the Jewish expectation of the coming of Christ; Jn.4:9, the author knew the Jewish feelings towards the Samaritans; Jn.4:20, the Jewish attitude towards worship and acquaintance with the Jewish feasts; cp. Jn.18:39, noting the custom of the Passover for the Romans to release a Jewish prisoner.
 2. By a Palestinian Jew. The author was acquainted with the geography, especially around Jerusalem, cp. Jn.9:7; 11:18; 18:1. Also, the cities of Galilee and the territory of Samaria, Jn.1:44; 2:1; 4:5,6,21.
 3. By an eyewitness of events, Jn.1:14 "*We beheld His glory*"; 19:35 (author speaking in the third person) "*And he who has seen has borne witness (event of the Cross).*" The author knew the number and size of the pots at the wedding of Cana, Jn.2:6.
 4. By the "beloved disciple" and close associate of the apostle Peter, Jn.21:7; cp. 13:23 (last supper, this rules out Peter). Since James was killed early in the history of the Church, and Thomas and Philip are mentioned so frequently in the third person (the author speaks of himself in the third person), John the son of Zebedee is the best remaining possibility.
 5. The language and thinking of the author of the Gospel of John is parallel with the first epistle of John, cp. 1Jn.1:1ff.

II. Date and place of writing.

- A. The date of writing for the gospel has been variously estimated from 40AD to 140AD.
- B. Patristic evidence weigh heavier towards John living a full and long life verses a short life.
- C. Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, 190AD, and Irenaeus both place John at Ephesus as late as 98-117AD with a long residence there.
- D. The discovery of the Rylands Fragment, which is a copy of Jn.18:31-33,37,38, shows that the Gospel of John was in use in the first half of the second century.
- E. Internal support for the writing at Ephesus (Asia Minor and gentile surroundings) is seen in the explanations of the feasts and customs of the Jews as if it were for the benefit of those unfamiliar with them, cp. Jn.2:13; 4:9; 19:31.
- F. Though a definite time has not been determined for this writing, it has traditionally been dated around 90AD.

III. Purpose of the writing.

- A. The general purpose of John's writing is apologetic, or in defense of the validity of who and what Christ is.

- B. In a harmony of the gospels, we see most of John's writing contains information not found in the synoptic gospels (Mt., Mk., and Lk.). However, the events surrounding the Cross are parallel with the synoptic gospels. This provides further apologetics for the validity of the synoptic gospels.
- C. An additional purpose of the Gospel of John then, is to provide supplemental information and to expand the reader's view of the incarnate Christ (life and times of Jesus at the First Advent) as compared to the synoptic gospels.

IV. Summary outline of chapter one.

- A. John's prologue, Jn.1:1-18.
 - 1. The preincarnate deity of Christ, vss.1-5.
 - 2. The witness of John the Baptist, vss.6-13.
 - 3. The incarnation of Christ, vss.14-18.
- B. The end of John the Baptist's ministry and the beginning of Christ's, vss.19-51.
 - 1. The confession of John the Baptist, vss.19-28.
 - 2. John the Baptist identifies Christ as Messiah, vss.29-34.
 - 3. The conversion of Andrew, John, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathaniel, vss.35-51.