

# The Gospel of John

## Week One

### Introduction and Overview to the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel

#### 1. Introduction

- All information, study notes and related material can be found on the internet at <http://www.rtrc.net/biblestudy/john/john.htm>
- Course Syllabus
- Weekly Outlines (notebook)

#### 2. Synoptic Gospel Considerations

- Definition: from the Greek word synopsis which means “seeing together”
- The author assumes a synoptic knowledge from his readers, (John 3.24; 4.44 cp. with Mark 6.1-6)
- Traditionally written to supplement the synoptic gospels. Clement of Alexandria comments:

[John was] conscious that the outward facts had been set forth in the [Synoptic] gospels

- The author is more interested in the theological underpinnings of Jesus work and person than are the Synoptics
- Significance of the order of events in Mark compared with John
  - The work and witness of John the Baptist
  - Departure to Galilee
  - Feeding the Multitude
  - Walking on the water
  - Peter’s confession
  - Departure to Jerusalem
  - The entry and anointing
  - The Last Supper
  - The Arrest
  - The Passion and Resurrection
- Material found in Matthew, Mark and Luke NOT found in John:
  - Narrative parables
  - Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God
  - Aphoristic (concise and memorable) sayings
  - Eschatological discourses
  - The Sermon on the Mount (including the Lord’s Prayer)
  - An account of Jesus Baptism by John

- An account of the institution of the Lord's Supper
- An account of the transfiguration
- An account of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness by Satan
- An account of the garden event (Gethsemane)
- Demon exorcisms
- "Substitute" material
  - Symbolic discourses (i.e. John 15: "Vine and Branches")
  - Teaching on "eternal life" rather than the "kingdom of God"
  - Extended discourses rather than aphoristic sayings
  - An emphasis on "realized eschatology"
  - The farewell discourse
  - Satan as chief antagonist working through Judas but no demon exorcisms

### 3. Author

#### The importance of identifying the author

- Readers opinion
- Question of canon

#### Internal Evidence (1.14; 2.11; 21.20, 24; 13.23; 19.26-27; 19.35)

##### "Beloved Disciple":

- Last Supper (13.23,25)
- At the Cross (19.26, 34)
- Resurrection Morning (20.2-5, 8)
- Miraculous Catch of Fish (21.7)
- Final Words to Peter (21.20, 21)

##### Other arguments

- 7 disciples named; "sons of Zebedee" (21.2 cp. Matthew 4.21; 10.2)
- Weight of anonymity
- John "the Baptist" – (18 instances with no use of "The Baptist") compare with the Synoptics use. (Matthew 3.1)(NOTE: distinguishing of same names in the gospels, (14.22; 11.16; 6.71))
- Consider these facts:
  - One of the 12
  - Jew
  - Eye-witness to the events in the gospel
  - Knowledge of intimate conversations; words among the twelve (4.33; 16.17; 20.25; 21:3, 7)
  - Knowledge of the thoughts of the twelve (2.11, 17, 22; 4.27; 6.19, 60ff)

- Knowledge of places frequented by the twelve (11.54; 18.2)
- The author speaks of the mistakes of the twelve that were later corrected (2.21ff; 11.13; 12.16)

### External Evidence

- The testimony of the early church is in harmony with the conclusion which has been derived from the internal evidence of the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel itself.

- Eusebius (260-341):

But come, let us indicate the undoubted writings of this apostle. Let the Gospel according to him be first recognized, for it is read in all the churches under heaven... Thus John in the course of his gospel relates what Christ did before the Baptist has been thrown into prison, but the other three evangelists narrate the events after the imprisonment of the Baptist (Ecclesiastical History III, xxiv, 1-13).

- Clement of Alexandria (?-215):

Last of all, John, perceiving the external facts had been made plain in the Gospels, being urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual gospel (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History VI. xiv, 7).

- Irenaeus (130-202):

The John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even rested on his breast, himself also gave forth the gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia (Ecclesiastical History, V viii, 4).

- Theophilus:

And hence the holy writings teach us, and all inspired men, one of whom, John, says, 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God', showing that at first God was alone, and the Word in him (To Autolytus, II, xxii).

## 4. Readers and Purpose

### Readers

- Written to those residing in Asia Minor (Jews of the Diaspora and proselytized Gentiles)
  - Note the added explanations of Jewish customs and conditions, (2.6; 4.9; 7.2; 10.22; 18.28; 19.31; 41, 42)
  - Note the circumstantial manner in which he locates places that were situated in Palestine (4.5; 5.2; 6.1; 11.1, 18; 12.1, 21)

## Purpose

- Stated purpose:

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (20.30, 31. Emphasis mine)

- “that you may believe” (καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες)
- Variant readings: “to believe” [aorist subjective: initial belief; present subjective: ongoing belief]
- Consider 1 John 5.13:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (Emphasis mine)

- Other possibilities:
  - Refutation of the errors of Cerinthus: taught that Jesus was merely human. Ireneus retells a story from Polycarp that John, the beloved disciple, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within rushed out of the bath house without bathing, exclaiming, “Let us flee, lest even the bath-house fall down because Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is within” Elsewhere Ireneus states that John seeks by proclamation of the Gospel to remove the error which by Cerinthus had been disseminated among men (Against Heresies, III, xi, 1)
  - Encouragement to Jewish Believers

## 5. Date of Writing and Origin

- Modern views examined:
  - Highly developed theology (late date)
  - Pool of Bethesda (Early date; John 5.2 “is” not “was”)
  - John’s concern over the followers of John the Baptist (early date)
  - References to excommunication (9.22; 12.42; 16.2). Christians were not put out of the synagogues until the 80’s (late date)
  - Absent information as compared to the Synoptic gospels (early date)
  - “disciples” not “apostles”
- Most likely date; A.D. 80’s
- Origin: City of Ephesus. Some historical facts:

- During the reign of Domitian (81-96) John was banished to the island of Patmos
- When Nerva took the throne he returned to Ephesus, where he died at the beginning of Trajan's reign (circa A.D. 98)
- Clement of Alexandria affirms that John wrote the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel from Ephesus
- No mention of the Fall of Jerusalem

## 6. Theology and key terms of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel

- God – used in the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel as the “sender of the Son” and as the “Father of the Son”.
- The Christ – Christology is the entire emphasis of the book
- Salvation – a general presupposition of substitutionary atonement is evident throughout the book
- The Spirit – of all the gospels the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel offers more explicit teaching on the Holy Spirit than the other three. The term “parakletos” (advocate; helping presence) is used only to designate the Holy Spirit.
- New Covenant Community
- Eschatology (last things) – believers have eternal life now and have already passed from death to life
- Witness
- Faith and Signs
- Love and Obedience
- The Church (ecclesiology) – the Greek term “ekklesia” does not occur in the gospel and only occurs in two references in the other gospel accounts (Matthew 16.18; 18.17). John's ecclesiology centers on the Church as the replacement of Israel (John 15). Other metaphors for the Church are also used within the corpus of the gospel
- Sacramentalism
- The Jews
- Word
- Light
- Darkness
- Glory
- Father
- Belief

## 7. Concluding Remarks