



Lecture # 10 Part 2

INTRODUCTION TO JOHN

2. It would be helpful to take a moment to discuss the obvious difference between John and the Synoptics. Let me quote **George Eldon Ladd** from *A Theology of the New Testament* on the differences:

- c. **Ladd** also quotes **W. F. Albright** from “**Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of John**” in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* edited by **W. D. Davies and D. Daube**

“There is no fundamental difference in teaching between John and the Synoptics; the contrast between them lies in the concentration of tradition along certain aspects of Christ’s teachings, particularly those which seem to have resembled the teaching of the Essenes most closely.

There is absolutely nothing to show that any of Jesus’ teachings have been distorted or falsified, or that a vital new element has been added to them. That the needs of the early Church influenced the selection of items for inclusion in the Gospel we may readily admit, but there is no reason to suppose that the needs of that Church were responsible for any inventions or innovations of theological significance.

One of the strangest assumptions of critical New Testament scholars and theologians is that the mind of Jesus was so limited that any apparent contrast between John and the Synoptics must be due to differences between early Christian theologians. Every great thinker and personality is going to be interpreted differently by different friends and hearers, who will select what seems most congenial or useful out of what they have seen and heard” (pp. 170–171).

- d. And again from **George E. Ladd**:

“The difference between them is not that John is theological and the others are not but that all are theological in different ways. Interpreted history may represent more truly the facts of a situation than a mere chronicle of events. If John is a theological interpretation, it is an interpretation of events that John is convinced happened in history. It is obviously not the intent of the Synoptic Gospels to give a report of the *ipsissima verba* of (the exact words) Jesus nor a biography of the events of his life. They are portraits of Jesus and summaries of his



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teaching. Matthew and Luke feel themselves free to rearrange the material in Mark and to report Jesus' teaching with considerable freedom. If John used more freedom than Matthew and Luke, it is because he wished to give a more profound and ultimately more real portrait of Jesus" (pp. 221–222).

II. AUTHOR

- A. The Gospel is anonymous but hints at John's authorship
 - 1. an eye witness author (cf. [John 19:35](#))
 - 2. the phrase "**the beloved disciple**" (both Polycrates and Irenaeus identify him as John the Apostle)
 - 3. John, son of Zebedee, never mentioned by name
- B. The historical setting is obvious from the Gospel itself, therefore, the issue of authorship is not a crucial factor in interpretation. The affirmation of an inspired author is crucial!

The authorship and date of John's Gospel does not affect inspiration, but interpretation. Commentators seek a historical setting, an occasion that caused the book to be written. Should one compare John's dualism to (1) the Jewish two ages; (2) the Qumran teacher of righteousness; (3) Zoroastrian religion; (4) Gnostic thought; or (5) the unique perspective of Jesus?

- C. The early traditional view is that John the Apostle, son of Zebedee, is the human, eye-witness source. This must be clarified because second century external sources seem to link others in the production of the Gospel:
 - 1. Fellow believers and the Ephesian elders encouraged the aging Apostle to write (Eusebius quotes Clement of Alexandria)
 - 2. A fellow Apostle, Andrew (**the Muratorian Fragment**, A.D. 180–200, from Rome)
- D. Some modern scholars have assumed another author based on several assumptions about the style and subject matter of the Gospel. Many assume an early second century date (before A.D. 115):
 - 1. written by John's disciples (a Johannine circle of influence) who remembered his teachings (**J. Weiss, B. Lightfoot, C. H. Dodd, O. Cullmann, R. A. Culpepper, C. K. Barrett**)
 - 2. written by "the elder John," (one of a series of early leaders from Asia influenced by John the Apostle's theology and terminology) which is derived from an obscure passage in **Papias** (A.D. 70–146) quoted by **Eusebius** (A.D. 280–339)



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- E. Evidence for John himself as the primary source for the material of the Gospel
1. Internal evidence
 - a. the author knew Jewish teachings and rituals and shared their OT world view
 - b. the author knew Palestine and Jerusalem in their pre-A.D. 70 condition
 - c. the author claims to be an eyewitness
 - 1) [John 1:14](#)
 - 2) [John 19:35](#)
 - 3) [John 21:24](#)
 - d. the author was a member of the apostolic group, for he is familiar with
 - 1) details of time and place (the night trials)
 - 2) details of numbers (water pots of [John 2:6](#) and fish of [John 21:11](#))
 - 3) details of persons
 - 4) details of events and the reaction to them
 - e. the author seems to be designated as “**the beloved disciple**”
 - a) [John 13:23, 25](#)
 - b) [John 19:26–27, 34–35](#)
 - c) [John 20:2–5, 8](#)
 - d) [John 21:7, 20–24](#)