

#1a Introduction to the Gospel According to John

I In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God. The same was in the beginning with God. Jn 1:1.

These memorable sonorous phrases in King Jamesian English that begin this gospel inform you immediately that you are in a different literary and conceptual world than that of the synoptic gospels. These phrases, deliberately derived from the opening words of Genesis also contain echos of Hebrew Wisdom literature and introduces the language of Greek philosophy.

Mark's Gospel opens with a conclusion: "This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God"; Matthew with a genealogy from Abraham to Joseph; and Luke has his amiable note to Theophilus that because there were several gospels circulating, he decided to do it right. John's gospel starts in the beginning, a very long term perspective..

II Date and author: Fragments of this gospel exist from about 100 AD. The first commentary was written in about 150. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon in about 180, declared the gospel to be based on the reflections of John son of Zebedee, one of Jesus' earliest followers, as related to a writer who was skilled in Greek language and literature.

III Background: Nearly all of the first generation Christians were Jews who never stopped being Jews. Therefore the religious conflicts in the synoptic gospels are with specific individuals or groups, i.e. the high priest or the Pharisees, etc. By the time of John's gospel, the Christians have been expelled from the synagogues and the Benediction against Heretics from about 90 specifically anathemized Christians. That is why in this gospel the religious opponents are usually "the Jews".

Other conflicts revealed in this gospel are with early Gnosticism and with the syncretistic work of Philo who sought to unite Hebrew and hellenistic thought.

IV Outline. From The Jerusalem Bible, p142.

- I Prologue, 1:1-18
- I First week of messianic ministry, 1:19-2:11.
- II First Passover, 2:12-4:54.
- III Sabbath of the paralytic, C 5.
- IV The Passover of the bread of life, C6.
- V The feast of Tabernacles, 7:1-10:21.
- VI The feast of Dedication, 10:22-11:54
- VII Week of the Passion and the crucifixion Passover, 11:56-19:42.
- VIII The resurrection and week of appearances, C20.
- IX Appendix concerning the Church and Christ's return. C 21.

V Comment on outline. The writer of John was unconcerned about precise chronology. He organized blocks of material related to Jewish feasts in order to show Christian development or replacement of those feasts. The Christian sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are illustrated in this gospel although the actual terms are not used.

#1b, study guide on Prologue continued on back.