

Introduction to John's Gospel

What Paper do you Read?

- Just out of interest, what newspapers do we read?
 - what differences are there between them?
 - within our papers, what sections do we have?
 - eg, headlines and front page news story, background piece, editorial, personal opinion piece, etc
- **Mark** - headlines, front page story, the facts, with barely a breath between them!
- **Matthew** - background piece, genealogy, setting Jesus' life in the (Jewish) historical and religious context
- **Luke** -
- **John** - is the personal opinion piece, the insights of someone who has lived with the subject at hand over a lifetime.....

Why are we looking at this?

- in part prompted by various looks at end of John around Easter!
- in part by a personal desire and a desire for us as a congregation to meet Jesus afresh, face to face
- as we'll see this gospel is quite different from the others in style, purpose and approach
- but one thing that seems to me to ring through it is that here we are brought face to face with Jesus - his words, his teaching, under his skin far more so than the external observer style of the synoptics
- there is personal encounter here aplenty!
- *(this is not my natural area of strength; stretching for me!!)*
- Long series ahead - probably take breaks along the way!

Different from the synoptics:

- includes less
- includes more!
- apparent discrepancies with synoptics - eg **John Baptist denying he is Elijah, the bestowal of the Spirit in John 20:22 compared to Pentecost in Acts 2, day of last supper and crucifixion, above all sense from synoptics of disciples slowly growing in understanding through Jesus' ministry with people in chapter 1 of John calling him Rabbi, Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man, Lamb of God and King of Israel!!**
- *They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." (John 1:21)*
- *(11) And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" (12) Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? (13) But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him." (Mark 9:11-13)*
- chronological difficulties - eg cleansing of Temple at start of John and end of synoptics
- big difference in Greek style compared with synoptics - in particular, there is in the Greek no discernible difference in style between the words John uses and the parts that are reported as Jesus' words!

Author

- Formally anonymous
- *"The disciple whom Jesus loved"*
 - while most contemporary scholars dismiss John as the author, this directly discounts (a) all the external evidence from the early church, and (b) Westcott and Morris' case - a Jew, of Palestine, an eyewitness, an apostle, and the apostle John (of later fame)
 - they build their case and say: "if each of these bits is true, then that points inevitably to the author being John, son of Zebedee..."

John 20:30-31; 21:20-25 Beginning at the End! Fintry, 24/4/2005, pm

- fisherman... but eminent church leader, apostle over many decades, father figure...

Date

- almost any date from 55AD to 95AD has been argued - later dates have been pretty much ruled out by recent Papyrus finds of bits of the text of John from earlier than that!
- probably later on - Carson, for instance, holds to about 80AD
- reflecting back on the impact of Jesus over a whole lifetime of experience!

Purpose

- Best place to start is with words we read in 20:30-31:
 - *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (20:30-31)*
- Comparison with 1 John 5:13:
 - *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*
 - same author - clear distinction towards evangelistic purpose!
 - not "who is Jesus?" but "who is the Messiah?"
 - (hence readers probably Jews or Jewish converts asking who the Christ is)

Conclusion

- So?!
 - set out hearts on meeting with the Lord!
 - its not belief in a historical reality, but belief, trust, faith in this Jesus who we have discovered is the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour
 - and as we meet Him, allow Jesus to be at work in our lives, that our lives might add to the pages of all the books that would be written!