

## **Johannine Studies**

### **Lecture 3 Study Notes – February 12, 2008**

1. Discuss the 8 major literary characteristics of John's Gospel according to Raymond Brown in the handout. Show scripture references for each major type.

#### **2. Canonical Challenges of the Four Gospels and Epistles**

Review: The word *cannon* comes from the Greek word *kannon* which originally meant *reed*. The *reed* was used by carpenters as a ruler or a way of measure. It gradually took on the meaning of a listing of rules, ordinances, and principles in which we might live by. In talking about scripture, writings were not considered to be scripture and to be read in public worship unless it was canonical, or on the list. According to the Mercer Dictionary of the Bible, the formal designation of scripture as being *Cannon* was not used until around 350 when Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, referred to it in a summary of the Decrees of the Synod of Nicaea.

#### **3. Theological Challenges**

See Culpepper page 288. Note especially the challenge of Gaius on page 288, 289. Note that Irenaus was the first, as far as we know, to establish the Apostle John as the writer living in Ephesus. After Irenaus, the authority of the Gospel was not challenged.

#### **4. Historical Challenges**

Most notably was the 19th century in which the document was challenged because of the differences between it and the Synoptics. See Culpepper quote on page 291. In addition, see Mercer Dictionary article on "Cannon" quote of Tertullian on page 133.

#### **5. Ethnical Challenges**

Is the Gospel anti-Jewish? John is not by any means in danger of being kicked out of the Cannon, but there is a lot of criticism directed at Christianity in general and John, in particular, as being anti-semitic. I had a teacher at a Methodist seminary who once told her class she had almost become Jewish because of anti-Semitism in Christianity and that she no longer considered John as part of her Bible. Notice "the Jews" references in the Gospel... I've always seen such references as not anti-Jewish but anti-religious authority in which some Jews stood for. But in the question that scholars have been debating for some years is, in light of the Holocaust, how can we help prepare the future church to never use John or any other Christian scripture for roots of anti-Semitism? Is John inherently anti-Semitic?

What are the theological issues and themes in John's writings (see syllabus)? The Gospel is thoroughly Christological. The major theological issues, therefore, will arise around the many facets of Jesus' person and our relationship to him.