

Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004. xx + 700pp. Hardback. \$44.99.

James Dunn's *Jesus Remembered* is glaring evidence that the scholarly community still does not look to the Gospel of John when doing "historical Jesus" research. Andreas Köstenberger boldly offers this commentary aiming "to further rehabilitate belief in the historical reliability of John's Gospel," adding that he has "learned from Jesus as he speaks to us through the pages of the Gospel of John" (xi, xii).

While some evangelical scholars have done all they can to mask their own positions and stay under the radar in an attempt to avoid detection as an evangelical (as though it is somehow wrong for a Christian to do scholarly work on the Bible), Köstenberger states: "an active, born-again faith in Jesus Christ as Lord is unashamedly acknowledged as the vantage point from which exegesis is undertaken" (3). This almost sounds like the Apostle Paul (Rom 1:16). Köstenberger's description of his hermeneutical presuppositions, which include the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture (6), is commendably forthright.

Köstenberger provides an accessible Introduction that says everything necessary in only 18 pages. He shows a sane humility in discussing Johannine authorship, which he finds to be an "eminently plausible hypothesis based on both external and internal evidence" (1 n. 2). He follows Hoehner in dating Jesus' ministry in the years A.D. 29–33, providing a helpful chart of the chronology of Jesus' Ministry in John (11–13). Another helpful chart near the end of the commentary traces the themes introduced in the prologue through their development in the Gospel (586). Köstenberger's outline of the Gospel reflects something of a consensus that has developed regarding the structure of the Fourth Gospel: Prologue (1:1–18), Book of Signs (1:19–12:50), Book of Glory (13:1–20:31), Epilogue (21:1–25) (10–11).

John 1:1–2 is shown to have a chiastic structure, as does the prologue as a whole (20–21). The enlightening of every man in John 1:9 "does not speak of *internal* illumination . . . but of *external* illumination in the sense of objective revelation requiring a response" (35–36). The term *monogenes* (1:14, et al.) does not mean "only begotten" but "one-of-a-kind" (42–43). Köstenberger holds that the temple "clearing" in John 2 is the second of seven signs in John, taking the reference to Jesus' "second sign" in John 4:54 to mean the second sign "in Cana" (89). He does not think that Nicodemus was born again (118–19). The works the disciples will do are "greater" than those of Jesus (John 14:12) because they are "based on Jesus' completed cross-work" and belong "to a more advanced stage in God's economy of salvation" (433). The mention of the reception of the Spirit in John 7:39 "anticipates . . . the commissioning scene in John 20:22" (241), but the giving of the Spirit in 20:22 is "a symbolic promise of the soon-to-be-given gift of the Spirit, not the actual giving of it fifty days later at Pentecost" (574). The 153 fish in John 21:11 likely "represents the number of fish counted" (593). There is probably no distinction in meaning between *phileo* and *agapao* in John 21:15–17 (596).

On John 7:53–8:11, rather than providing an interpretation of the passage with disclaimers (as, for instance, Carson does), Köstenberger discusses the internal and external evidence and concludes “the account almost certainly was not part of the original Gospel and therefore should not be regarded as part of the Christian canon. Nor does inspiration extend to it. . . . proper conservatism and caution suggest that the passage be omitted from preaching in the churches (not to mention inclusion in the main body of translations, even within square brackets. . .)” (248).

One of the great strengths of this commentary is its direct brevity. As mentioned, the introduction is only 18 pages, and the body of the commentary ends on page 606 (followed by nearly 100 pages of bibliography and indexes). An impressive amount of primary and secondary literature is dialogued with in this relatively short span, and Köstenberger’s brief comments are carefully worded statements that speak, for the initiate, directly to the scholarly discussions. This strength, however, is also a weakness in that the commentary is dense, and at points more thorough discussion is desired. With all of the book’s other strengths, however, this brevity will ultimately be a virtue as it makes the volume’s conclusions readily accessible to researchers, teachers, and pastors. We are well equipped with commentaries on John. With Carson retaining pride of place among recent commentators, we are able to turn to Keener for all things related to extra-biblical literature, to Ridderbos for excellent biblical-theological discussion, to Blomberg for every question of historical reliability, and now to Köstenberger for an up to date, concise interpretation.

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