

Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003. xlviii + 1636pp. \$79.95. Cloth.

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Craig Keener teaches NT at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He has also written commentaries on Matthew and Revelation, and this two volume commentary on John is massive. The introduction alone extends to 330 pages. Keener states in the preface that the greatest contribution his commentary makes to Johannine studies is in the area of the Gospel's "social-historical context" (xxv). The whole commentary is awash with references to ancient literature, and the preface is no exception. Nor is there any shortage of interaction with modern scholarship, and the interaction with so much ancient and modern literature makes this both an important resource for scholars and a demanding book to read.

The introduction opens by considering the genre of the Fourth Gospel, and Keener classes John as an ancient biography. He then discusses the discourses of Jesus in John, where he concludes that "the Fourth Gospel preserves genuine historical reminiscences of Jesus and an accurate portrait of events and essential teaching" (79). Keener then takes up the question of authorship, writing, "I believe that traditional conservative scholars have made a better case for Johannine authorship of the Gospel (at least at some state in the process) than other scholars have made against it" (82). Keener also writes, "The writer and first readers of the Fourth Gospel undoubtedly assumed its inspiration [by the Paraclete], and thus ceded the document authority because they affirmed that Jesus stood behind and spoke in the document" (122). The introduction goes on to discuss the Social Contexts of the Gospel, the Jewish Context of the Gospel, Revelatory Motifs in the Gospel—Knowledge, Vision, Signs, and Christology and Other Theology.

Keener then moves into the commentary proper, and he divides the Gospel as follows: The Prologue (1:1–18); Witness in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee (1:19–6:71); Tabernacles and Hanukkah (7:1–10:42); Introducing the Passion (11:1–12:50) [vol. 2 begins here]; Farewell Discourse (13:1–17:26); The Passion and Resurrection (18:1–20:31); and an Epilogue (21:1–25). Nearly half of the second volume is given to the Bibliography (166pp.), indexes of modern authors and subjects (37pp.), an index of Scripture and OT Apocrypha (66pp.), and an index of other ancient sources (121pp.). These indexes will be indispensable resources for scholars.

The amount of extra-biblical ancient literature cited in this commentary is nothing less than prodigious. Keener has done all students of John an enormous service by bringing together a comprehensive compilation of ancient sources that could influence the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel. This makes the commentary a potentially valuable reference tool. This great strength of the commentary is also its weakness, however, for multiplied allusions to ancient literature makes finding Keener's conclusions on particular issues somewhat difficult. One might also wonder whether or not all of these sources are actually useful for interpreting John, and Keener at points says as much. For instance, he takes the reader through the various allusions to rebirth in the Eleusinian Mysteries before arguing against the conclusions of some scholars (e.g., Bultmann) and rejecting these as an informative background for understanding the rebirth

imagery of John 3 (539–41). This makes for comprehensive treatment in the discussion, but it does not make for brevity or clarity in the commentary.

Keener's mastery of so much ancient and modern literature is inspiring. This will not be the first commentary on John that most pastors reach for, but it is the commentary to consult for extra-biblical texts that relate to the interpretation of John's Gospel.

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