

Revelation - Introduction, Part 4

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COURSE  COMMENTARY 

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Authorship

- [Authorship and Authority](#)
One of the criteria for recognizing canonicity is apostolic authorship. By arguing against the Apostle John as author, the authority of the book can be questioned.
- [Primary Reason](#)
As discussed previously, the style of the Greek in Revelation is less polished than in John's gospel.
- [Caution - Internal Evidence is Subjective](#)
Analysis of the text apart from external historical witness is fraught with difficulty and subjective interpretation. External evidence, when available, is **more reliable**.
- [Famous Book, Obscure Author?!](#)
Some would have us believe this most famous book was authored by someone lost to the record of history.

Unfavorable Doctrines

1. [Jewish Emphasis](#)
The mention of 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel was seen as being inconsistent with the rejection of Israel ([Rev. 7; 14](#)).
2. [Millennial Kingdom](#)
The thousand-year reign **on earth** as the fulfillment of the promised Messianic kingdom was seen as too earthly and sensual ([Rev. 20:4-9](#)).

Early Opposition

- [Roman Presbyter Caius](#)
Opposed Montanism, which emphasized the Millennial Kingdom. Revelation seen as inconsistent with rest of the New Testament. Attributed authorship to Cerinthus.
- [Marcion](#)
A second-century Gnostic who rejected Jewish passages because of an anti-Semitic stance.
- [Dionysius the Great](#)
Bishop of Alexandria. Opposed millennialism. Book inspired, but not written by Apostle John. Had great influence upon Eastern Church.
- [Eusebius of Caesarea](#)
Bishop of Nicomedia. Opposed millennialism. Believed author was "John the

Elder" mentioned by Papias.

- **Reformers**
Apostolic authorship rejected by Erasmus, Luther, and Zwingli. All opposed a literal thousand-year-reign of Christ on earth.

Suggested Authors

- **Claims of the Text**
The text claims the author to simply be "John" ([Rev. 1:1](#), [4](#), [9](#); [21:2](#); [22:8](#)).
- **Proposed Alternatives**
 - 1) John the Apostle;
 - 2) the elder John;
 - 3) John Mark;
 - 4) John the Baptist;
 - 5) some other John;
 - 6) Cerinthus;
 - 7) someone using the name "John" as a pseudonym.
 - 8) a composite work

Internal Evidence for the Apostle John

- **Simplicity of Title**
Any other "John" would necessarily have had to distinguish himself from the most famous John (the Apostle).
- **Authority of Author**
Authority over seven churches exceeds that of a New Testament prophet. His own Apostolic authority is implied ([Rev. 2:2](#)).
- **Textual Similarities**

There are striking similarities to the other writings of John the Apostle:

- 1) Jesus called *logos* .
 - 2) Jesus called *Lamb of God* (27 times in Revelation, also [John 1:29](#), [36](#)).
 - 3) Prominence of *marturia*.
 - 4) Opening paragraphs, Jesus called *the Word* ([John 1:1](#); [1Jn. 1:1](#); [Rev. 1:2](#)).
 - 5) Frequent use of "overcome" (*nikan*).
 - 6) Unique use of Greek diminutive for "Lamb" (*arnion*, literally "lambkin"). Occurs 29 times here, only other place is [John 21:15](#).
 - 7) Use of Greek verb *ekkenteo* from Septuagint version of [Zec. 12:10](#) appears in [John 19:37](#) and [Rev. 1:7](#) but nowhere else in New Testament.
- **John's Relationship to Jesus**
John was the apostle "Jesus loved" ([John 13:23](#); [John 20:2](#); [John 21:7](#), [20](#)).

The pattern of divine intimacy for revelation: Daniel was "greatly beloved" ([Dan. 9:23](#); [Dan. 10:11](#), [19](#)); Moses spoke with God "face to face" ([Num. 12:8](#)).

External Evidence for Apostle John

- **Testimony of Early Church**
 - 1) Justin Martyr (c. 100-165), **lived at Ephesus** amidst the seven churches.
 - 2) Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons (c. 130-200)
 - 3) Tertullian (c. 150-212)
 - 4) Clement of Alexandria (c. 155-215)
 - 5) Origen (c. 185-254)
 - 6) Papias (c. 60-130), bishop of Hierapolis **near Laodicea** one of the seven churches.
 - 7) Victorinus (d.c. 304)

- **Testimony of Enemies of Early Church**
 - 1) The *Alogi* opposed the doctrine of Jesus as "the Word" and rejected Revelation as they did all literature by John the Apostle.
 - 2) Gnostic document *Apocryphon of John* cites **Rev. 1:19** as being written by "John, the brother of James, these who are sons of Zebedee."

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).