
Endorsements

“Using tools of scholarship and critical thinking, these essays revisit questions that are important for the church in every generation. Steven Waterhouse scrutinizes scholarly orthodoxies and shows that ancient views discarded in modern times may be right after all. Waterhouse helps readers think for themselves by highlighting the primary sources and blowing the whistle on unwarranted contemporary skepticism. He also weighs in knowledgeably on issues concerning which legitimate debate continues. Pastors, seminary students, and others who are intellectually serious about the Bible will profit from these wise, thorough and informed investigations.” **Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Professor of New Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis MO.**

“This succinct volume introduces Papias and his testimony to the Matthean authorship of the first Gospel. In a wonderfully cogent fashion the reader not only encounters Papias but also the evidence of Matthew’s hand. Other studies follow that are equally prescient. Thank God for Steven Waterhouse and his insights.” **Dr. Paige Patterson, President, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX.**

“Dr. Waterhouse is one of the great pastor-scholars, finding time in the busy life of a pastor to do the extensive research necessary to produce such brilliant and compelling defenses of Scripture. His *Papias and Matthew, Papias and his “Elder John”* is well-reasoned and thorough, using Papias to convince readers of the apostolic authorship and early dates of the Gospel of Matthew and all the works of John.” **Dr. William Watson, Professor of History, Colorado Christian University, Lakewood, CO.**

“The authorship and dates of the Gospels of Matthew and John remain essential concerns of students of Scripture. Steven Waterhouse addresses these concerns in a masterful series of topical studies. In a cumulative, step-by-step analysis that uses both logical and historical arguments, he shows the reader that Matthew and John did in fact write the Gospels attributed to them (and that John did author the book of Revelation). Central to Waterhouse’s case is the testimony of Papias, an early church father who knew both John and the disciples of Matthew. His final study includes wise comments on Messianic

Prophecies, demonstrating that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior promised in the Old Testament and thus that the Bible comes from God and is true. While Waterhouses' studies specifically focus on the Gospel accounts of Jesus Christ, their overall effect is to confirm the reliability of the entire canon of Scripture." **Dr. Neil D. Nelson, Professor of New Testament Studies, Calvary Theological Seminary, Kansas City, MO.**

"In this work Steven Waterhouse has compiled cogent essays concerning the church's tradition that the apostle Matthew wrote a Gospel narrative in both Aramaic and Greek. His work is both thoughtful and critical, and addresses salient issues with respect to the historical accuracy of these traditions – issues that many skeptics either chose to avoid or fail to consider. The evidence for his position that the Gospel of Matthew originates as early as the AD 60s cannot be easily dismissed, and gives significant credibility to the assertion that this Gospel provides accurate historical testimony to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Waterhouse's methods are thorough, sound, and well-defended, consequently, his effort is a solid contribution for any who wish to investigate both the origin and purpose of the Gospel of Matthew." **Dr. Monte Shanks, Assistant Professor of New Testament, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.**

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Papias and his Elder John
(Three Topical Studies)

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and that Jesus Is the Promised Savior

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Preface

Papias lived in the next following generation from the Apostles. His surviving comments are essential to background conclusions about the *Gospels*.

Should Papias be understood and trusted that the Apostle Matthew's writing ministry was the basis for the canonical *Gospel of Matthew*? Who was Papias' "Elder John" and what was his connection to the *Gospel of John* and the *Book of Revelation*? Was the author the Apostle John or some secondary obscure John?

This book gives attention to these difficult but vital questions. As they overlap with the reliability of the *Gospels*, a third study on fulfilled Messianic Prophecy is included.

This book came about because Ed Nolan, a member of the congregation of Westcliff Bible Church, wanted to study these issues despite his battle with cancer. Also, few of my works would have been finished without our editor, Alan Good.

All of us pray these studies counter needless skepticism and result in greater confidence in the reliability of the Bible, especially concerning the life and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has promised forgiveness and eternal life to any who trust Him as Savior. We invite all readers to place faith in God the Son, the risen Savior.

Topic I

Papias and Matthew

(Who Wrote Matthew's Gospel?)

INTRODUCTION

Papias of Hierapolis (now in Turkey) wrote in approximately AD 95-110 that ὁ Ἰωάννης Ματθαῖος ἐκράτησεν τὰς προφητείας [Greek *logia*] ἐν τῇ Ἑβραϊκῇ [Aramaic] γλώσσῃ.¹

Numerous early church fathers linked this to the Gospel of Matthew (see p. 36). However, because no Hebrew/Aramaic document has survived, modern scholars reject this early evidence. Liberals disdain Papias's information.

No doubt Papias meant our Mt [Matthew], but he had no more seen a Mt in a Semitic language than had those later witnesses who depended upon Papias's report. We must concede that the report that Mt was written by Matthew ὡς ἐν τῇ Ἑβραϊκῇ γλώσσῃ is utterly false, however, it may have arisen.²

This [Papias's] information is, however, unclear and of dubious value. In fact, it does not seem to be a reference to our Matthew, which was written in Greek.³

But this [Papias's] statement is of no value in establishing authorship. The *logia* are not the same as a gospel ἡ ἀποστολή. Because there is no evidence elsewhere that Matthew was written in

¹ Translation from Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Volume 1, books 1-5, *Loeb Classical Library*, translation by Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 3.39.16. This date for Papias and the conclusion that his association with ὁ πρεσβύτερος Ἰωάννης referred to the Apostle John are based upon conclusions from previous research: See Waterhouse, Steven, *Who Wrote Revelation and John's Gospel?: The Identity of Papias' Elder John* (Amarillo TX: Westcliff Press, 2012). For additional study sources see fn. 45.

² Werner Georg Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, translated by Howard Clark Lee (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), pp. 120-21.

³ Robert A. Spivey and D. Moody Smith, *Anatomy of the New Testament*, 3rd edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1982), p. 97.

Hebrew (Aramaic), there is universal agreement that it was originally written in Greek.⁴

This study will support the basic point that the Apostle **Matthew wrote something about Jesus** which in some way has become the material in our Greek Gospel of Matthew. Strong evidence for this conclusion is best viewed in a cumulative fashion taking all points into consideration but, of course, we must study each truth one at a time. While each specific point alone may not prove the proposition, they do add up to a very strong case.

The Early Church and False Authorship

The liberal presupposition is that early Christians falsely attributed authorship to the apostles in propaganda efforts to gain new adherents.⁵ Evidence contradicts this radical assumption. The Apostle Paul warned of forged letters and put his signature or other indications of his authorship in his letters (see 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; Philemon 19; Galatians 6:11). The Book of Hebrews is a case where the Church was unsure of its authorship. Yet, instead of exaggerating its credentials with false apostolic authorship, church leaders just admitted they were uncertain. The Gospel of Mark was not written by an apostle. Yet, even though it was believed Peter's teaching was behind Mark, no one labeled the Second Gospel as "the Gospel According to Peter."

At least three early church documents condemn anyone who falsely attributed a book. Tertullian (160-225) excommunicated a deacon for claiming he had found Paul's third letter to the Corinthians. Serapion, Bishop of Antioch in AD 200, rejected a document falsely attributed to Peter, and the Muratorian Canon in the 200s also spoke of several

⁴ Edwin D. Freed, *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction, 2nd edition* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1991), p. 117.

⁵ "If its ascription to Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, is no more than a guess the church attempted to give a special authority to the most important of its gospels by ascribing it to a disciple and eyewitness," Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), p. 169.

rejected documents that were not composed by Paul.⁶ The evidence is that early Christians did the opposite of exaggerating claims of authorship. If a document did not have strong evidence for connection to an apostle, it was rejected. Yet, regarding the Gospel of Matthew, it was the most trusted and popular Gospel in the early Church.

The Acceptance and Popularity of Matthew

Virtually everyone agrees that Matthew was the most copied and quoted of the four Gospels.

During the first three centuries of the church, Matthew was the most highly revered and frequently quoted canonical Gospel.⁷

But when all such doubts have been given full weight, the study [Massaux's work] remains an impressive demonstration that in the first century after the writing of our New Testament gospels it was Matthew which quickly established itself as the gospel par excellence, the natural place from which to derive the authoritative account of the words and deeds of Jesus. By the middle of the second century the gospel of Luke was being used more alongside Matthew, and in some circles John was much appreciated. But neither of them seems to have rivaled Matthew in any part of the Church for which we have documentation.⁸

The gospel of Matthew was the church's most popular gospel in the decades up to the time of Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180).⁹

⁶ *On Baptism* 17; *Ecclesiastical History* 6.12.3, Muratorian Canon 64-67; see J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), p. 145, and also Ray Van Neste, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to Timothy" in the *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), p. 2321.

⁷ D. A. Carson, "Matthew" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, general editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), p. 19.

⁸ R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, reprint edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), p. 17.

⁹ Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, *The Jesus Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), p. 37.

Yet, Matthew's Gospel was by far the most popular of the Gospels in the early Church.¹⁰

Given the widespread acceptance and popularity of Matthew's Gospel, it is likely its origin was well known in the early Church. False ascription to Matthew would have made no sense as fraudulent tax collectors would not have given the best credibility. Matthew the tax collector would have been among the last choices.¹¹ Yet, every manuscript that has a title or every church father who mentions authorship all attribute the first Gospel to Matthew.

The Place for Matthew's Composition

If scholars make any conclusion about Matthew's place of origin, they either say Antioch, Syria or Syria in general or believe the book started in Israel (probably the Jerusalem church) but was most widely distributed from Syria.¹² Among evidences for this are two verses which refer to Israel as "that land" (see Matthew 9:26 and 31). Therefore, the book's viewpoint is outside the land of Israel. More telling is the reference to Syria in Matthew 4:24. Some Syrian connection becomes important when tied to the fact that Ignatius from Antioch favored the information about the Lord Jesus found in Matthew's Gospel. (See pp. 12-18.)

¹⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, second edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), p. 281.

¹¹ Glasscock gives evidence that tax collectors used oppression and torture against common people in Israel. They in turn hated them, and tax collectors risked "lynching" by the mobs. "According to rabbinic literature, tax gatherers were classified as "robbers" and disqualified from acting as witnesses" Ed Glasscock, "Matthew" in *Moody Gospel Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), pp. 24-25.

¹² E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Boston and Leiden: Brill Academic, 2002), pp. 291-292 and J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, reprint edition (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), p. 103. The Gospel of Matthew could have originated in Israel but have found primary use and distribution later in Antioch, Syria.

The Date for Composition

Any early date for composition of the Gospel of Matthew favors that church tradition about Matthew's authorship is correct. It is unreasonable to think an anonymous document could have been the most popular study on the life of Christ and then several decades later became attributed to an author that had previously been unknown. Furthermore, it is unreasonable to think this could happen without any dissenting opinion. Universal agreement among Christians rarely ever happens unless the conclusion is very strong.

Scholars disagree on the range of dates for Matthew. However, with both an early date (AD 60s or before) or a later date (AD 80-90), one comes back to two important conclusions:

First, an anonymous document whose authorship was unknown at an earlier date is unlikely to lead to complete acceptance later with no dissent as to authorship.

A second point is also important: the tradition of Matthew's authorship must not have arisen from Papias alone. Papias's view that the Gospel of Matthew originated from the Apostle Matthew's work was already the view of Christians when Papias wrote about it in around AD 95-110.

Evidence for an AD 60s date for Matthew

Was Matthew composed before or after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70? A case can be made that the wording, emphasis, and choice of topics in Matthew's Gospel would not be the same had it been written after AD 70.

Matthew 17:24-27 refers to Jesus and Peter paying a temple tax. After AD 70 the Romans continued to enforce this temple tax upon Jews except instead of rebuilding a destroyed Jewish Temple all funds were directed to pay for a pagan temple in Rome called *Jupiter*

Capitolinus.¹³ As it stands the text supports continued payment; this strongly indicates a pre-AD 70 time of composition.

After AD 70 the Sadducees ceased to exist. Yet, Matthew features Jesus debating with them. Mark and Luke have just one reference to these high level priests (Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27). Yet, Matthew contains seven references (3:7; 16:1, 6, 11, 12; 22:23, 34). Why would a book emphasize a debate with a group that no longer existed?

In Matthew 24 Jesus is recorded as predicting the fall of Jerusalem. This dual reference pertains to both the destruction by the Romans in AD 70 and also end-time battles in a future tribulation period. This future aspect is important to keep in mind as none of Jesus' predictions are ultimately untrue, but they do not fit to exact circumstances for the Roman destruction of the Temple and the city in AD 70. The author of Matthew reveals no knowledge of the events of AD 70, and thus, the book should be dated no later than the AD 60s.

If the Gospel of Matthew had been written after AD 70, some of the details in Matthew 24 should have been deleted, modified, or explained to avoid misunderstanding that details of the prophecy about Jerusalem's end time destruction do not fit the actual events of AD 70. Matthew 24:15 warns that when the "desolation" of the Temple is seen, then flee. In fact, the Christians had left the city long before the Romans desecrated the Temple ending sacrifices and worship. If the Temple had already been made "desolate," any author after AD 70 would have made more specific reference to prove Jesus not the Temple elite had spoken for God and/or to explain Jesus' words ultimately refer to the future tribulation period. If first had they waited until the Romans were in the Temple, it would be too late to heed any warning to escape. The Temple was the very last stronghold to be conquered by the besieging Roman army.

¹³ "It is doubtful that Matthew would have included the account in his Gospel at a date at which it would be interpreted as support for pagan idolatry" Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross and the Crown* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2009), p. 188. See also D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, second edition, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), p. 155.

Robinson remarks that silence over the Temple's desolation would be as significant as the silence for Sherlock Holmes of the dog that did not bark.¹⁷

Other features in Matthew's text do not alone establish a pre-AD 70 date, but by way of showing Matthew's emphasis they tend to favor an earlier date.

Only Matthew calls Jerusalem the holy city (4:5; 27:53). Only Matthew refers to Jesus' teachings about the altar (5:23-24; 23:18, 19, 20, 35) or gold in the Temple (23:16-17).¹⁸ The wording of oaths concerning gold in the Temple meant "May the Temple or related objects be destroyed if I do not fulfill my promise."¹⁹ This phrase would only have meaning if the Temple still stood, and highly and needlessly offensive after the Temple had been destroyed. Post AD 70, it would not just be critical of hypocritical leaders but all Jews in common; perhaps not the best way to build bridges to Jewish readers who had recent war trauma.

When Jesus confronted the money changers and livestock venders in the Temple, Mark in 11:17 and Luke in 19:46 quoted Him as saying, "you have made (past tense) the Temple a den of thieves." Matthew 21:13 quoted Jesus words in the present tense, "you are making the Temple a den of thieves." Does this imply Matthew meant to stress that corrupt practices were ongoing as he wrote?

Matthew 28:19-20 refers to baptism before teaching, but the early Church required catechism before baptism. This order supports an early date. Internal evidences tend overall to an early date for Matthew.

External evidences from the church fathers also favor an early date. For example, Irenaeus (c. 115-200), bishop of Lyons, now in France, wrote that Matthew was composed among the Jews "while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome" ²⁰ The early church fathers dated Matthew

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁸ Luke 11:51 refers to the altar but during Old Testament times, and Luke 1:11 to the altar of incense, not the altar of burnt offering, and at a time before Jesus' birth.

¹⁹ Kostenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, p. 188.

²⁰ Irenaeus, *AH* 3.1.1. See also Eusebius *HE* 5.8.2.

to the 60s and believed it (or an earlier Aramaic/Hebrew draft) was the first written Gospel.²¹

For these reasons many scholars favor an early date for Matthew's Gospel (no later than AD 60s).²² It is hardly possible that any book's author would start out unknown and then find universal popularity and agreement on authorship many decades later. An early date more strongly supports that Papias alone was not the reason everyone thought Matthew wrote the Gospel. The Matthean authorship conclusion must have pre-dated Papias's writing ministry. He was only one among many who held to Matthew's authorship, and this explains why so many others accepted his statement.

Not all accept the above case for dating the Gospel of Matthew to the AD 60s or earlier. They favor a date of AD 75-90. Still, even with a conclusion for a later date, the previous two key points still stand (see p. 7). Once we keep in mind Matthew is based upon still earlier sources, even a later date of composition would push back to a time

²¹ See Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell in *The Jesus Crisis*, p. 57; and Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids and Leicester, England: Baker Academic and Apollos, 2002), p. 178; Craig Blomberg, "Matthew" in *The New American Commentary*, David C. Dockery, editor (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), p. 39.

²² "All of this evidence appears to point to a date in the 60s" (Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, p. 25). "On balance, then, the preponderance of evidence suggests that Matthew was published before 70, but not long before" (Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 156). "The canonical Gospel of Matthew was very likely composed in Jerusalem for the Jacobean mission, and that means before AD 66 or 67 when the leaders of the mission had departed for Pella" (Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, p. 291). Gundry dates Matthew before AD 63 because he believes Luke was influenced by Matthew. Even without this point he argues for a date at least by the 60s. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew*, second edition, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 599-608. "These clues and many others support a date for Matthew sometime prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70" (Kostenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, p. 188). "In any case, since the Third Gospel is to be dated to around A.D. 60, the First and Second Gospels cannot have been composed later, but must rather be dated to about the same time" (Bo Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Tradition*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 180.

before Papias and to a time when those who knew Matthew personally still lived.

We now study the date for the Gospel of Matthew reasoning from its latest possible date to an even earlier beginning. It is best to sub-divide this discussion between the use of Matthew by Ignatius of Antioch in AD 107 plus or minus a few years and all other rationale for arriving at the latest possible date. Even a later date for the origins of the material of Matthew is still before Papias's time.

Ignatius of Antioch and the Date of Matthew

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was an early church leader worthy of respect. Antioch was the place where believers were first called Christians (Acts 11:26) and obviously a primary center of early Christianity.

In approximately AD 107, Roman authorities escorted Ignatius from Antioch to Rome for execution. On the way Ignatius wrote seven letters to various churches.

Ignatius's life span is uncertain. He need not have been elderly at martyrdom, but certainly the head of one of Christianity's most prominent and historical churches was no child. A birth date around AD 45-60 seems reasonable. Kostenberger conjectures Ignatius's life span to be approximately AD 35 through 110.²³ Polycarp of Smyrna, who knew the Apostle John, lived to about AD 156. Papias also knew John and the daughters of Philip. Ignatius could well have known some of the apostles in his earlier days. Far more certain he knew the followers of the apostles as Papias did. These likely would have visited Antioch even more than Hierapolis or Smyrna.

If Papias knew the disciples of Matthew as he claimed in *HE* 3.39.4, Ignatius certainly did, especially since the Gospel of Matthew was first circulated either in Antioch or at least in the region.

²³ Kostenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, p. 911.

Most interesting is that Ignatius on his way to death repeatedly quoted either the Gospel of Matthew or perhaps more important even earlier sources that had also already been incorporated into the Gospel of Matthew. Bauckham concludes, "I myself would regard six Matthean passages as having virtually certain parallels in Ignatius, and about ten others as being reasonably probable parallels."²⁴

Many scholars, even some liberal ones, believe Ignatius probably quoted the completed Gospel of Matthew.²⁵ Yet, his quotes do not come from across the entire Gospel of Matthew but mostly from material that is only in Matthew not Mark or Luke.²⁶ Thus, both Bauckham and Blomberg agree that Ignatius quoted earlier sources that pre-date Matthew's Gospel but had already also been written into Matthew's Gospel by the time of Ignatius' death.²⁷ Bauckman favors

²⁴ Richard Bauckham, "The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels," David Wenham, ed., *Gospel Perspectives*, Vol. 5. *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985, p. 387, accessed at www.biblicalstudies.org.uk.

²⁵ "He [Ignatius] probably worked with the Gospel of Matthew (e.g., *Smyrn.* 1.1) " " Michael W. Holmes, third edition, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2007), p. 174. "There is but one probable citation" " Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 428. Hill is arguing that Ignatius' knowledge of John is just as strong as Matthew, but the comment still means Ignatius probably quoted the written Gospel of Matthew. Bauckham mentions that even Helmut Koester thought Ignatius indirectly used Matthew's Gospel. "Koester denies that Ignatius knew any written Gospel, though he held at one point he was indirectly dependent upon Matthew" Richard Bauckham, "The Study of Gospel Tradition Outside the Canonical Gospels" p. 387.

²⁶ "What is surprising is that nearly three-quarters of the references in Ignatius are found in M material, that is, in passages peculiar to Matthew, even though such material comprises only about one-quarter of the Gospel." See Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, p. 261.

²⁷ "One of the most striking and surest results of studies of writers who probably knew Synoptic tradition independently of the Synoptic Gospels is that they knew, not simply independent *logia*, but particular "blocks" of tradition " . In my opinion, of all the putative sources of the Synoptic Gospels, the one for which there is the best evidence outside the Synoptic Gospels is not Q, but Matthew's special source " " Bauckham, "The Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels" pp. 378 and 380. "The [Ignatius] must have been following different sources [not just the completed Gospel of Matthew], including those distinctive traditions on which Matthew alone, of

Ignatius was quoting early oral tradition from the church in Antioch which he had memorized.²⁸ Blomberg argues strongly for an early written source that later was used in Matthew's Gospel.²⁹

By either way the information in Matthew's Gospel must be very early and have historical reliability. It is reasonable that the Gospel of Matthew had to have been written at least 20 to 30 years before Ignatius was killed (i.e., about AD 77-87),³⁰ but sources for it are even earlier.³¹ The latest one should date the material found in the Gospel of

the four Evangelists relied í Many scholars doubt whether Matthew relied on actual sources for his canonically unparalleled sections, whereas here is strong evidence that he didö Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, p. 262.

²⁸ öThe difference would be readily explicable if in both cases M was the oral tradition of the church of Antioch, on which Matthew drew some twenty or thirty years before Ignatius wroteö Bauckham, öThe Study of the Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospels,ö p. 398.

²⁹ Throughout *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* Blomberg asserts that the synoptic authors had access to large blocks of previous tradition that were probably written. Though he never says that Matthew composed such early documents, he does believe the sermons now in the Gospel of Matthew came from those still earlier written traditions (see pages 46-47, 182, 185, 261-262, 281, 286-290).

³⁰ Bauckham dates Ignatius's death at around AD 107. He concludes his article by a suggested date for Matthew's composition at ösome twenty or thirty years before Ignatius wrote.ö See Bauckham, öThe Study of Gospel Traditions Outside the Canonical Gospel,ö pp. 388 and 398. This is reasonable especially considering the additional points in the next section of this article.

³¹ By-passing the evidence that Matthew was composed in the 60's, and reasoning back from Ignatius's usage alone, still places the content within Matthew at a time when many who knew the apostles still lived. This does not prove the accuracy of every detail, but any major alterations about the life and claims of Jesus would not be acceptable to the original followers of the apostles. The Gospel of Matthew has to have been close enough to what they had been taught. It could not present a greatly altered Jesus, only partially recognizable to the first generation of Christians.

It is quite true that an early date for content alone says nothing about authorship. However, this still relatively early date taken together with the place of origin, the popularity of the Gospel, the Church's practices on anonymity and its care with authorship, and desire to follow the apostles, strongly supports the traditional description to Matthew.

Matthew perhaps in the AD 70s. This still results in a conclusion that the material in Matthew was very early and the author was likely well known before Papias, especially in Antioch where the book was either written or enthusiastically welcomed and promoted. Ignatius would have known the identity of its author or else of the book's complete anonymity. Yet all factors considered, there can be confidence that Ignatius knew of an apostolic author. This line of thought still results in a conclusion that the material in Matthew was very early and the author very likely well known, especially in Antioch where the book was especially welcomed and promoted. Blomberg's case for an early written source is persuasive. If so, written materials that later were incorporated within Matthew must be very early. In fact Blomberg argues for blocks of written tradition found in the synoptics dating from even before the epistles were written in the 50s.³²

The authorship of the book was known either to be anonymous or to be traced to an author before Papias's five books were circulating in Syria. If it had been believed the Gospel of Matthew was anonymous, then for reasons presented on pp. 4-6 it is unlikely Papias's comments alone could have produced a universal transfer to identify Matthew as the author. Even less likely would be the scenario that those in Antioch believed the Gospel had been composed by someone else, but they all changed their minds based on the word of an out-of-towner like Papias. This would be especially true if had differed from Ignatius in any major way. Most likely is that the tradition around Antioch and the tradition around Hierapolis were the same. The above date suggests that Papias himself did not originate the idea Matthew was behind the first Gospel. This hypothesis should be considered confirmed by the fact Papias himself wrote his views came from reliable sources in the generation before him (see pp. 22-23). This makes it reasonable to think the generation before Ignatius also would have known the origin of the Gospel of Matthew.

³² See also footnote 29. This date comes from Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, pp. 280-295 where he argues that the authors of the epistles knew the same tradition that was used within the synoptics. Blomberg (following Wenham) concludes Paul in 1st Thessalonians must have known pre-synoptic versions of Jesus's sermons in the Gospels including sections peculiar to Matthew (p. 290). This makes Bernard Orchard's chart comparing the Thessalonian letters to the synoptics worthy of study. Orchard believed Paul quoted the Gospel of Matthew directly. Blomberg would link the same data to sources even earlier than Matthew (see Bernard Orchard and Harold Riley, *The Order of the Synoptics and Why Three Synoptic Gospels?* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), p. 119.

It is highly unlikely that the Romans allowed Ignatius to haul his library along with him in chains, and Ignatius likely wrote in a hurry. He probably was quoting lines he learned in his youth from his authoritative and beloved instruction. This just happens to be material also already found in Matthew's Gospel even before Ignatius wrote his last letters.³³ Ignatius probably quoted from the completed Gospel of Matthew. He certainly quoted information that had been already incorporated within it. While Ignatius never directly said the Apostle Matthew was the author and even possibly may not have quoted the Gospel of Matthew directly, he certainly must have known about this Gospel written in the same place at least twenty and perhaps forty years earlier. It is incredible to think neither Ignatius nor pastoral leaders taught by him did not know the Gospel of Matthew's origin and authorship (whether named or anonymous). Since Papias knew the followers of the apostles, including Matthew, in distant Hierapolis, Ignatius would have known the followers of Matthew in Antioch. They must not have rejected the Gospel of Matthew then circulating in Antioch. If the beloved and eventually martyred Ignatius or Matthew's disciples had disapproved of Matthew's Gospel in any way, these views would have been clearly known.

It is easy to prove Ignatius stressed apostolic authority and teaching.³⁴ While he may not have specifically written about his views on the

³³ Perhaps a blend of thinking Ignatius was relying on written sources but also oral tradition makes sense. Roman executioners would not have allowed him to haul along his library to execution. Therefore, as Ignatius frantically wrote letters, he quoted from memory from his most valued apostolic teaching about Jesus. Therefore, he knew the full written Gospel, but perhaps he remembered better the traditions memorized in his youth. These sources both written and oral had been long incorporated into the Gospel text, but Ignatius may well have memorized them before the First Gospel was completed. They were the words that came most easily to mind and Ignatius quoted them in his final letters on the way to his death.

³⁴ Hill remarks, "This view [Papias's views on the Gospels including Matthew] cannot simply be assumed without question to have been held by the visiting bishop of Antioch [i.e., Ignatius] (428). Yet, Ignatius places the council of the apostles in the heavenly hierarchy along the Father and the Son [ibid] . . . The apostles are a definite and closed group which participate in the transcendent, heavenly hierarchy, along with Jesus Christ and the Father . . . Such exalted or quasi-divine notions of the apostolate and of apostolic authority are at least commensurate with those that accompanied the

authorship of Matthew, he must have known about the origin of this study on Christ that was popular and known to be circulating in his place and time. Given Ignatius' stress on apostolic authority and that his favorite material about the Lord Jesus had already been incorporated into the written Gospel of Matthew, what are the chances this book had no tie whatsoever to an apostle? What are the chances Ignatius' disciples and later successors who accepted the first Gospel as the Apostle Matthew's held a different view from their revered leader, Ignatius?³⁵

emergence of a new set of Christian "apostolic" Scriptures, and are entirely consistent with the attitudes we have discovered in Papias and his elder. If Ignatius was aware of a body of apostolic teaching, whether oral or written, we can be assured that he held it up as embodying divine authority [p. 430] . Ignatius' doctrine of the apostolate is part of the essential setting for examining the question of his possible borrowings from any writings which had any claim to being apostolic in his day. It shows us that the matter of apostolic authority is not only viable in his thought, it is of tremendous importance . Ignatius would be attentive and solicitous about any body of apostolic teaching, whether it had to do directly with the life of Christ or with moral or theological instruction [p. 431]. Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, pp. 428-431. Ignatius clearly wanted to follow apostolic authority. His letters show that Ignatius was acquainted either with Matthew or a document very clearly akin to it. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997 paperback edition), p. 46. The Gospel of Matthew had early ties to Ignatius' region. It is not at all likely Ignatius' favorite documents on the life and teaching of Christ had no ties to the apostles. Titles were likely being attached to the Gospels around Ignatius' time. The conclusion that the materials Ignatius quoted had no tie whatsoever to the Apostle Matthew is contrary to many lines of evidence.

³⁵ It is difficult to believe questions about the authorship of the Gospel never came up during Ignatius' ministry or that Ignatius only first started using this material in danger at the final stage of his life. Given Ignatius told his pastoral subordinates and congregation to follow apostolic teachings, that the Gospel of Matthew had already been composed, and that it contained the same information Ignatius felt was his best source for the life of Christ, knowledge about his book's background would have been a very important topic for discussion for the leaders under Ignatius' charge. Whether this written Gospel was unfaithful to the life and teaching of the Savior or whether if it was valuable for use in the churches, it would seem to have been part of Ignatius' pastoral duty to give guidance. It is most likely questions would arise about Ignatius' own views about the Gospel. It is highly probable they were well

Scholars often conclude the title ðaccording to Matthewö was being added to the text around AD 100-125.³⁶ If titles for the Gospel were being given either during Ignatius ministry, or soon after, what are the chances Ignatius himself would have opposed naming Matthew as the author? It is not reasonable to think a book written in or near Antioch would start as known to be anonymous or written by a different author but end as the most popular resource for the teaching of Christ attributed to Matthew. Ignatius must have known the book's origin and approved or allowed its use in the churches under his care.

Those who think the church leaders in Antioch who came after Ignatius contradicted his own views on his most cherished source for the life and teachings of Christ are going contrary to the evidence toward an illogical inference. The strongest view is that those who succeeded Ignatius as leaders in Antioch also followed his own views about the Gospel of Matthew. Bock, in *Studying the Historical Jesus* says ðí this Gospel was widely accepted and the most popular in the early period, judging by how frequently the fathers quote from it. The likelihood is excellent that its roots were well known to the early church, or it would never have received such early and widespread acceptance. If this is the case, the traditional argument for Matthew the apostle is stronger than it might first appear.ö³⁷

known and very hard to believe his subordinates and later successors would have diverged and gone in a completely new direction on a book containing Ignatius's most treasured teachings about Jesus. It is especially unlikely that after they had been warned to follow strictly apostolic authority, they would choose a book with none contrary to their beloved and martyred leader.

³⁶ See page 19 for quotations from scholars who believe the titles for the Gospels were added around AD 100.

³⁷ Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, p. 24. Keener has come to this same conclusion. In previous research he had rejected Matthew as the author of the First Gospel. Later he changed his mind. Though he holds to a later date of its composition ðin the late 70sö (p. 34), he now accepts Matthean authorship because, ðAuthorship would be the *last* point forgottenö (p. 32) Craig S. Keener, ðMatthewö in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, Grant R. Osborne, editor (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), pp. 32-34.

Other Considerations for the Latest Possible Date for Matthew's Gospel

The Gospels do not name their authors. Yet, titles with names were attached at an early date.

Wallace dates these titles to AD 125. Yet, Carson and Moo (following Hengel) Ellis, and Reicke all favor AD 100.

Some scholars suggest that this title was added as early as 125 CE.³⁸

In all likelihood the Gospel that was titled "According to Matthew" by AD 100.³⁹

Hengel argues that as soon as two or more gospels were publicly read in any one church—a phenomenon that certainly occurred, he thinks not later than AD 100—it would have been necessary to distinguish between them by some such device as a title. The unanimity of the attributions in the second century cannot be explained by anything other than the assumption that the titles were part of the work from the beginning. It is inconceivable, he argues, that the gospels could circulate anonymously for up to sixty years, and then in the second century display unanimous attribution to certain authors. If they had originally been anonymous, then surely there would have been some variation in second century attributions.⁴⁰

As will be demonstrated here, the titles may be dated to around AD 100 when historical information was still available.⁴¹

³⁸Daniel B. Wallace, "Matthew: Introduction, Argument, Outline," www.bible.org, accessed 02/03/2009, p. 1.

³⁹Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, p. 252 fn. 77.

⁴⁰Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp.140-141 following Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 64-84. See also Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2000), pp. 48-56.

⁴¹Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Tradition*, p. 150.

The Gospel of Matthew must have believed to have been written by Matthew before AD 100-125. At the very least people like Ignatius would have known the traditional authorship.

Later writings of the early church fathers most often quoted Paul's epistles. They also oppose heresies such as Gnosticism. Matthew contains neither feature. On this basis alone liberal scholars reason that Matthew cannot be later than AD 90.⁴² Again, its sources would be earlier. Even this date extends back into the times of those who knew what the apostles had taught about the life of Christ. The Gospel of Matthew must have been close enough to what the early Christians had always been taught about Jesus' life and teaching to become the most popular Gospel.⁴³

If one disagrees with the evidence above that Matthew was written before AD 70, how long after AD 70 would it take before the selected emphases within Matthew's Gospel would become passé? How long after the Sadducees had become extinct would one write a book that emphasized their challenge? How long after the Temple had been destroyed would only Matthew include a reference to the Temple tax? If one disagrees that the above evidence establishes a pre-AD 70 and chooses a post-AD 70 date, one can still not reasonably assert they point to a time decades and decades after the era of Temple Judaism and its debate with early Christians. Even with the weakest link of

⁴²Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 156 in reference to Kilpatrick.

⁴³ The *Didache* (teaching) if dated early would also support an early date for Matthew. Hill seems to lean this way, "That is, the *Didache* presupposes the finished Gospel of Matthew (possibly Luke also), not simply any postulated, earlier forms, and not simply oral tradition" see C. E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 201. Ellis agrees with an early date for *Didache* "c. A.D. 50-70" and Powell citing Craig Evans says, "dates back possibly as far as AD 70." See Ellis, *The Making of New Testament Documents*, p. 55 and Doug Powell, *Christian Apologetics* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2006), p. 143, citing Craig A. Evans. *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), p. 157; Kostenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, p. 187 fn. 22; Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 337-339.

reasoning for dating the Gospel of Matthew's composition, the result is perhaps no later than AD 85 but still based on still earlier sources.

Conclusion on the Date of Matthew's Gospel

This study adopts a date for Matthew no later than the AD 60s. Yet, if we conclude the book's information comes from the 70s, the result is still a time close to the apostles. Again this means the historical material in Matthew is reliable. Either date is too early to think the book's origin was unknown but decades later was attributed to Matthew by everyone and regarded as the best book on Jesus. Had authorship been unknown, we would have expected a parallel to the epistle of Hebrews with the early Christians saying they did not really know the author. It is highly unlikely that an unknown book would then be universally attributed to Matthew.

Most important for assessing Papias's credibility is that whether the early date for Matthew (AD 60s) or a later date for its origin (AD 70s or 80s) be accepted, Papias alone was not the origin of the view that Matthew wrote about Jesus and that Matthew's document became the information in the Greek Gospel of Matthew. Papias shared this view with others who already held it, and Papias's statements were approved by his early readers because they already shared his views on the origin of Matthew. Carson and Moo summarize their very similar view this way: "The argument that Matthew was understood to be the author of the first gospel long before Papias wrote his difficult words affirming such a connection seems very strong, even if not unassailable."⁴⁴

The combination of the Church's caution in attributing authorship and rejecting forgeries, the widespread and early popularity of Matthew's Gospel, and its early date all support that Papias was correct. In addition, while Papias himself was early (AD 95-110), his views came from the generation before him. The above line of reasoning only leads back to Papias's own statement that his views came from his predecessors (*HE* 3.39.4).

⁴⁴ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 142.

Papias and his Sources of Information

The evidence above indicates that Papias himself was not the origin of the tradition that tied the Apostle Matthew to the book labeled "according to Matthew." The early Church's care on matters of authorship, the popularity of the first Gospel, and the early date of its sources and composition establish that others already shared Papias's views. His specific words are the earliest that now exist but other known factors show Papias inherited and shared his tradition from still earlier Christian leaders.

Is this not exactly what Papias himself claimed? He did not invent his traditions but rather was a keen student of the followers of the Apostles, including those who had known Matthew (*HE* 3.39.4). He also listened to the Apostle John.⁴⁵ Papias was early enough. He wrote his five volume books around AD 95-110, but his information was earlier still. When he wrote about his learning days, they were long in his past, perhaps as early as AD 80.⁴⁶

After nearly 2,000 years one could hardly expect information from a better connected source. Around AD 80 Papias learned from those earlier still.

What are the chances that Papias knew the disciples of Matthew, but his information on the Gospel of Matthew was totally wrong? While the surviving quotations from Papias do not specifically say Papias's views about the authorship of Matthew came from the Apostle John, they do say his view on the authorship of Mark came from "The Elder John" meaning the Apostle John. Shall we then suppose they never discussed the more popular Gospel being promoted at Antioch? Suppose there had been any disputes, challenges or doubts about the

⁴⁵ For arguments that Papias's Elder John should be equated with the Apostle John and a relatively early date for Papias's ministry see Monte A. Shanks, *Papias and the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), pp. 154-157, 288; Steven Waterhouse, *Who Wrote Revelation and John's Gospel?* (available for free download at www.webtheology.com), and Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Date of Papias: A Reassessment" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 26/2, June 1983, pp. 181-191.

⁴⁶ This date is Richard Bauckham's suggestion from Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 14.

origin on the Gospel of Matthew. Are we to believe Papias would not have settled them by asking the Apostle John?

If anyone's credibility is questionable, it is modern scholars who dismiss the evidence for Papias with only their own bold assertions about Papias's statements being worthless. Papias lived early enough and was well enough placed to still earlier and trustworthy sources that scholars today should respect him.

It is true that Eusebius called Papias a man of limited intelligence (*HE* 3.39.4). However, this is a reference to Papias believing that Christ would set up a millennium after His Second Coming. By contrast Eusebius quotes Papias on the subject of Gospel origins.

Eusebius's comments indicating his prejudice against premillennialism seem not to contradict Papias was a valuable source on the background of the Gospels. Papias, based upon still earlier authority, believed the Gospel of Matthew should be tied to the Apostle Matthew's writing ministry. This foundational point should be accepted as truth. Some of the details in Papias's sentence about the origin of Matthew are difficult. Perhaps Papias's definition of the *logia* Matthew wrote has the best chance of a solution.

What were the *logia* that Matthew composed?

Many scholars do not totally dismiss Papias. They believe the Apostle Matthew wrote a limited document that was in a small way later incorporated into the book we call the Gospel of Matthew. Conjecture on Papias's *logia* include a list of Messianic prophecies or Q or something unknown. Perhaps it was only a short list of Jesus's "sayings." After considering the options, Carson and Moo conclude, "It is thus highly unlikely that (the *logia*) should be understood to refer to Q or a book of 'testimonies'"⁴⁷

In the New Testament *logia* is translated "oracles" in Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12; and 1 Peter 4:11. It refers to divine revelation. The emphasis in Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2 and Hebrews 5:12 may be upon the words (or quotations) specifically spoken by God

⁴⁷ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 145.

Himself, but it is not possible to limit the reference to only quotations of God's words. "Actions speak louder than words." Quotes from God from the burning bush and/or Mt. Sinai would be emphasized in Acts 7:38, but one could hardly exclude God's actions from His revelation. God also "communicated" by bringing plagues on Egypt, parting the Red Sea, sending manna, and causing Mt. Sinai to quake. It is also true the whole written record of the Old Covenant is probably included within Romans 3:2 even if direct revelation from God is stressed. The entire Old Testament is God's divine revelation to Israel. The use of *logia* in the New Testament applied to Papias' definition does not support a short list of isolated quotations from Jesus, rather an account of His divine message as delivered to humanity. This is indeed how Papias himself used this term. Papias' own usage of the term indicates he refers to a longer document including not just the sayings or words of Christ but also His deeds.

Papias had also called the Gospel of Mark *logia* and further defined it as a collection of information about "things said or done by the Lord" (HE 3.39.15). The title of Papias' own five-volume study was "The Exegesis of the Lord's *logion*" (HE 3.39.1). In his own books Papias discussed not only the "words" of the Lord but also His "deeds." When Papias wrote that Matthew composed the *logia* of the Lord, he was not referring to a limited document. It was either the entirety of what he knew as the Gospel of Matthew or a major source reworked into our Gospel of Matthew. Gerhard Kittel acknowledges Papias used *logia* in reference to his own writing as

ί obviously not meant to limit the work to a collection of sayings ί . Whatever merit there may be in modern theories which postulate a *logia* source (Q), i.e., a collection of dominical sayings, these theories cannot appeal to what the Papias fragment tells us about Mt. [Matthew].⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel, editor, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), IV: 140-141.

British scholar Westcott in his *Origin of the Gospels* said that the term *logia* used by Papias can mean no less than a written Hebrew Gospel.⁴⁹ Even Raymond Brown allows this definition.

Moreover, since Papias reported that Mark was a follower of Peter who did not make an orderly account of the Lord's *logia* and it is widely agreed Papias was referring to the Gospel of Mark, plausibly he could have been referring to a gospel when he says Matthew arranged in order the *logia* in Hebrew/Aramaic.⁵⁰

At this point the main proposition of this study has been established. Matthew wrote something substantial about the life and teaching of Christ that became the basis for the Greek Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament. Shortly, this research will discuss options and probabilities of how the Apostle Matthew's authoritative data became the New Testament book. Yet, there must be a preliminary step disputing the view that Papias's words about Matthew refer to an entirely different book and its close relationship to the Greek so-called Gospel of Matthew was and is a colossal blunder.

Papias' Words in Relation to the Present Greek Gospel of Matthew

One line of objection to a link between Papias's statement and the present Greek Gospel of Matthew is that maybe his words referred to an entirely different now-lost book (or to one of the later Hebrew Gospels, see appendix, pp. 440-47). Could Papias have made reference to a lost book thought to have been written by Matthew that bears no connection to the book in the Bible today?

Liberal critics of the New Testament might think Papias's referred to one book but excited readers in the early Church superficially and mistakenly linked his sentence to a popular Gospel whose authorship had previously been unknown. The arguments above already show this

⁴⁹ Brooke Foss Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1882), p. 194.

⁵⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 209.

to be most unreasonable (pp. 4-6). The origins of canonical Matthew were believed at a time before Papias.

Still, an additional and important observation should be brought forward proving Papias himself did link the Apostle Matthew's writing ministry directly to the canonical Matthew.

Papias' books no longer exist. Their wording is known only through secondary quotations within other church fathers, especially Eusebius. Still, Papias' lengthy books on the *logia* of the Lord did exist in European libraries down to the Middle Ages.⁵¹ In 1981 research was published showing that Papias' books were used by 13th century Armenian scholar Vardan Vardapet.⁵² Shanks reviewed Adolf Harnack's efforts to find Papias' books. While there is no evidence they still exist, these books probably existed in European libraries one in 1218, another in 1341, and possibly a third as late as 1534.⁵³

We no longer can read Papias' works, but they were circulated in the early Church and remained at least until the 13th century. Especially important is the observation that all early readers understood the *logia* of the Lord being explained within Papias' books as having a connection to and overlapping with the Greek canonical Gospel of Matthew. They could read Papias' full content and commentary on the *logia* and also believed canonical Matthew was written by the Apostle Matthew.⁵⁴ Papias' full words must have commented on data that was identical or very close to the text of canonical Matthew. Those who disagree with the trustworthiness of Papias may not say everyone has misunderstood him by taking his comments about a different and now lost book to refer to the canonical Greek Matthew. On the contrary, Papias' own explanations must have been about words recognized to be identical or very close to the Greek Gospel of Matthew by all who could read them. It is not a mistake to link Papias' words about

⁵¹ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 142.

⁵² See Bernard Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics: Why Three Synoptic Gospels?* p. 171 and fn. 6; Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, p.385.

⁵³ Shanks, *Papias and the New Testament*, pp. 88-89.

⁵⁴ See p. 36 for a list of early Church fathers who agree with Papias that Matthew wrote an Hebrew/Aramaic Gospel that had become the canonical Gospel.

Matthew's writing about the Lord Jesus Christ to the book his readers knew and everyone today knows as the Gospel of Matthew.

Papias was early and had excellent connections to authoritative people earlier still. While some details are uncertain, he should be trusted that the Apostle Matthew is the authority behind canonical Matthew.

Internal evidence from Matthew's Gospel alone might not prove Matthew's connection. Yet, details not only fit a link to Matthew; they favor the same conclusion as the stronger external evidence from church history.

Internal Clues on the Authorship of Matthew

Nothing written in the text of Matthew demands that Matthew be the author. Yet, nothing contradicts it, much fits his authorship, and a few points support it.

A cheating and lying tax collector would not be the choice for a Gospel author if it were only a guess or exaggeration. Of the Apostles, Matthew would be low on the credibility list. Yet, judged by capability Matthew's authorship makes more sense than the others. A tax collector would likely have known Greek and had a habit of keeping careful records.

The text of Matthew makes reference to coins and financial details not given in the other Gospels.⁵⁵ Only Matthew refers to the two-drachma coin (17:24), the stater (17:27), and the very valuable talent (18:24-25; 25:15-28). Matthew 6:12 gives the wording in the Lord's Prayer as

⁵⁵ Luke also contains references to money or tax collectors not found even in Matthew. However, these may primarily indicate his physician's perspective, interest in women, and repentance. The Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37, is a story about injury and rehab not just paying an innkeeper; Luke 18:1-8 and 21:1-4 refer to poor widows. Matthew chose not to include episodes that present tax collectors as good examples of repentance such as in Luke 18:9-14 and Zaccheus in Luke 19:1-10. Luke does include material involving money that is lacking in Matthew. Yet, when his special interests are included, the text in Matthew shows more interest in strictly accounting, coinage, and tax matters.

and forgive us our debts í ö not as in Luke 11:4, öí forgive us our sins í ö Only Matthew 17:24-27 refers to the temple tax.

While other gospels refer to tax collectors, only Matthew 21:31 quotes Jesus as saying, öTruly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.ö

Matthew 22:19 uses a more precise term than parallels in Mark 12:15 and Luke 20:24. Mark and Luke say, öBring me a denarius í ö Matthew 22:19 says, öBring me a *nomisma* ...ö The term *numismatic* derives from this, and a paraphrase might be, öbring me the government's minted coin or bring me the legal tender. They issued this coin. Give it back.ö This specific word may not be a technical term that only a tax official would know, but it sounds the way a tax collector might think and was probably Jesus's more specific point. öGive them back the coins they issued.ö⁵⁶

Mark and Luke write that Judas betrayed Jesus for money (Mark 14:11; Luke 22:5). Only the Gospel of Matthew gives the exact amount, öthirty pieces of silverö (26:15) and only Matthew 27:3-10 makes connection back to Zechariah 11:12-13 regarding this amount and the purchase of a burial plot still known öto this dayö (verse 8). Other unique financial notations include the parable of the laborers in Matthew 20:1-16 and the bribe for soldiers to claim grave robbing by the disciples (Matthew 28:11-15).

While such financial interests may not prove the author was an accountant/tax collector, they certainly fit that conclusion and even sometimes favor it (e.g., Matthew 6:12; 17:24-27; 21:31; 26:15).

The conversion story of a tax collector named Levi is found in Mark 2 and Luke 5. However, only Matthew uses the name *Matthew* in Matthew 9:9. Perhaps Jesus changed this tax collector's name, and the text in Matthew prefers a personal touch. If one accepts Marcan priority, then the change may also be evidence Matthew himself made the change. Anyone with less authority would not have felt liberty to make alterations.

⁵⁶ This observation may be traced to Kostenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, p. 184.

Probably the most important details within the Gospel that suggest Matthew's involvement are those which give uncomplimentary comments. In Luke 5:28-29 the tax collector "left everything behind" in order to follow Jesus and next "gave a big reception for Him in his house." Matthew 9:9 downplays by only saying, "he got up and followed" with an oblique reference to "the house" in verse 10. Also, while all apostolic lists include Matthew's name (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) only Matthew 10:3 mentions his dishonorable and crooked occupation, "Matthew the tax collector." The downplaying of Matthew's virtue and added reference to his sordid past would be improbable from an admiring fan (especially after Matthew's death) and more likely indicate Matthew's self-references. Internal clues from the text fit Matthew's involvement and sometimes favor it. Details on money and especially comments that show deprecation for Matthew himself support the external evidence that Papias was correct. The Apostle Matthew's work is connected with the Gospel of Matthew.

Main Conclusion

Viewed cumulatively several truths added together make a sufficient case that Matthew's teaching is behind the Gospel that bears his name. The early Church was careful to determine authorship and reject forgeries. Still, Matthew was the most popular Gospel in the early Church. The Greek Gospel of Matthew came long before Papias, probably in the 60s; but it was still long before Papias and Ignatius, even reasoning backwards from Ignatius' usage in around AD 107 (back to AD 70/80 at least in its original sources). People who knew the apostle were still alive then. The Greek Gospel of Matthew was likely composed, or at least published and circulated in Antioch. Therefore, Ignatius knew its roots and he was one who demanded apostolic authority. It is highly unlikely Ignatius' successors would have ever contradicted him on a book that had already been written and contained his favorite teaching on the life of Christ. The popularity of the First Gospel among Ignatius' successors proved Ignatius had certainly not disapproved it. The title "Gospel According to Matthew" was also being attached probably at the time of Ignatius and most probably at the time of Papias.

Taken as a whole, evidence shows Papias alone did not start the view that the Apostle Matthew was the source of the Gospel of Matthew.

Papias himself was early and well-connected to still earlier and credible sources including the Apostle John and Matthew's personal disciples. Papias's statement that the Apostle Matthew was the authority and source for the canonical Gospel of Matthew should be accepted as true.

With this primary conclusion settled, this study continues with other details from Papias's comments about Matthew. Was there an original Hebrew/Aramaic draft for the Greek Gospel of Matthew? What can we know about the transfer of information from any semitic language original to the canonical Greek Gospel of Matthew?

Was there a Hebrew/Aramaic Original Draft for Matthew?

Papias believed there had been an original draft by the Apostle Matthew that was subsequently incorporated into the canonical Greek Matthew. No semitic language original still exists.⁵⁷ How shall we explain its absence? The option that will later be proposed in this study (see pp. 38-41) is that everyone believed Matthew's teaching had been accurately transferred into the Greek Gospel of Matthew. Thus, the extinction of any original language draft is best explained by thinking it was a transitional document not much used after the Greek Matthew began to circulate so widely among Christians who knew Greek and struggled with Hebrew/Aramaic. This scenario may be implied by the end of Papias's own quote where he used the past tense for efforts to translate Matthew's work into Greek. By the time Papias wrote his books such "translations" had ended because the authoritative Greek Gospel was regarded as the same material as Matthew's original but in a more useful language.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See appendix pages 44-47 for evidence that all of the later Hebrew gospels originated after canonical Matthew. Therefore, they should not be considered to be Matthew's original document.

⁵⁸ There are many options for understanding Papias's phrase "each interpreted [translated] them as best he could" (*HE* 3.39.16). This could refer to individual interpretation or pastoral translations for sermons. It could refer to oral translation only. If it referred to written translations, then these could have been temporary unofficial documents that had nothing to do with the Greek Gospel of Matthew. Reicke believes Papias's phrase refers to a group of Matthew's disciples who translated Matthew's "proto-Matthew." "Therefore, when Papias stated that different persons translated the Hebrew reports of Matthew to the best of their ability, he saw the issue of their activity just in the

Papias said that Matthew completed the *logia* of the Lord in the Hebrew (Aramaic) *dialectos*. Gundry and Orchard (following Kurtzinger) believe Papias intended by his use of *dialectos* to refer not to language but to writing style.⁵⁹ A parallel example would be Britain and America have separate dialects of English. Perhaps readers have misunderstood Papias. Maybe he never intended to communicate that Matthew wrote in a semitic language, but only with a semitic style. His statement refers not to any Hebrew/Aramaic gospel but directly to the Greek Gospel of Matthew. While the Greek word *dialectos* can refer to style not language, this is a more remote definition. Its primary definition is language, and this is how the word is used in the New Testament (e.g., Acts 1:19; 2:6, 8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14) and that is how all of Papias' early readers understood his word *dialectos* (see p. 36). This is perhaps the greatest objection to the theory. The early church fathers knew Greek word definitions and grammar better than modern scholars. They believed Papias intended to mean Matthew composed in the Hebrew/Aramaic *language*.

Another explanation for the absence of any Hebrew/Aramaic draft for Matthew is that this document never existed. Papias indeed meant a semitic language but made a complete mistake about the language. No such work ever existed.

Greek Matthew. He had learned that a proto-Matthew was transposed from Hebrew or Aramaic into Greek by a team. Disciples in contact with Matthew were said to have translated and edited his collection as correctly as possible. The result here indicated was nothing but the canonical Gospel of Matthew, as was also indicated by Eusebius when he introduced the notice on the translation with an express reference to this Gospel. Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels*, p. 159. While the exact interpretation of Papias' phrase is uncertain, at least it is clear such translations were no longer needed because of the Greek Gospel of Matthew.

⁵⁹ Robert Gundry, Matthew, pp. 617-620; Robert H. Gundry, "The Old Is Better" in *New Testament Essays In Support of Traditional Interpretations* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), pp. 67-68. Gundry argues that the word *hermeneo* used in Papias' phrase in *HE* 3.39.16 refers to "interpretation" (not translation from a different language) when used previously in the title of Papias' own books. Furthermore, while the New Testament favors *dialectos* as "language," all six usages place an article before the *dialectos* unlike Papias (Acts 1:19; 2:6,8; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14 including three references to "the" Hebrew or Aramaic language). See also Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics: Why Three Synoptic Gospels?* pp. 129 fn. 8, 190, 198-199.

The liberal extension of this view further concludes Papias must have been also unreliable about any connection of the Apostle Matthew to the canonical Gospel. Both of Papias's points should be regarded as errors. A common conservative alternative is that Papias only made an error about any Hebrew/Aramaic draft but was correct that the Apostle Matthew's authority and writing ministry stands behind the Gospel of Matthew, which was originally composed in Greek.

The liberal view that Papias was wrong about everything should be rejected. The argument above establishes that the early date and early acceptance for the Greek Gospel of Matthew pre-dated Papias. Papias alone did not originate the view that the Apostle Matthew was the authority for the Gospel of Matthew. Others at the same time shared his view of a connection between the Apostle and the First Gospel.

By contrast it is more possible (still not probable, see below) that Papias alone was the origin for the idea of an earlier Gospel document written in Hebrew/Aramaic. For the sake of argument it is possible that Papias's sources, including even the Apostle John, could have made mistakes (at times John was not writing Scripture under the supervision of the Holy Spirit). The followers of Matthew that Papias encountered could also make mistakes. This is not to concede an error is probable. Yet, thinking Papias alone is responsible for a mix-up on language is more possible than an error about there being no connection whatsoever between the Apostle Matthew and the Gospel of Matthew. Others outside of Papias's social network believed in a connection of the book to the apostle. It is possible the idea of a Hebrew draft started with Papias (or his sources) strictly around Hierapolis.

An error on secondary details is more understandable than an error about foundational information.⁶⁰ Selecting Matthew as the author of the Gospel was a primary point about an unexpected candidate given the dishonesty of tax collectors. By contrast, thinking Matthew wrote first in Hebrew/Aramaic might be an honest and understandable assumption on a related but less important detail.

⁶⁰ Keener's statement is also relevant here. "Authorship would be the *last* point forgotten" Keener, *Matthew*, p. 32.

Perhaps Papias's readers accepted this reasonable assumption on a language without pausing to challenge it. After all, Jesus's and Matthew's primary language was Aramaic. Perhaps his readers never bothered to scrutinize Papias's statement on language as the more important issue was the book's authorship and authority.

Unlike fictitiously attributing authorship to one in such a dishonest profession (contrary to reason), believing a Jewish tax collector wrote in his own language for Jewish people was a most logical assumption. Reasonable mistakes on peripheral matters do not prove mistakes on crucial matters.⁶¹

If Papias did make an error about language, this does not at all mean he was likely wrong about any relationship between the Apostle Matthew and the canonical Matthew text in Greek.

For the sake of argument suppose Matthew never wrote a book about Jesus in a semitic language. Yet, also suppose one comes to this difficult issue already persuaded that the Greek Gospel of Matthew had a date long before Papias and that Papias alone was not the origin of the traditional association of the Apostle Matthew to the Gospel, the following scenario is most probable.

If a Hebrew/Aramaic book never existed, then Papias obviously never had one. Yet, then he must have possessed and valued the Greek text of

⁶¹ Amarillo, TX has two hospitals on the same street next to each other. Over the years a pattern sometimes develops that a church member always goes to the same hospital for insurance or a personal physician choice. Sometimes an emergency call to the church comes that this person is in the hospital for a serious diagnosis. Nearly always the person, time period, and initial diagnosis in a call to the church are correct, but a "panic" call often only refers to "in the hospital" without being specific. Usually it is a safe assumption to go to the same hospital in the past, but not always. The major details of a crisis are correct. A secondary assumption is reasonable and usually true, but not always true. It is easier to make mistakes on points that are reasonable but secondary.

Matthew.⁶² Given Papias had no Hebrew document but did have Greek canonical Matthew, which others accepted as apostolic and

⁶² Shanks questions whether Papias had possession of a Greek canonical Gospel of Matthew. "Some have inferred from Papias' reference to an Aramaic Gospel written by Matthew that he must have known about the canonical Gospel of Matthew. This, however, is not a certainty" Monte Shanks, *Papias and the New Testament*, p. 271. This author's argument in the above text is hypothetical. If Papias had no semitic language original of Matthew, then he must have possessed a Greek Matthew for Papias did have some source from Matthew that helped him compose his study on the teachings of the Lord. Bauckham believes Papias did possess the Greek Gospel of Matthew (see Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 225 and 417-418). Zahn observes that since Papias put translations of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel in the past, Papias was familiar with the Greek canonical Matthew. "if the Greek Matthew is the final outcome of the translation of the Hebrew Matthew testified to by Papias in the Greek congregations of Asia Minor" (Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2:515). While it may not be "certain" Papias had the Greek text of Matthew's Gospel, given an early date for its composition and the travels of apostolic disciples passing through Heirapolis, it would be surprising if Papias did not possess a Greek Gospel of Matthew. Conclusions from previous sections of this present study have been that others before and around Papias shared his view that the Apostle Matthew was associated with the Greek Gospel of Matthew. Papias was not the only leader with this view of its origin. Assuming this conclusion, the following options exist for his possession of Matthew's semitic original:

If no semitic draft by Matthew ever existed, Papias made a mistake about language only because he already accepted the Greek Gospel, which he must have then possessed, to have originated from Matthew.

If a Hebrew/Aramaic Gospel composed by Matthew did exist, then Papias either did or did not have a personal copy. If he did, it would have been possible to compare this semitic document to canonical Matthew. If Matthew's original existed but Papias lacked a personal copy, he would likely have still been correct about its association to the Greek Gospel. Assuming Matthew's original was on the subject of Jesus' life and teaching, everyone would assume some tie to canonical Matthew (regardless of the degree of overlap ranging from a word-for-word translation into Greek down to a research document on the life of Christ that was consulted in the composition of the first Gospel).

If a Hebrew/Aramaic document existed but was mistakenly attributed to Matthew, Papias and any others who had a copy could check its affinity to the Greek Gospel. Yet, if a non-Matthean gospel existed but Papias never saw one and on the basis of rumor alone he made a mistaken connection to canonical Matthew; this mistake was made only because he already concluded canonical Greek Gospel was based upon Matthew's authority and work.

authoritative, Papias most likely then made a reasonable but ultimately false assumption about language *only because he already believed the Gospel he had used as a source for studies on Jesus was written by Matthew*. Therefore, if Papias made a mistake about an earlier draft, it was a reasonable assumption made without careful research in an attempt to support a document he (and his respected sources) *already believed to have been handed down from Matthew*. If there was never any Hebrew/Aramaic source for the Greek Gospel of Matthew, this does not at all mean Papias (and others before and contemporary with him) were wrong on the primary matter of authorship. Carson and Moo conclude Papias did make an error about a semitic draft for Matthew. Yet, they also believe Papias was just sharing an earlier and correct belief that his Greek Gospel was rooted in the Apostle Matthew. Their quote used above also fits here in this line of inquiry about any Hebrew/Aramaic draft: *ὅτι Matthew was understood to be the author of the first gospel long before Papias wrote his difficult words affirming such a connection*⁶³

Any mistake by Papias about Matthew writing in *ὀHebrewō* would have been made in support of the canonical Greek Gospel that he already accepted as being written by Matthew. While the two points about language and ultimate authorship are related, they can and should be distinguished. Matthew's authorship was a surprise choice (i.e., a tax collector!) about a primary point. By contrast, Papias's comments about an original draft in a semitic language would have been a reasonable assumption about a relatively minor detail.

It cannot be disproved that Papias made a secondary mistake about language. However, this need not mean that thinking he was mistaken is the best conclusion. Papias was early with still earlier and reliable sources. Without conclusive evidence to the contrary, he should be given the benefit of doubt. Everyone in the early Church (and until

As will be suggested in the text, Papias should be trusted on matters of both authorship and original language. Yet, if possible errors have happened, they arose because the view that canonical Matthew came from the Apostle Matthew pre-dated Papias. He and others already held this view even before Papias wrote about any original language document (see pp. 7-23).

⁶³ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 142. For arguments that Papias made a mistake about a Matthew Aramaic/Hebrew language original see pp. 143-146.

relatively modern times) agreed with Papias about Matthew writing about Jesus in the language Jesus and Matthew used. Those who disagree have no external evidence to use. Their arguments are from the absence of any now existing semitic draft but even more from the literary style of the Greek Gospel of Matthew. The majority who deny the existence of a semitic original insist canonical Matthew cannot possibly have been a translation from a Hebrew/Aramaic original.

Those who believe Papias was correct on language successfully meet these challenges from those who claim the Greek Gospel of Matthew cannot possibly have started from another language. One way insists the Greek Gospel of Matthew is still a translation from Hebrew or Aramaic. Another views the change from a semitic draft to Greek not as a precise translation but a reworking of the information in a way that still substantially transfers the content from an original semitic language to Greek.

All early church fathers who made comments about the original canonical Matthew agreed there had been an underlying Hebrew or Aramaic document. Irenaeus (c. 180) in *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1 also quoted by Eusebius *HE* 5.8.2; Pantaenus (died about AD 190) quoted by Eusebius *HE* 5.10.3; Tertullian (c. 200-210) in *Adv. Marc.* 4:2; Origen (c. 245) quoted by Eusebius in *HE* 6.25.4; Eusebius himself in *HE* 3.24.5-6; Jerome in *De Vir Ill* 3; Epiphanius in *Panarion* 51.5.3 all believe there was an Aramaic document underneath the Greek Gospel of Matthew.⁶⁴

Kostenberger cautions that modern scholars should not be so confident that canonical Greek could not possibly be an excellent translation from a semitic original. Also, the early church fathers were native Greek speakers who knew their own language better than anyone alive today. They had no difficulty in accepting that Greek Matthew had an underlying semitic language source.⁶⁵ Concluding that a

⁶⁴ This list is a merger of data from Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, pp. 252-253 fn. 80 and Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 145. Zahn believes Origen was independent of Papias, Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2:517.

⁶⁵ However, the excellent Greek of Matthew could have been produced by a skilled translator of an original Hebrew text. Allison noted that many of the early church fathers who affirmed Matthew's authorship of a Hebrew Gospel

Hebrew/Aramaic source is underneath the present Greek Matthew is still plausible not disproven by literary grounds. The external evidence for it is quite strong even if we think other church fathers just followed Papias. At least no one disputed Papias.

Thomas gives a parallel but attractive option. He agrees canonical Matthew should not be viewed as a direct precise translation. Still, he believes Papias was correct on language. An Aramaic document written by the Apostle Matthew was used in the reworked Greek Gospel of Matthew. In various places within *The Jesus Crisis* Thomas says, "The Aramaic edition served as a model and/or source for some of the contents of his [Matthew's] Greek edition. . . though patristic witnesses like Papias uniformly spoke about an Aramaic original for the gospel, they accepted the Greek Matthew as unquestionably authoritative and coming from the Apostle Matthew himself. They offered no explanation for the change in language. Most likely, that indicates their regard for the Greek Matthew as authoritative and substantially representative of the Hebrew *ta logia*." Thomas later gives additional comments about Papias and an original Aramaic document associated with the Gospel of Matthew. "Though the Greek Matthew is not a translation, Matthew may have produced an expanded version of the life of Christ that incorporated much of the original Aramaic without being a direct translation of it."⁶⁶

Both views that accept Papias was correct on language would assert that the fact that no Hebrew/Aramaic Matthew survived is a result of the Greek Matthew being regarded as the same material but in a useful language used by the masses of early churches. The absence of surviving copies in Hebrew/Aramaic does not prove it had never existed.

A decision about whether the Greek Gospel of Matthew had an earlier Hebrew draft boils down to a choice between external evidence versus internal literary clues. If Papias made an error about language, it was

were native Greek speakers who knew Greek better than most, if not all, modern scholars and were in a better position to determine whether the Greek Gospel could have been a translation of a Hebrew original. Kostenberger, Kellum and Quarles, *The Cross, the Cradle, and the Crown*, p. 183.

⁶⁶ Thomas and Farnell, *The Jesus Crisis*, pp. 45 and 79 fn. 52.

because he already accepted the Greek Gospel as authoritative. This cannot be disproven. Yet, it is not likely. Literary clues from the text alone are not conclusive against external evidence that Papias's statement was endorsed by all.⁶⁷ Papias was early. He had contact with leaders still earlier including the personal disciples of Matthew and the Apostle John. It is difficult to believe they were all wrong. It is also unlikely that all church fathers, especially when their native tongue was Greek, would mistakenly agree that there had been an earlier semitic source from the Greek Gospel of Matthew. What are chances everyone was wrong?

The primary conclusion that the Apostle Matthew was responsible for the Gospel of Matthew is quite strong. Papias alone was not the origin of this important truth. In addition, it is best to think Papias was also correct that Matthew had written about the life and teaching of Christ in their own language and that this material was incorporated within the text of Greek Matthew. If so, can anything be known about the process of transfer from Hebrew/Aramaic into the Greek text?

The Transfer From An Earlier Hebrew/Aramaic Document to the Greek Gospel of Matthew

If one accepts the strong probability of an original semitic language source for Matthew, what are the options for its transfer into the Greek Gospel of Matthew? Evidence above suggests that any *logia* compiled by Matthew himself would have been a substantial document including not just the words but deeds of Jesus's life. Options range from a complete draft of the entire Gospel, or extensive but unorganized research notes about Jesus, or a completed book/booklet that was used as a major source for the Greek Gospel of Matthew without being a word-for-word translation. There was a form of ancient shorthand that would have allowed disciples like Matthew to take notes to supplement memory.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ This author once worked on the English translation of a book written in Spanish. After several rounds of editing the result does not read like Spanish but smooth English.

⁶⁸ Richard Bauckham writes, "Such notebooks were in quite widespread use in the ancient world (2 Tim. 4:13 refers to parchment notebooks Paul carried in his travels). It seems more probable than not that early Christians used them." The old suggestion that, among the Twelve, it would be Matthew the tax

First, perhaps Matthew wrote about Jesus in Hebrew/Aramaic then shortly later he himself translated his own book into Greek. Maybe Matthew had a ministry in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), but he relocated to the Antioch region when war broke out between Rome and Israel in AD 66. There his Hebrew/Aramaic teaching would have been needed in Greek.

Second, maybe another disciple translated or reworked Matthew's original work into Greek with Matthew himself giving supervision. Because the text of Matthew tends to downplay Matthew's importance, is preferable to think he himself played a role in the translation or substantial transfer of his material from Hebrew/Aramaic into Greek.

A third less likely possibility is that Matthew's notes were used by an unknown disciple who actually did the work on the Greek Gospel of the Bible today. Because the information for this Gospel came from the Apostle Matthew, the book was named after him even after Matthew himself had passed. In that case, parallels could be made with Mark and Luke. Mark and Luke were authors, but their authority came from Peter and Paul. With this third hypothetical process for Matthew, a difference would be Matthew was not the person to approve the final project; but unlike the Gospels of Mark and Luke, the Apostle himself had actually written the first material. By this possible means, the early Church still regarded the Gospel of Matthew as Matthew's authoritative teaching.⁶⁹

collector who would most likely, owing to his profession, be able to write, might after all be a sound guess and a clue to the perplexing question of the role he might have played somewhere among the sources of the Gospel of Matthew. *Bauckham, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, pp. 288-289.

⁶⁹ Quite a few scholars who do not think Matthew wrote the Greek Gospel of Matthew himself do think the Apostle Matthew probably was a source for an anonymous disciple who actually composed the Gospel. See Bauckham's comment in the previous footnote. Raymond Brown says "did what Matthew wrote in Aramaic/Hebrew play any role in the background of canonical Matthew, thus explaining the title given to the latter work?" While he adds, "we cannot know," he continues "It is not prudent for scholarship to dismiss too facilely as complete fiction or ignorance the affirmation of Papias, an ancient spokesman living within four decades of the composition of canonical Matthew." Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 210-211. De Silva writes, "We need, therefore, an explanation that accounts for the early church's awareness that Matthew was somehow intimately connected with the production of this Gospel and for the problems raised both in the

examination of the external and internal evidence. Both may be honored and yet not stretched beyond their bounds by positing that Matthew did compile an Aramaic sayings source, recording what Jesus taught in the course of his own apostolic ministry. This became the possession of the communities that Matthew founded and nurtured. A disciple of Matthew took his teacher's materials, other Jesus sayings familiar to the community and the Mark's Gospel, and fashioned a presentation of Jesus's life and instruction more complete than any of the sources on their own. Because Matthew stood behind one of these sources, indeed the source that made this Gospel distinctive, it would be quite natural for his name to continue to stand behind the finished product as author and, more importantly for the early church, authenticator of that tradition. David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 235-236. Hengel also allows that an Aramaic source was used in the composition of the Greek Gospel of Matthew. "This would mean that the sources of the evangelist probably also included a collection of the Logia of the Lord which according to Papias was attributed to Matthew." Papias's note about Matthew, which probably goes back to the presbyter John, could thus refer to a historically meaningful context and at the same time explain the pseudepigraphical title of the first Gospel, together with the fact that it then soon came to be regarded as the oldest. Later Hengel adds, "The Logia collections may have derived in the communities from an originally Aramaic collection made by the disciple Matthew. This gave his Gospel the 'apostolic' name." Perhaps here an Aramaic original is identical with the collection made by Matthew which is mentioned by the presbyter John in Papias. Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*, pp. 178, 204-205.

Although the text above prefers Matthew's personal involvement, it allows the possibility Matthew's written work became a source that an unnamed disciple reworked into the finished Greek Gospel. Still the authors just quoted seem to downplay the size and scope of any possible Matthean source used in the final product. Given their concession that an Aramaic/Hebrew document existed, its later extinction is best explained by the position that it was extensively or to quote Thomas "substantially" transferred to the Greek Gospel of Matthew (see page 37).

Furthermore, it seems safe to assume any original notetaking by the Apostle Matthew would be extensive not minimal and that the early church accepted Matthew as the author of the canonical Greek Gospel is best explained by a full use of a major source. Matthew's abandonment of his career and dedication to follow Jesus for years indicated a major commitment and interest. His background involved record keeping. If we grant he wrote something about Jesus, why would we suppose it would be brief and

The third possibility cannot be rejected as impossible. However, details within the book which tend to disparage Matthew favor his personal involvement as translator or supervisor. To write the Gospel of Matthew any unknown disciple must have been a Matthew "fan." This means it is unlikely he would have included references that downplayed Matthew's greatness. On the contrary, the expectation would be that the text would include even more praise for the Apostle Matthew than exists in the Gospel. This would have been even more true after Matthew's death. Therefore, it is preferable to think Matthew either translated his own semitic original or that he personally approved the final Greek Gospel of Matthew.

Review of Major Conclusions

É Papias in AD 95-110 wrote that Matthew's writing ministry was connected to the Gospel of Matthew. Papias knew the Apostle John and the followers of Matthew.

É The early Church acknowledged when it did not know authorship and rejected forgeries.

É The Gospel of Matthew was the most popular Gospel in early Christianity.

É The best date for Matthew's composition is during or even before the AD 60s.

É The latest date for its material is still within the lifetime of those who knew the Apostles. Ignatius in c. 107 probably quoted the Gospel of Matthew directly and even more certainly quoted still earlier sources that had already been included within the Gospel. Reasoning backwards in time, the Gospel was written at least by AD 77-87; but it was based upon much earlier information (AD 70-80 or before). The early Church, especially in Antioch, a possible place of origin and/or

superficial? Why would we suppose a modest unnoticed disciple would not fully use his master's work. Therefore, if Matthew's writing ministry was a source for the canonical Gospel, it should be viewed as a major not trivial source. It would make more sense to suppose Matthew wrote no semitic document at all than to suppose he did, but it was only a cursory document that was of minor interest or use to an unnamed later editor.

place of distribution, knew the source of the Gospel of Matthew well and approved the book. The title *ḁaccording to Matthew* was being attached during or immediately after the time of Ignatius (c. AD 100-125). Unless we are to believe Ignatius's immediate successors contradicted their beloved and martyred leader, then Ignatius and the Antiochene tradition also accepted the connection of the Greek Gospel of Matthew to the Apostle Matthew.

É Given a date of composition around AD 60-80, Papias himself was not the start of ascribing the first Gospel to the Apostle Matthew. He was giving a view already shared by others (Ignatius, the disciples of Matthew, and probably the Apostle John).

É The view that Papias made a mistake about a Hebrew/Aramaic document cannot be disproven. However, an error on this secondary matter would then have only arisen because Papias already accepted that Matthew wrote the Greek Gospel. Papias would have been passing along a reasonable and, therefore unquestioned mistake, only because he and other Christian leaders already believed the Apostle Matthew was connected to the canonical Matthew.

É Papias understood the term *logia* to refer to a major written document. It was either a draft for the full Gospel, extensive notes, or an informative document but not just a few lines.

É Papias's own five volume set of books existed down to the 13th century. All who could read his books accepted his comments and exposition about Matthew's written work were identical or very close to the content in canonical Matthew. Papias was definitely not saying Matthew's material about Jesus was incorporated into another book that would now be missing.

É While a mistake on language is possible, Papias was early and had good connections. He knew the Apostle John and the disciples of Matthew. All others in the early Church who gave any reference to the issue accepted that a Hebrew/Aramaic document was underneath the Greek Gospel. These were native Greek speakers who did not think it impossible that the Greek Gospel of Matthew had an original semitic source.

É It is best to give Papias the benefit of doubt about Matthew's writing ministry in Hebrew/Aramaic. He wrote a substantial document that was used to make the Gospel of Matthew in the Bible.

É Assuming this early source existed, it is best to conclude Matthew himself was involved in the transfer of his teaching into canonical Matthew. Viewing Matthew as translator or supervisor best explains the diminished praise and even slightly uncomplimentary details in the text.

É That the Apostle Matthew was the apostolic authority and origin of the teaching within the Gospel of Matthew should be accepted. It is possible Papias made a mistake about an original language document, but it is unlikely given his early date and excellent ministry connections. Assuming it did exist, the transfer of its contents on the words and works of Jesus was probably at least approved personally by the Apostle Matthew.

Appendix 1

Various Hebrew Gospels

Jerome, in about 386 moved to Israel, learned Hebrew, and translated the Old Testament from Hebrew to Latin. While there he encountered several Hebrew gospels that were said to be Matthew's original Hebrew Gospel. Epiphanius (c. AD 315-403) felt these books may have been traced back to Matthew. Yet, he said the existing wording must have been greatly altered to become a falsification and distortion by various Jewish cults. Was Jerome correct or just excited about a discovery that proved the value of his learning Hebrew?⁷⁰

A skeptic today might say today these Hebrew gospels were indeed Matthew's original Gospel. Yet, they then conclude that they were not altered, rather it is the canonical Greek text that gives variance from what Matthew really had written.

As these Hebrew gospels have come down in fragments, scholars cannot tell for certain if they were one, two, of three separate books.⁷¹

⁷⁰ For comments on Epiphanius and Jerome see James R. Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp. 65-96, 114. Contrary to this article Edwards believes the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew was a source for the Gospel of Luke and that canonical Matthew had no personal connection to the Apostle Matthew (pp. 144, 243-258). Falsification and distortion comes from Edwards, p. 114. Hill says Epiphanius regarded the Gospel of the Ebionites (which Edwards says in reality equals the Hebrew Gospel, p. 65) as a corrupted version of a presumed Hebrew original of the Gospel according to Matthew in Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?* p. 252. See also Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 146 (as far as Epiphanius was concerned) falsified and mutilated.

⁷¹ These materials are so fragmentary that not much can be made of them. Darrell L. Bock, *The Missing Gospels* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2006), p. 218. Thus the number of the Jewish Christian Gospels - whether there be one, two, or three, such Gospels - is uncertain as is the identification of the individual fragments. Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 257 fn. 304. In another publication Peterson even constructs an argument that two of these (*Gospel of the Nazoreans*, *Gospel of the Ebionites*) and possibly a third (*Gospel According to the Hebrews*) are actually

They can be called *The Gospel of the Nazarenes*, *The Gospel of the Ebionites*, and *The Gospel of the Hebrews*, but they may have been parts of the same document.

Charles Hill dates all three long past the time that they could have been any source for the Gospel of Matthew. He dates *The Gospel of the Nazarenes* at the "first half of the second century;" *The Gospel of the Ebionites* at the "earliest probable date: c. 125," and *the Gospel of the Hebrews* at "early second century"⁷² All dates are too late to be any source underneath the canonical Gospel of Matthew. Hill labels *The Gospel of the Ebionites* and others as "derivative documents based on a greater or lesser degree on the existing Gospels" and also concludes *The Gospel of the Hebrews* and others, "were basically a blend of two or more of the canonical ones, with elements of various kinds

different names for the same Gospel" Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?*, p. 257 fn. 2. "It is uncertain whether these titles refer to three separate books or two or more of them refer to one book" Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 146.

⁷² Ibid., 252. Brown also agrees these "gospels" are derivatives and, therefore, later than the canonical Gospels. Raymond Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 209-210 and fn. 84. For additional study and support that these Hebrew gospels were based on the canonical Gospels rather than sources for them see Craig A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), pp. 20 and 202; Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (London: T and T Clark, 2004), pp. 55 and 357; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, p. 224 fn. 70; and Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, p. 169. Scholars of the past who believe all these Hebrew gospels were later than the Gospel of Matthew include: Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Introduction to the Study of Scripture*, American edition from the 8th London edition (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1854), p. 307; William Nast, *Introduction to the Gospel Records* (Cincinnati: Curts and Jennings, 1866), pp. 58-59; George Salmon, *A Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament*, 4th edition (London: John Murray, 1889), pp. 165-190 and Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2:516-521, 562; 3:38 fn. 19. Nast and Salmon believe Papias made a mistake about a semitic original by Matthew. They believed the various Hebrew Gospels were derivatives and corruptions. Zahn believed Papias was correct, and the Greek Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of the Hebrews may have separately come from Matthew's semitic original (2:519).

added or subtracted.⁷³ These materials were never any sources to the Gospels.

In any parallels with Matthew it was rather the Greek Gospel of Matthew that was the source for the corrupted texts in these derivative books.

For the sake of argument, suppose the above dates are wrong. Suppose these Hebrew gospels could be traced to a Hebrew original before the Greek Gospel of Matthew. Then as they stand they would still have no credibility to now give Matthew's original wording. Even if these Hebrew gospels could be tied to Matthew, they could not be trusted to have followed his original wording, and thus, would give no basis for which to criticize the present canonical text.

Metzger lists several examples of such odd wording. *The Gospel of the Hebrews* called the Holy Spirit Jesus's mother and that she seized Jesus by one hair to place him upon Mt. Tabor, perhaps to face Satan's temptation.⁷⁴ *The Gospel of the Hebrews* also said Michael was chosen by God to become Mary and give birth to Christ after seven months.⁷⁵ Contrary to the canonical Gospels, *The Gospel of the Hebrews* relates that Jesus's brother James drank the Lord's cup and had sworn that he would not eat bread until he would see him risen again.⁷⁶ Then after the resurrection Jesus commanded a table and bread so James could break his vow to fast. The Gospels indicate that James was not a believer until after the resurrection and did not attend the last supper.

Even if these Hebrew gospels could be traced to Matthew, then they say nothing about any original Hebrew wording for Matthew's Gospel. Hengel says, "these apocryphal Gospels were later subjected to considerable alterations and, as shown by the few remaining of them, sometimes ran wild."⁷⁷ Hengel related that the Gospel of Hebrews even quoted Plato.⁷⁸

⁷³ Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?*, pp. 143 and 237.

⁷⁴ Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, pp. 169-170.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ*, p. 73.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

No evidence exists to show the Hebrew gospels existed before the Greek Gospel of Matthew. They date decades after canonical Matthew and were at the most first derived from it with substantial odd additions.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Carson and Moo agree that the Gospel of the Hebrews had no textual connection to any Hebrew draft that was later incorporated into the canonical Matthew. (See Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 146.) They deny any Hebrew/Aramaic document penned by Matthew ever existed. They suggest Papias heard about various Hebrew gospels circulating in Israel. He then assumed Matthew wrote them. Thus, confusion over the Hebrew gospels was the cause for Papias thinking Matthew had written a Hebrew/Aramaic Gospel before the Greek Gospel. If one thinks Papias made an error about Matthew composing a study on Jesus in Hebrew/Aramaic, then Carson and Moo's suggestion might be the cause of Papias's false assumption about the original language. (Yet, as discussed above, Papias was early with excellent sources and should be given the benefit of doubt about an original document in a Hebrew/Aramaic language.)

Topic II

Papias' and His Elder John

(Who Wrote John's Gospel
and
Revelation?)

Who wrote Revelation and John's Gospel?

Preface

The identity of Papias' Elder John is critical to the apostolic authorship of both Revelation and the Gospel of John. For 1,700 years scholars have struggled with a quotation of Papias given by Eusebius. Eusebius asserted Papias referred to two Johns and the second wrote Revelation. Many today conclude this second John also wrote John's Gospel.

This scholarly booklet argues the probable date for Papias' books (c. 95-110), clues within this quotation, and evidence that Eusebius was not objective indicate the apostle and the Elder John were one person. In turn this strengthens apostolic authorship for the Johannine Corpus and means the Apostle John was Papias' authority concerning the authorship of Matthew and Mark.

The Identity of Papias' Elder John

Eusebius in *Ecclesiastical History* (c. AD 324) quoted the much earlier books of Papias of Hierapolis. These five books were titled *Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord* and are now lost (3.39.1).⁸⁰ A few lines given by Eusebius still generate scholarly interest and controversy. Papias had written, "if ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters [elders], I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples had said, and what Aristion and the presbyter [Elder] John, the Lord's disciples, were saying. For I did not suppose that information from books would help me as much as the word of a living and surviving voice" (3.39.4).

Did Papias refer to two different men named John, first the Apostle John and then the Elder John? Did he equate the Apostle with the Elder? Did he mean his information came from three leadership generations (followers, then elders, and finally apostles) or only two generations (followers of the elders who were the apostles)?

If this quotation had not played a part in debates over the authorship of canonical books, its interpretation would be historical trivia. However, Eusebius himself immediately gave his view that Papias' second reference to John was "outside the number of the Apostles" and that "it is probable that the second (unless anyone prefer the former) saw the revelation which passes under the name John" (3.39.5-6).

The Elder John as Author

Many scholars today base their rejection of the apostolic authorship of Revelation upon the above interpretation from Eusebius. In his influential church history textbook Gonzalez writes, "A second-century writer Papias of Hierapolis affirms that there were indeed two persons by the name of John in the early church: one the apostle,

⁸⁰ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, volume 1, books 1-5, *Loeb Classical Library*, translated by Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 3.39.1. All quotations are from volume 1 or volume 2.

and another an elder at Ephesus, who received the visions on Patmos. It is clear from the enormous difference in their use of the Greek language, that the John of Revelation did not write the Fourth Gospel ó commonly known as the Gospel of John.ö⁸¹

In Book 7 Eusebius quoted Dionysius of Alexandria.⁸² After translating this section of Eusebius, Maier makes this approving comment about Dionysius and Eusebius' endorsement of him: öUntil his time, the final book of the New Testament had generally been thought the work of John the Apostle, but Dionysius convincingly ascribes it to another John in Asia Minor, which is the majority view among New Testament scholars today, and for the very good reasons advanced by Dionysius.ö⁸³ Carson and Moo claim that the view Eusebius presented in 7.25 rejecting the apostolic authorship of Revelation is öshared by most contemporary scholars.ö⁸⁴

Eusebius did emphatically believe the Apostle John wrote the Gospel of John (3.24.11-13). Yet, building on Eusebius that there were two leaders named John, modern scholars often attribute the Gospel of John to a second John, the Elder John. Theissen and Merz comment, öAt present there is a tendency í to attribute í John to a disciple of Jesus and presbyter, John.ö⁸⁵ Prominent examples of this tendency

⁸¹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, volume 1 (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 36.

⁸² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, volume 2, books 6-10, *Loeb Classical Library*, translated by J.E.L. Oulton with H. J. Lawlor (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 7.25.1-27.

⁸³ Eusebius, *The Church History*, translated by Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 285.

⁸⁴ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 701.

⁸⁵ Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, translated by John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 18.

include Hengel and Bauckham.⁸⁶ The most influential author to affirm the Elder John wrote the Gospel of John is Pope Benedict XVI. His conclusion arises from the Papias quotation by Eusebius. Eusebius tells us about a five-volume work of the bishop of Hierapolis, Papias, who died around 220. Now the important point is that he distinguishes between the Apostle and Evangelist John, on the one hand, and presbyter John, on the other.⁸⁷ In the following paragraph Pope Benedict gives his conclusion, there seems to be grounds for ascribing to the presbyter John an essential role in the definitive shaping of the Gospel, though he must always have regarded himself as the trustee of the tradition he received from the son of Zebedee.⁸⁸

The attribution of John's Gospel to an Elder John is compatible with the book's historicity as Pope Benedict's example reveals. However, this Elder John is not a clear Bible character and at best ancient historical information about him would be restricted to Eusebius' interpretation of Papias. Eusebius' interpretation may be challenged and, therefore, any Elder John's credibility as a source for the life of Christ and even his very existence.

The Apostle John as Author

Other scholars assert the Apostle John wrote the Gospel of John and Revelation. Their detailed and persuasive arguments need not be repeated, but their work yields a significant observation about Papias' words in 3.39.4. The apostolic authorship of John's Gospel and Revelation is compatible with a range of views concerning the

⁸⁶ Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel*, translated by John Bowden (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000), 67; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 412-432.

⁸⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, translated by Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 225-226. Pope Benedict's conclusion for the death of Papias is probably AD 120 with a copy error in translation.

⁸⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 226. Catholic scholar Bernard Orchard argues for apostolic authorship and denies the existence of a second person named Elder John. Bernard Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 111-199.

existence of a second John in this important Papias quote. It must not be overlooked that the quote itself says nothing about the authorship of anything. That idea was added by Eusebius.

Hill presents impressive research arguing that the Apostle John wrote the Gospel of John, all three Epistles of John, and Revelation.⁸⁹ In his mind, Papias not only referred to two Johns, but the Elder John attested to the Apostle John being the author. Hill concludes the unnamed written source Eusebius follows in 3.24.5-13 is in fact Papias. The plural "they say" found in both 3.24.7 and 11 includes both Papias and the Elder John.⁹⁰ Therefore, "If Papias' source is indeed John the Elder, then this would supply the ultimate truth this man had nothing to do with the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, for he describes John, obviously as a person distinct from himself. At last, however, we may be able to ascribe to the legacy of the Elder John some value in helping to answer the Johannine question."⁹¹

Blomberg also strongly supports the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel. He thinks Eusebius may have interpreted Papias correctly. "One natural interpretation of this text is that Papias is distinguishing two Johns, the original apostle, no longer alive, and a presbyter alive in Papias' day of whom he could directly inquire."⁹² He continues with limited confidence in a second John theory, "I even if

⁸⁹ Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 383-396, 459-464, 465-475.

⁹⁰ Charles E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 217. If Elder John was also a title for the Apostle John, then "they say" could still have included Papias as the main source in Eusebius' mind with others known to confirm his testimony.

⁹¹ Charles E. Hill, "What Papias Said About John (and Luke) A 'New' Papias Fragment," *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 49, Pt. 2, October 1998: 613. Hill makes a good case for Papias as the identity of Eusebius' source. Bauckham counters in *Jesus and the Eyewitness*, 433-437.

⁹² Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 26.

there was a second early church leader named John, none of these testimonies link him with the Fourth gospel *per se*.⁹³

Finally, other scholars disagree with the way Eusebius interpreted Papias. They cast doubt on a separate Elder John's existence and think both times Papias mentioned John he clearly meant the Apostle John. Carson and Moo write, "it is far from certain that there ever was an 'elder John' independent of the apostle, and if there was, it is still less certain that he wrote anything."⁹⁴ Likewise, Kostenberger, Kellum and Quarles say, "But it is more likely Papias referred to John the son of Zebedee by two different names, distinguishing between the deceased eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry and those who were still alive in His day."⁹⁵

Those who assert the Apostle John as the writer of John's Gospel and Revelation present a full range of thought about whether there were two leaders named John in the early church. Because the Papias quote in 3.39.4 made no reference to authorship, a decision about its original meaning need not be reached before consideration of authorship.⁹⁶

Perhaps there is no final answer to the interpretation intended by Papias for his ancient and lost books. Yet, attempts at a resolution are worthwhile. If Papias referred to two Johns, there is always the hypothetical possibility that the early church confused them transferring a false belief in authorship to the more prominent Apostle John. On the contrary, if Papias referred only to the Apostle John, then

⁹³ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*, 26.

⁹⁴ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 235.

⁹⁵ Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2009), 297. To illustrate the difficulty of this subject it should be observed one of these authors disagrees. "Apparently, Papias made a distinction between John the apostle and John the elder (see Chap. 7 above)," 811 fn. 5.

⁹⁶ Steven W. Waterhouse, *Jesus and History* (Amarillo, TX: Westcliff Press, 2009), 45-60.

a non-existent Elder John can be safely excluded as an author of any book.

The Date for Papias

The date when Papias learned his information from the Elder John could be a major factor in the latter's identity.⁹⁷ Whether he be identified as the Apostle John or another Elder John, Papias must have made it clear that he had personal contact with the man referred to as the Elder John. Eusebius accepted this as true (3.39.7)

An early date for Papias's time of learning that also overlapped with the live teaching ministry of the Apostle John leads to the conclusion Papias would have been far more interested to learn from the Apostle than a secondary person also named John. Eusebius had written that the Apostle John lived to the reign of Trajan, which began in AD 98 (3.23.1-4). If the date for Papias's acquisition of facts was earlier, then the John whom Papias had actually heard should be identified as the Apostle John.

Papias was early enough to be acquainted with two of Philip's daughters (3.31.3; 39.39.9). These ladies were already adults in the AD 50's and were Bible characters (Acts 21:9).

While Eusebius denied Papias ever heard the Apostle John, the context in which he placed Papias was at a time he could have known the Apostle John or heard teaching from John's personal followers. Eusebius placed his chapter about Papias between chronological notations of year three (3.33.3 and 3.34) and year twelve of Trajan (4.1.1), that is between AD 101 and AD 110. Before quoting Papias directly, Eusebius had already placed him at the same time and place (Asia Minor) as Polycarp and more importantly Ignatius. "At this time there flourished in Asia Polycarp, the companion of the Apostles . . . Distinguished men at the same time were Papias and Ignatius"

⁹⁷ See helpful research on a date for Papias in C. Stewart Petrie, "The Authorship of the Gospel According to Matthew" *New Testament Studies* 14:15-33 and Robert W. Yarbrough, "The Date of Papias" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 26/2, June 1983, 181-191.

(3.36.1-2). Eusebius continued by recording the martyrdom of Ignatius which can be dated to about AD 107-108. Yet, Eusebius placed Polycarp's final years and martyrdom only after the end of Book Three and after the reference to year twelve of Trajan (4.1.1; 4.15). By contrast only one full sentence intervened between Eusebius's reference to Trajan's third year in AD 101 and the paragraph "at this time there flourished in Asia . . . Distinguished men at the same time were Papias . . ." (3.34 and 3.36.1). Therefore, it is best to understand that the time Papias "flourished" overlapped with Polycarp's earlier lifespan making Papias's days of training earlier still.

In addition to *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius also wrote *Chronicon*. Yarbrough observes that in *Chronicon*, "Eusebius places the aged Apostle John, Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius - in that order - in the same entry. Next to this entry Eusebius has as part of his running table of dates, the year 100."⁹⁸

Irenaeus also provided information which helps date Papias's ministry. Eusebius was aware that 150 years prior to his own time Irenaeus had said, "To these things also Papias, the hearer of John, who was a companion of Polycarp and one of the ancients, bears witness in writing . . ." (3.39.1).⁹⁹

After quoting Irenaeus, Eusebius went on to contradict him on the assertion that Papias had heard the Apostle John (3.39.2). Who was right, Irenaeus or Eusebius? No doubt if Papias's books still existed, the answer would be easier. Before Eusebius's reading of Papias be quickly accepted, it is wise to remember Irenaeus also could read Papias's full books. He judged nothing inconsistent with the interpretation that the Elder John known to Papias was the Apostle John. If Eusebius could

⁹⁸ Yarbrough, "The Date of Papias," 186.

⁹⁹ Eusebius quoted Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.33.4. Eusebius quoted Irenaeus accurately on Papias being "ancient," but Yarbrough warns about English translations. "The standard English translation of the Ante-Nicene fathers for some unknown reason does not translate these words [ancient man], but see *Sancti Irenaei* (ed. W. W. Harvey; Cambridge: Typis Academicus, 1867), 2.418." Yarbrough "The Date of Papias," 186 fn. 41.

have found a more clear text in Papias than 3.39.4, he would have used it.

Eusebius never challenged Irenaeus' statements that Papias was "ancient." Later Eusebius also made reference to Papias' "antiquity" (3.39.13).

The qualification of "ancient" is a subjective description. Yarbrough writes, "The force of this appellation for Papias is strengthened when it is remembered that Irenaeus referred to John as seeing the Apocalypse not very long time ago, but almost in our day, toward the end of Domitian's reign (81-96). If Domitian's reign was in some sense for Irenaeus (b ca. 125) almost in our day, then an *archaios aner* would be early indeed."¹⁰⁰

Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp but did not refer to him as "ancient." This also supports the conclusion that the lives of Polycarp and Papias overlapped, but Papias was earlier.

Just as Eusebius allowed Irenaeus' description of Papias as "ancient," he never challenged that Papias had been as "a companion of Polycarp." Yet, if Polycarp lived early enough to know John, and Papias seems to be just as early or earlier, how could Eusebius rule out that Papias ever knew the Apostle as Irenaeus had written?

Because of the above chronological evidence, even scholars who believe the Elder John was a second person still date Papias within a period he could have learned from a living Apostle John. Bauckham writes that a late date for Papias c. 130 is "based on very unreliable evidence..."¹⁰¹ Instead, the earlier period in Papias' life "during which he was collecting oral reports... must be c. 80."¹⁰² This is a reasonable

¹⁰⁰ Yarbrough, "The Date of Papias," 187. Yarbrough's quotation is from Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," 5.30.3 (compare Eusebius 5.8.6). See Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," *The Ante Nicene Fathers*, translated by A. Cleveland Coxe, reprint edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 1.559-560.

¹⁰¹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 13.

¹⁰² Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 14.

date, but in AD 80 should not the ðJohnö who commanded Papias' attention be understood as the Apostle?¹⁰³ The same point may be raised when Tasmuth says, ðSo if Papias was about the same age as Polycarp, he was probably born between AD 70 and 80.ö¹⁰⁴ If Papias' ðstudentö days overlapped with the teaching ministry of the Apostle John, why should not a reference to ðthe Elder Johnö refer to him?

Yarbrough writes, ðí the existence of an Elder John is a beleaguered postulate.ö¹⁰⁵ His conclusion is ðí Papias is likely to have written ca. 95-110.ö¹⁰⁶

If Papias wrote around AD 110 and the Apostle John lived to AD 98, then Papias' words about previous learning from ðJohnö should be understood as the Apostle John.¹⁰⁷ In addition to a date for Papias, another clue as to his meaning involves his definition of ðelder.ö

¹⁰³ If as Bauckham says Papias was acquiring his information in AD 80, then the Apostle John should be understood to be the ðJohnö who commanded his attention. Presuming Pope Benedict dates Papias' death to around AD 120, then a young Papias would have been eager to learn from the Apostle John (see footnote 87).

¹⁰⁴ Randar Tasmuth, ðAuthority, Authorship, and Apostolicity as Part of the Johannine Question: The Role of Papias in the Search for an Authoritative Author of the Gospel of Johnö *Concordia Journal*, January 2007, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Yarbrough, ðThe Date of Papias,ö 184.

¹⁰⁶ Yarbrough, ðThe Date of Papias,ö 187.

¹⁰⁷ Hill gives the date for Papias' writing at ðprobably in the 120s or possibly as late as the early 130sö (Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, 384.) He reasons correctly but in different steps than above. First he decides the question of the Elder John's identity and then sets a date. If the Elder John was not the Apostle John, then Papias' association with him was later. Yet, a consideration of Papias' dates for his association with John provides a clue to John's identity. Hill follows many of the points listed above but gives one addition. He mentions Philip of Side's *Church History* as having said Papias made reference to Hadrian in his books (384). This placed the books after AD 118. Yet, Hill in footnote 79 mentions it is possible Philip the Side was ðconfused.ö Philip the Side's *Church History* no longer exists. Scholars who follow secondary quotations from it are often not impressed with its reliability.

Papias in His Own Words

Only fragments of Papias' work have survived. Necessity allows only a few clues as to what he meant.

Aristion Not an Elder

In 3.39.4 Papias listed Aristion and the Elder John together.¹⁰⁸ Yet, he did not give Aristion the description "elder." Earlier in the sentence the apostles had been described as "the Lord's disciples." The apostles were disciples in the sense of having personally followed Jesus in ministry. The end of the sentence also described Aristion and the Elder John as "the Lord's disciples." Within the same sentence it is best to understand both usages of the phrase as designating those who had personally ministered under the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁹

Yarbrough calls Side's book a "confused attempt at history" and his "evidence is of no value" (Yarbrough, "The Date of Papias," 185). Petrie says, "Neither his contemporary Socrates, the church historian, nor modern writers have much respect for Philip. His work was apparently careless and far from accurate" (Petrie, "The Authorship of the Gospel According to Matthew," 26). Wallace includes Philip of Side among "sources which show themselves to be unreliable as historical guides in other matters" (Daniel B. Wallace, "The Gospel of John," www.bible.org, accessed 8/17/2007).

¹⁰⁸ Carson and Moo write, "Indeed, the Greek syntax Papias employs favors the view that 'Aristion and John the elder' means something like 'Aristion and the aforementioned elder John.'" Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 234. Wallace agrees but with more caution as to the definitive proof from grammatical considerations. "The second mention of John is the *only* name in the list to have the definitive article $\acute{\alpha}$. The article could well be anaphoric $\acute{\alpha}$. Still, in all fairness, the article is not *obviously* anaphoric and one might naturally expect some kind of qualifier if Papias clearly wanted to identify one John with the other." Daniel B. Wallace, "Revelation," www.bible.org, accessed 8/18/2007.

¹⁰⁹ A theory about any second Elder John who was a personal disciple of Jesus moves in the direction of being a self-defeating proposition. If Papias was early enough to learn from this hypothetical disciple, Papias must have also been early enough to learn from the Apostle John. John himself was probably among the youngest of those who literally followed Jesus around in ministry.

By the definition of elder as advanced age, Aristion must have been old by the time Papias learned from him. Since Papias often quoted Aristion by name and knew him personally (3.39.7), Aristion must have been a frequent speaker. Thus, by the definition of elder as non-apostolic church leader, Aristion was an elder. Therefore, Papias used the title *elder* as different from advanced age or church leader. When he wrote *elder*, he evidently meant *apostle* as in 1 Peter 5:1.¹¹⁰

Better than Books

Papias said that *the word of a living and surviving voice* had been more helpful to him than *information from books* (3.39.4). He was not hesitant to *append to the interpretations* what he had learned from oral sources (3.39.3). This forceful statement might lead to the conclusion that Papias intended *books* to be limited to non-canonical books. What books were accessible to Papias?

Bauckham, Hill, and Orchard all conclude Papias had possession of some or all four written Gospels.¹¹¹ Since Papias own

The Apostle John was known to have survived to a time that is about as late as any historical disciple of Jesus could have possibly lived. Thus, a personal disciple of Jesus called *the Elder John* is best interpreted as the Apostle John. See Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 419-420 where he accepts Papias *the Elder John* had been a personal disciple of Jesus but denies he was the Apostle.

¹¹⁰ See Robert H. Gundry, *The Old is Better* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 54-55.

¹¹¹ Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 417-418 makes the observation that Papias was probably following the order within the Gospel of John as he composed the list of names quoted by Eusebius in 3.39.4 (compare to John 1:40, 41, 43; 11:16; 21:2). Bauckham thinks Papias added Matthew to his list *because when he was writing, Matthew's Gospel was well known* (Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, 385-396; Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?*, 210-214 documents that Papias knew all four written Gospels even without using his well presented conclusion that Papias is Eusebius' written source in 3.24.5-13. Orchard concurs, *Papias knew and used all four Gospels*, Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 170.

books were called *Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord*, it is unreasonable to exclude canonical books from his phrase "information from books." The Gospels would have been his primary source for study, but Papias said the "living and surviving voice" had been even more informative.

If Papias were comparing interpretations it would be understandable he viewed his own interpretation of the books as inferior to the interpretation given by oral authority. Yet, Papias' statement did not compare two interpretations. Instead, it compared two sources of information: "books" versus "a surviving voice."

It is difficult to believe a group consisting of only second or third generation Christian leaders, regardless of apostolic connections, could be said to surpass the written Gospels. There must have been among Papias' surviving sources one of the highest possible accuracy and authority. This leads in the direction of the Elder John being the Apostle John.

The Elder

In 3.39.15 Eusebius quoted Papias again. This time Papias wrote only "the presbyter" (Elder) without the name John attached.¹¹² Eusebius had just identified this elder as John (3.39.14). Therefore, Papias had written only "the Elder," but he expected readers could identify this person as John.

Perhaps the full text of Papias' lost book had made it clear to readers that "the Elder" referred to another John not the Apostle John. If this were so, why did Eusebius not quote something more definitive to support his two-John theory than the unclear lines in 3.39.3-4?

Perhaps Papias himself felt it was sufficient to use "the Elder" as a reference to the Apostle John without any need to add his name.

¹¹² This is the important quotation giving the source for Mark being Peter's assistant and writing the Gospel of Mark. "The Elder" was probably also the authority for the information that Matthew wrote a document about Jesus' teaching which was either the Gospel of Matthew or a major source for it (3.39.16).

This suggestion is the far stronger of the two alternatives because several early church fathers before Eusebius identified the Elder who wrote Second and Third John as the Apostle John. Therefore, the Elder standing alone was an acceptable title for the Apostle John. Of special interest is a comparison of church fathers who knew Papias' books and also believed the Elder who wrote these letters was the Apostle John.

The Elder and Other Church Fathers

It is less true to say the church fathers before Eusebius contested the authenticity of the Second and Third Epistles of John than to say they largely ignored them.

Some important early church fathers supported authenticity. Others, now anonymous, disagreed. Yet, Carson and Moo observe, "Never is any of three Johannine epistles attributed to anyone other than John the son of Zebedee."¹¹³

Those who supported authenticity believed the description the Elder in Second John 1 and Third John 1 meant the Apostle John. Yet, those who disputed authenticity did not necessarily do so because they thought the Elder referred to a non-apostolic leader. They seem to have also interpreted the opening of these two epistles to claim apostolic authorship but had doubts about the claim.

Hill makes a good case that originally all three Johannine epistles circulated together as the same corpus because they were viewed as works of the same author and that authorship was assumed to be apostolic.¹¹⁴ Specific leaders before Eusebius who accepted one or both of the small epistles as apostolic included: Irenaeus (AD 130-200), the Muratorian Canon (late second century?), Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215), Dionysius of Alexandria (d. AD 265), and perhaps Origen (AD 185-254).¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 671.

¹¹⁴ Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, 459-460.

¹¹⁵ Kostenberger, Kellum and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 297, 783-784 give these names and dates. For additional studies on the early

Studies on canonicity are vital. For the topic at hand the more crucial observation is that the early church often understood the Elder as a name for the Apostle John.

The church fathers who had access to Papias' books and also believed the Elder in Second and Third John was the apostle might provide a clue as to how Papias could expect his readers to understand the Elder John and the Elder.¹¹⁶ Hill's list of those who had read some or all of Papias' books includes: Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, the author of the *Muratorian Fragment*, Origen, and Victorinus all writing before Eusebius...¹¹⁷ His list of the fathers who accepted the apostolic authorship of Second and Third John includes: Irenaeus, Tertullian, the author of the *Muratorian Fragment*, Clement of Alexandria, and Dionysius.¹¹⁸ It seems others who could read Papias would have had no problem in taking the Elder as a reference to the Apostle John.¹¹⁹

Many scholars remark Eusebius was the first to spot a reference to a second early church leader named John within the books of Papias. Ellis writes, "But making the Elder John distinct from the Apostle John and putting him in the generation following the apostles

church fathers regarding the authorship of Second and Third John see Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 670-671, 682-683 and Hill, *The Johannine Corpus of the Early Church*, 99, 136, 460-464.

¹¹⁶ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 142 trace the existence of Papias' works into the Middle Ages in some libraries in Europe. Both Hill and Orchard add Vardan Vardapet, a thirteenth century Armenian scholar, had access to Papias' books. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, 385; Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 171 fn. 6.

¹¹⁷ Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, 390.

¹¹⁸ Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, 471.

¹¹⁹ Orchard thinks the phrase the Elder John may have been written by Papias only in the preface to his books. Perhaps the phrase the Elder was used in much or all of the rest of Papias' five books because the title the Elder was understood by early readers as meaning the Apostle John. Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 177 and 180.

is apparently the creation of Eusebius.¹²⁰ Orchard calls the existence of a second Elder John a "legend created by Eusebius."¹²¹ He thinks, "It is really impossible that we should not have received some further inkling of his existence from early Church writers."¹²² Yarbrough adds, "Eusebius, it seems, is the first to distinguish two Johns in Papias."¹²³

Before Eusebius the title "the Elder" seems to have been understood as an expression of affection for the elderly Apostle John. In his own comments about Second and Third John even Eusebius also allowed this interpretive option for his readers.¹²⁴ This leads to the consideration of how Eusebius himself interpreted the previous references to "the elders" earlier in the controversial sentence in 3.39.4.

Eusebius' Definition of "Elders"

The description "elder" could refer to an aged person, a non-apostolic church leader (Acts 15:6) or an apostle (1 Peter 5:1). Without

¹²⁰ E. Earle Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Boston and Leiden: Brill Academic, 2002), 144 fn. 5.

¹²¹ Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 176.

¹²² Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 183.

¹²³ Yarbrough, "The Date of Papias," 184.

¹²⁴ Eusebius himself doubted the apostolic authorship of Second and Third John. He said, "the so-called second and third Epistles of John which may be the work of the evangelist or some other with the same name" (3.25.3). Yet, even in this critical statement Eusebius had to allow "the Elder" within Second and Third John could be reasonably interpreted as a name for the "evangelist," that is the Apostle John. Also, here Eusebius made no reference to his alternative Elder John that he asserted had been identified within Papias' books. In Revelation the author did not use the description "the Elder." Both Second John 1 and Third John 1 begin with "the Elder." If a second Elder John interpretation of the Papias quote in 3.39.4 fits anywhere, it would be even stronger support for an alternative author for these epistles. This raises doubt as to whether Eusebius was really more committed to finding an alternative author for Revelation than to his own second "Elder John" theory. Many others accepted "the Elder" as a title for the Apostle John.

reasons to the contrary, it would be best to interpret the term consistently within a sentence.

Eusebius definitively interpreted the Elder John in 3.39.4 as a venerable but non-apostolic church leader. It stands to reason he also interpreted elders within the earlier part of the sentence the same way. In turn this would establish the number of leadership generations at three. Papias learned from followers who learned from elders who learned from the apostles. As that would support a date for Papias past the time of the Apostle John, it fits well with Eusebius' statement that Papias never knew the Apostle John. Instead, Papias had encountered a non-apostolic Elder John. All of this would be reasonable except Eusebius seems to have interpreted elder inconsistently within the same sentence.

Just after distinguishing between two Johns in 3.39.5-6, Eusebius in 3.39.7 wrote Papias had received the words of the Apostles from their followers. This phrase gave only two leadership generations not three and equated Papias' original phrase in 3.39.4 the words of the presbyters (elders) with the words of the apostles. Perhaps for brevity sake Eusebius just gave the final results of Papias' investigation. The words of two groups could be the same without the people being the same if the elders faithfully transmitted the words of the Apostles. This interpretation of Eusebius' wording might be possible, but it is an inadequate explanation of the facts known to Eusebius.

Eusebius accepted Irenaeus' statement that Papias had been a companion to Polycarp (3.39.1). If the definition for elders in the usages in 3.39.4 was leaders who learned directly from the apostles, then Polycarp was such an elder. Yet, Papias had written he did not know any of these elders. He learned from their followers.

If an early date be assigned to Papias' time of learning, he probably knew additional people who had learned from the apostles. He knew the daughters of Philip (3.39.9). It is a fair conjecture he also knew some male leaders old enough to have personal knowledge of the apostles. Eusebius knew these facts. Despite problems for his ultimate conclusion, the term elders in the earlier part of 3.39.4 can not refer to non-apostolic attendants to the apostles because Papias knew these

kind of elders. Therefore, when Eusebius equated the words of the apostles in 3.39.4 with the words of the elders in 3.39.7, he had indeed interpreted elders as apostles.

Several scholars make comments to the effect that by doing so Eusebius was the best witness against his own interpretation of Papias.¹²⁵ If Papias referred to two leadership generations not three, then there is additional evidence for an early date which puts Papias at a time he would have learned from the Apostle John.¹²⁶ A more important point is that Eusebius changed the definition of elder in the middle of a sentence to support his theory of two Johns. He accepted elders meant apostles earlier in the Papias quotation. Then the phrase the Elder John should have been given the same definition throughout the sentence. The Elder John meant the Apostle John unless there is strong evidence to the contrary.

Eusebius and Revelation

Before and after Eusebius used the Papian quote in 3.39.4, he built an argument for an alternative author for Revelation (3.39.2, 5-7). Shortly after the quote he criticized Papias' belief in a literal millennium after the resurrection of the dead, when the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this earth (3.39.12).

¹²⁵ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 233-234 argue this way though their last sentence of the paragraph seems awkward. Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 176-177; Theodore Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, translated by John Moore Trout *et al*, reprint edition, (Grand Rapids: Kregal, 1953), 2:452. Concerning the identification of Papias' elders as apostles, Zahn said, "But the classical witness for the correctness of this interpretation is Eusebius himself, who disputes it."

¹²⁶ Carson and Moo write, "It appears that the distinction Papias is making in his two lists is not between apostles and elders of the next generation but between first generation witnesses who have died (what they *said*) and first generation witnesses who are still alive (what they *say*)."

They further contend, "Those who preserve a distinction between the apostles and the elders in Papias' words must introduce a couple of rather clumsy ellipses."

Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 234 and 234 fn.18.

An evaluation of millennial views is beyond the present study, but Eusebius' objectivity toward Papias and impartiality in interpreting his words is very much a concern.

Eusebius and the Millennium

A full psychological assessment of an author who lived 1,750 years ago is not possible. Orchard thinks Eusebius had a "fanatical hatred" toward a literal millennial doctrine.¹²⁷ This extreme description is possible. Yet, Eusebius respected Irenaeus, who believed in a millennium, and quoted Papias with appreciation for his views on the origin of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark (3.39.15-16). If Eusebius hated the millennial doctrine, he did not hate everything within Papias' books. At the very least Eusebius had a bad attitude toward any literal millennium and was not likely to give full and impartial attention to parts of any book when it discussed a future millennium.

In fairness to Eusebius it is not unusual for an overall doctrine to be rendered odious by its association with objectionable groups or peripheral weird comments by its advocates. End time doctrines are especially vulnerable to embarrassment.

Eusebius knew that Dionysius of Alexandria had been aware of an heretical cult which taught the millennium will be a "carnal" time of "feasts" and "carousals" (7.25.3).

Irenaeus used another quote from Papias in *Against Heresies* (5.33.3-4) in which the agricultural fertility of the millennium was exaggerated beyond belief.¹²⁸ Eusebius wrote that Papias was "a man of very little intelligence" (3.39.13). This evaluation did not concern everything Papias wrote, but it was especially directed at Papias' teaching about end times.

¹²⁷ Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 173.

¹²⁸ Irenaeus said Papias had "borne witness" to a zealous comment that each vine in the millennium will have "ten thousand branches" and each branch "ten thousand twigs" and each twig "ten thousand shoots" and each shoot "ten thousand clusters" and "on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes" and "every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metretes of wine." Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, *The Ante Nicene Fathers*, 1:563.

Knowledge of cultic millennial advocates and odd remarks by Papias turned Eusebius away from a fair consideration of Papias' material when it specifically concerned eschatology. This clouded judgment seems also to hold true for Eusebius' consideration of the full evidence for the apostolic authorship of Revelation and Papias' words that could possibly relate (or be interpreted to relate) to authorship, especially the identity of John in 3.39.4.

Eusebius on the Apostle John

Eusebius knew the Apostle John had lived to an elderly age. He had been exiled to Patmos. Later he had relocated to Ephesus. Eusebius wrote his reliable sources for these biographical details were Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria (3.18.1; 3.20.9; 3.23.1-6).

Evidently, Eusebius had convinced himself there were two elderly Johns who had both been imprisoned in Patmos and later relocated to Ephesus and taught there. Only the second one should be regarded as the John who wrote Revelation (Revelation 1:4, 9; 2:1)!

Eusebius' Available Evidence for Authorship

Eusebius was clearly aware of leaders before him who had accepted the apostolic authorship of Revelation. Yet, he failed to bring in their views in on his discussion about the identity of John in 3.39.4.

Origen's views are of interest if for no other reason that he founded the library in Caesarea in which Eusebius was researching and writing.¹²⁹ Eusebius quoted Origen about the authorship of Revelation. "Why need I speak of him who leaned back on Jesus' breast, John, who has left behind one Gospel and he wrote also the Apocalypse" (6.25.9-10).

By claiming Irenaeus had misread Papias on the identity of John (3.39.2) and been duped by Papias about the millennium

¹²⁹ Maier, *Church History*, 16.

(3.39.13), Eusebius revealed he knew Irenaeus advocated the apostolic authorship of Revelation.¹³⁰

On Irenaeus and the authorship of Revelation, Carson and Moo comment that Irenaeus and others, could well be reporting firsthand evidence. They continue, Irenaeus was from Smyrna, also a church addressed in Revelation (1:11; 2:8-11), and claims to have heard Polycarp, who had talked with John the apostle himself.¹³¹ Eusebius' dismissal of Irenaeus concerning the authorship of Revelation by claiming he could not interpret Papias is hardly thorough and objective study on authorship.

Finally, Eusebius should be faulted because he knew and omitted perhaps the strongest patristic evidence for the apostolic authorship of Revelation. He himself would later refer to the earliest source for apostolic authorship, Justin Martyr. Eusebius wrote about Justin that, He quotes the Apocalypse of John saying clearly that it is the work of the apostle (4.18.8).¹³² Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* concerned a debate that took place in Ephesus in AD 132-134.¹³³ John had lived in Ephesus at least until around AD 98 (3.23.1-4). The Ephesian church was an original recipient of Revelation (Revelation 2:1). The church leaders there were not likely to have forgotten the author of Revelation only a few decades later.

Eusebius knew evidence contrary to his own views on the authorship of Revelation. He did not make any reference to them when writing about his own conclusion that the Apostle John did not write Revelation. This is hardly thorough and impartial work. Eusebius had

¹³⁰ Book 3.39 is the only chapter in the whole of *Ecclesiastical History* in which Eusebius questions the theological orthodoxy, accuracy, and good judgment of two of the most respected fathers of the early church [Irenaeus and Papias]. Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 171.

¹³¹ Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 701.

¹³² Eusebius quoted Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, 81.4. See Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1.240.

¹³³ Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, 200.

an attitude and conclusions about the identity of John within the quote in 3.39.4 that blunted objective interpretation.¹³⁴

Eusebius and Dionysius of Alexandria

Instead of following Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, or Origin on the authorship of Revelation, Eusebius followed Dionysius of Alexandria (who ministered from about AD 247-265).¹³⁵ Eusebius had limited historical support from those before him who denied apostolic authorship for Revelation. Dionysius had been the one exception, and Eusebius quoted him extensively in 7.25.

Dionysius said the author of Revelation was certainly named John but he did not readily agree that he was the apostle John (7.25.7). His basis for this judgment was not patristic evidence but that the writing style of Revelation is different from the Gospel of John. Dionysius observed that the Apostle John did not give his name in the Gospel of John nor his three epistles. Since the author of Revelation made several self-references to John (Revelation 1:4, 9; 22:8), Revelation could not have possibly have been penned by the Apostle John (7.25.8-11). For these and other literary (not historical) concerns Dionysius rejected the apostolic authorship of Revelation.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ In 3.39.12 Eusebius said Papias had misinterpreted apostolic accounts regarding a thousand-year period when the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this earth. Eusebius tied what he believed to be an absurd view to unwritten tradition (3.29.11). Nevertheless Eusebius knew that, regardless of exaggerations Papias made about millennial agriculture, Papias' foundational authority for the millennium was Revelation 20:1-6. He also knew many church fathers prior to his time believed in the apostolic authorship of Revelation. Did Eusebius' phrase apostolic accounts reveal a slip-up on his part? See Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, 395 fn. 117.

¹³⁵ The date for Dionysius' writing is from Kostenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 814.

¹³⁶ Dionysius, quoted by Eusebius in 7.25.24-27 regarded the Gospel of John and First John to be faultless Greek but Revelation to be barbarous. Yet, the difference in style had not kept others from concluding the Apostle John wrote Revelation. The author was composing in a different genre explaining his prophetic visions.

Dionysius believed the author of Revelation was named John, "But what John is not clear" (7.25.12). The only suggestion he made about this second John's identity was that he had heard there were two monuments to John in Ephesus. This rumor in turn led Dionysius to use the hesitant phrase "I think" in proposing there had been another John in Ephesus (7.25.16). While Dionysius did not directly assert this suggested other John was the author of Revelation, he left readers with the impression that he was at least a hypothetical alternative to the Apostle John writing Revelation.¹³⁷

Nowhere in Eusebius's lengthy quotation of Dionysius is there any reference that Dionysius had referred to his alternative author by the title "the Elder John." There is no indication Dionysius had ever read Papias. Nowhere did Eusebius supplement Dionysius with a repetition of his own confident statement about another John in Ephesus being "the Elder John" from the Papias quote. The authorship of Revelation was an important concern to Eusebius. He fully endorsed Dionysius's conjecture about there being a second man named John in Ephesus who was the real author of Revelation. Since Dionysius probably did not have the books by Papias, why did not Eusebius clarify and finish his incomplete line of argument by equating Dionysius's other John with Papias's "Elder John"? Eusebius's comments about two monuments to John (3.39.6) probably came from Dionysius (7.25.16).¹³⁸ Perhaps Eusebius lacked full confidence in his own earlier

¹³⁷ Dionysius wrote, "it is said that there were two John monuments in Ephesus and that each of the two is said to be John's" (7.25.16). The rumor about two John monuments could have been a mistake, but even if true, both markers could have honored the same person even without either one being correct. Concerning Dionysius's comments about the report, Orchard says, "so far as we know it is peculiar to him alone" and that there is no "historical or archaeological evidence for two tombs" (Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 176 and 180).

¹³⁸ Was Eusebius aware he had earlier argued in a different sequence than Dionysius regarding the rumor of two John monuments? Dionysius took the rumor about two monuments as evidence for a second leader named John (7.25.16). Eusebius reasoned that the second "Elder John" he had found in Papias "confirms the truth of the story" about two monuments (3.39.6). At the perfect point in his book where Eusebius could have added his previous conclusions to clinch the argument Dionysius (one of his favorite authors) had

interpretation about identifying two Johns within Papias' writing. A more important observation is that even Dionysius had regarded the title 'the Elder' as apostolic.

Eusebius' lengthy quotation of Dionysius concerned the authorship of Revelation. Yet, in arguing that the Apostle John did not write Revelation, Dionysius had concluded the Apostle John did write Second and Third John (7.25.11).¹³⁹ Dionysius reasoned the author began these short epistles with the title 'the Elder' (Second John 1 and Third John 1). For Dionysius this only illustrated their apostolic authorship, whereas the self-references to John in Revelation were evidence against apostolic authorship.

Regardless of the dubious merits of the assertion that the Apostle John would have never referred to himself by name in any writing, other authors did use his name. Dionysius wrote 'John the Apostle' in 7.25.14. Eusebius could hardly have used Dionysius to argue other writers such as Papias could have never referred to the apostle by the name 'John.' Papias had done so earlier in 3.39.4. Yet, to Dionysius the title 'the Elder' had been a reference to the Apostle John. It looks as if Dionysius would probably have interpreted the Papias phrase 'the Elder John' as reference to the Apostle John. Eusebius' earlier conclusion that 'the Elder John' could not have meant 'the apostle' would not have been really supported by Dionysius after all.

begun and to prove the Apostle John did not write Revelation, he wrote nothing. Because Eusebius only referred to his second Elder John theory once, Orchard wonders if Eusebius' earlier words had been 'impulsive' comments that were 'motivated by his theological zeal, which he was later glad to forget.' Orchard, *The Order of the Synoptics*, 181. Maier says, 'Eusebius did not have an editor, not even himself in polishing or revising his work.' Maier, *The Church History*, 18.

¹³⁹ Regarding apostolic authorship Hill says, 'Dionysius reveals no doubts about the two shorter Johannine Epistles.' Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, 463.

Eusebius' Objectivity

For the reasons listed above Eusebius was not objective on the authorship of Revelation. Knowledge of unorthodox adherents or odd hyperbole to core biblical descriptions of a possible millennium clouded his objectivity in respect to Papias, at least on the topics of the millennium and the authorship of the Revelation. This in turn obscured an impartial interpretation of Papias' important words in 3.39.4.

Conclusion

Apostolic authorship for John's Gospel and Revelation can be established without use of the Papias quote from 3.39.4. Yet, if these lines never referred to a second man named John, then the case for apostolic authorship is even more secure.

If "the Elder John" in question was the Apostle John, then the Apostle John was the authoritative source for following information about Mark being Peter's assistant and the author of the Gospel of Mark (3.39.15). The Apostle John would then probably have also been the authority for the statement that Matthew had written the Gospel of Matthew or a document that became a major source for it (3.39.16).¹⁴⁰

Papias probably wrote his books no later than AD 110. If so, his earlier days of learning overlapped with the live ministry of the Apostle John. Therefore, a reference to learning from John should be understood as the Apostle John. By not calling Aristion an elder, Papias showed he had defined this term as "apostle." Since the "surviving voice" had more accuracy and authority than "information from books," it must have been of the highest magnitude, the Apostle John. The early church regarded "the Elder" as a title for the Apostle John as in Second John 1 and Third John 1. Even Eusebius seems to have interpreted "elders" in the earlier part of Papias' sentence in 3.39.4 as "apostles." He then arbitrarily switched the definition in mid-sentence because he did not

¹⁴⁰ For study on the Papias quotations in 3.39.15-16 concerning Matthew and Mark, see Waterhouse, *Jesus and History*, 7, 19-20, 177-179, 188-190 and pp. 3-47 above.

want the Elder John to be the Apostle John but an alternative author for Revelation, especially the key text on the millennium in Revelation 20. It would take much stronger evidence than now exists to think Papias's surviving voice was any other than the Apostle John who was also famously known as the Elder John. The Apostle John was the author and the authority behind the Book of Revelation and the Gospel of John.

Argument Summary

É Christian scholarship divides as to whether the Apostle John or another Elder John wrote Revelation and John's Gospel.

É The identity of Papias' Elder John is the key to a solution. Did he refer to two Johns or only one John in the early Church?

É An early date for Papias' contact with John favors his learning from the Apostle John not an obscure John. Papias' time of learning from surviving authorities overlapped with the life span of the Apostle John. Thus, any reference to learning from a "John" should be presumed to refer to the Apostle John.

É Papias did not give the elderly Aristion the title "elder." Thus, as Papias himself used this term, it does not just mean aged or a church leader. To Papias "the Elder" was a title for an apostle as in 1 Peter 5.1.

É Papias studied the four written Gospels. His comment that his oral source was "better than books" favors an apostolic authority named John. No other John would have superior authority to such canonical books.

É Papias expected his readers to be able to identify his mentor by the simple title "the Elder." This title used alone without any name favors a reference to the famous Apostle John.

É All the early Church Fathers who accepted the apostolic authority of 2nd and 3rd John clearly had no problem with the Apostle John being called "the Elder John."

É Eusebius himself equated the "words of the elders" in HE 3.39.4 with the "words of the apostles" in HE 3.39.5-6. Then he arbitrarily switched the definition of elder to a non-apostle for the title "John the Elder." In both cases "elder" should be interpreted the same way,

especially in the same sentence. Papias intended both to be apostolic, but Eusebius wanted to find another author for Revelation.

É Eusebius had a blind spot in being objective about premillennial material. He never debated the writings of the influential church fathers before him whom he knew to accept the apostolic authorship of the book of Revelation. Instead, he was so eager to find an alternative author for Revelation that Eusebius' conclusion about two Johns would literally lead to two men named John, both imprisoned on Patmos and later both moved to Ephesus. This far-fetched theory was needed only because Eusebius could not accept the Apostle John as the author of Revelation.

É The only Church leader before Eusebius to deny the apostolic authorship of Revelation was Dionysus of Alexandria, but even he accepted that the Apostle John wrote 2nd and 3rd John. Therefore, he would probably have regarded the title "the Elder" as a reference to the Apostle John. This means Eusebius in the AD 300s is the origin of any theory about "the Elder John" being interpreted as another person distinct from the Apostle John.

É Papias "Elder John" should be equated with the Apostle John.

É This means that any second leader named "the Elder John" may be eliminated as a plausible author for either the book of Revelation or John's Gospel.

É Both Revelation and John possess the authority of the Apostle John.

Topic III

Messianic Prophecy

A Confirmation that
The Bible is True
and
Jesus is the Promised Savior

Messianic Prophecy

The Old Testament contains numerous predictions about a coming Deliverer, the Messiah. No critic can assert these were written after the facts of the life of Jesus. The Dead Sea Scrolls were copied long before the time of Jesus, and they clearly have these prophecies. The purpose of this study is to establish that these texts were correctly understood and translated from the Hebrew by those who see Jesus as the fulfillment. Messianic prophecy is probably the strongest evidence that the Bible is a book of supernatural origin and that Jesus of Nazareth must be identified as the Messiah, the Savior of all who place their faith in Him and His death on the Cross for our sins.

His Birth and Ministry

1. The First Promise of a Savior

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel (Genesis 3:15).

Does this curse only mean humans and snakes will harm each other? Or, is Genesis 3:15 the foundational promise of a Deliverer?

A. The Hebrew word for *ōseedō* is used 227 times in the Old Testament. It refers to plants (like English) and humans (unlike English), but *ōseedō* is virtually never used of animal offspring in either language. Thus, the serpent's *ōseedō* would not be literal baby snakes but Satan's followers.

B. Revelation 12:9 and Romans 16:20 link the serpent to Satan. Thus, Genesis 3:15 is the foundational Messianic prophecy of a Savior who will destroy Satan and his followers.

2. Messiah's unique ancestry

A. Descent from Abraham (Genesis 12:3, 22:7-8, 18; Galatians 3:8, 16)

B. Descent from Isaac (Genesis 21:12)

C. Descent from Jacob

A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel ... One from Jacob shall have dominion ... (Numbers 24:17b, 19a).

Did the Magi (wise men) know about Daniel's prophecy referring to the time for Messiah to come (see pp. 84-85) and then also make a connection to the star from Jacob in the Book of Numbers? Rabbi Onkelos and Rabbi Jonathan both considered Numbers 24:15-19 Messianic.¹⁴¹

D. Descent from Judah

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples (Genesis 49:10).

(1). Who is "Shiloh"? (This form is only in Genesis 49:10.)

a. Is it a name for the Messiah? (We find this name no where else.)

b. Does it derive from the word for "peace" (*shalom*) meaning "He who gives peace"?

c. Does it mean "to whom it belongs"?

(2). All options are Messianic! The rabbis interpreted Genesis 49:10 as Messianic, and the text obviously refers to a king, "to him shall be the obedience of the people."¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ A. Noordtzi, *Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) p. 231.

¹⁴² "From ancient times, (Targums, etc.) this passage has been taken as Messianic." Homer Heater, *Hebrew Messianic Exegesis*, Unpublished notes, Capital Seminary, 1981. See also Craig A. Evans, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*

Messianic Prophecy

E. Descent from Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-4)

F. Descent from David (Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 2 Samuel 7:13, 16)

G. Yet, the Solomonic line was cursed in Jeremiah 22:30 and 36:30. This means the Messiah must have *no blood connection* to the Solomonic line, yet still be a descendent of David and have the legal right to the royal line! This would be a very difficult standard to fulfill.

Conclusion ó The Messiah's prophesied ancestry would be very restricted. By Mary (genealogy in Luke 3:23-38) the Lord Jesus Christ has the blood of David but through his son, Nathan, not through Solomon. Yet, by His adoptive father Joseph He has the legal rights of the royal line (Matthew 1:1-18).

3. The Virgin Birth

Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

Some believe the Hebrew word *almah* only means "maiden" not a virgin. Did the early Christians exaggerate the intent of Isaiah 7:14? If the Hebrew word means virgin, this is an impressive prediction. The next most rare thing to a virgin birth is to have ones mother assert a virgin birth! Very few would ever meet this criterion.

A. "Virgin" is within the range of meaning of the Hebrew word *almah*.

(1). In the cognate (related) Ugaritic language *almah* means "virgin."¹⁴³

(Nashville: Holman, 2010), p. 256 for ancient Jewish commentaries regarding Genesis 49:10 as Messianic (4Q252 5:1-5).

¹⁴³ Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute), 1965, p. 183. See also E. J. Young, *Studies in Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 1:278-291.

(2). In Genesis 24, Rebekah is a virgin in verse 16, *ōa* virgin, and no one had relations with her *ō* and also an *almah* in verse 43. Therefore, *almah* can mean *ō*virgin.*ō*

(3). In Exodus 2, Miriam watched her brother Moses floating in the Nile. The point is that she was too young to be accused of being his mother. Exodus 2:8 calls Miriam an *almah*, i.e., virgin.

B. The context in Isaiah 7:14 calls for a miraculous request, *ō*make it as deep as Sheol or high as heaven*ō* (verse 11).

C. In the Septuagint (LXX) the ancient rabbis translated *almah* as *parthenos* which is the clear Greek word for *ō*virgin.*ō*

D. As astounding as it is, Isaiah 7:14 called for a virgin birth, and Mary asserted this claim for her Son (Matthew 1:16, 18, 23, 25; Luke 1:27, 34.)

4. Called *ō*Mighty God*ō* (Isaiah 9:6-7) *ō* The Messiah would be God becoming human. Who else in world history has ever made a credible claim to being God?

5. Born in Bethlehem

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity ... and He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. This One will be our peace (Micah 5:2, 4, 5a).

The scribes Herod consulted considered Micah 5:2 to be Messianic (Matthew 2:5-6). Perhaps the reference in Micah 5:4 also reminded them of David being called the *ō*Shepherd of Israel*ō* in 2 Samuel 5:2. No one can artificially fulfill a prediction about his place of birth.

6. The time of Messiah's birth

Messianic Prophecy

A. Cessation of Tribal Authority (Genesis 49:10) ó Power would not cease from Judah until the Messiah arrives.

(1). The Babylonian Talmud in *Sabbath* 15a says, “Forty years before the destruction of the Temple í the Sanhedrin í did not adjudicate capital cases.” The Palestinian Talmud in *Sanhedrin* 18a and 24b says, “Capital punishment was abolished forty years before the destruction of the Temple.”¹⁴⁴ Therefore, by about A.D. 30 judicial powers in Jerusalem (Judah) ended.

(2). When the courts in Judah lost the authority over capital cases, they tied this to the prophecy in Genesis 49:10. Rabbi Rachman says, “When the members of the Sanhedrin found themselves deprived over the right of life and death, a general consternation took possession of them; they covered their heads with ashes, and their bodies with sackcloth, exclaiming, ‘woe unto us, for the sceptre has departed from Judah, and the Messiah has not come.’”¹⁴⁵

(3). Conclusion: The removal of judicial powers from the court in Judah may have been a time indicator for the presence of the Messiah. (See John 18:31.)

B. Messiah’s coming and 69 öweeksö (seven-year cycles) from Daniel Chapter 9.

So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary (Daniel 9:25-26a).

¹⁴⁴ See Waterhouse, *Jesus and History* (Amarillo, TX: Westcliff Press, 2009), p. 133.

¹⁴⁵ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade, 1972), p.177.

Messianic Prophecy

(1). General Statement ó The Messiah would come and be õcut offö (killed) before the rebuilt Temple and City are destroyed. The Messiah must have been in the world before A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed the temple. Who else could it be except Jesus?

(2). Specific calculation ó From the time of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (in Nehemiah's time) until Messiah would be 69 cycles of seven years. Using 30 day months, Harold Hoehner calculated Daniel's prediction to end on what we call Palm Sunday (March 30, A.D. 33).¹⁴⁶ This proves the miraculous nature of Scripture and that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

7. Types concerning the Messiah's birth¹⁴⁷

A. Mother's grief, children's suffering

Thus says the Lord, a voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more (Jeremiah 31:15). (See also Matthew 2:17-18.)

In its context Jeremiah considers Rachel (a founding mother in Israel) to be figuratively weeping over her children being dragged into exile from Ramah. Yet, the massacre of the Bethlehem infants by wicked Herod is perhaps an even more appropriate parallel as Rachel's tomb was actually in Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19).

B. God's Son out of Egypt

And out of Egypt I called My Son (Hosea 11:1).

Hosea 11:1 refers to the Exodus, but Matthew 2:15 concludes this is a type of Jesus who is the greater Son coming out of Egypt.

¹⁴⁶ See Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects to the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 116-139.

¹⁴⁷ A õtypeö is a person or thing that foreshadows a future person or thing, a parallel occurrence.

8. A Forerunner (John the Baptist)

Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me (Malachi 3:1a). (See also Matthew 11:10; Luke 1:17.)

9. Ministry in Galilee

But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them (Isaiah 9:1-2).

10. A Prophet

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him (Deuteronomy 18:15).

i and Miracle Worker

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy (Isaiah 35:5-6a, see also 42:7).

A. The greatest evidence that Jesus did miracles is that **His enemies agreed He did them**. They just attributed His powers to Beelzebul not God! (John 11:47; Mark 6:14; Luke 23:8; John 3:2; Acts 2:22, 4:16, 10:37-38, 26:26, but see Matthew 9:33-34, 12:22-24; Mark 3:22; John 7:20, 8:48-49, 10:19-21). For extrabiblical examples of Jesus viewed as a sorcerer by His critics see endnote 360 in Waterhouse, *Jesus and History*.

B. Ancient literature outside the Bible shows the Jewish public expected the Messiah to be a miracle worker. Bringing in the Kingdom

of God was associated with overpowering Satan, which in turn demanded supernatural powers of healing and exorcism.¹⁴⁸ It is an historical fact that Jesus must have had a reputation as a miracle worker in order to satisfy the ancient cultural expectations of being a candidate for the Messiah. The masses listened to Jesus not just for His oratory, but rather because He demonstrated powers to back His claims to bring in the Kingdom of God.

C. The õprinciple of embarrassmentö means that embarrassing events must be historical. Unless true, shameful details would not have been recorded. Therefore, John the Baptist must have had doubts about Jesus being the Messiah, but then Jesusø response to him must be taken as historical fact including Jesusø claim to working miracles (Matthew 11:2-6).

D. These historical supports showing that the Lord Jesus Christ did miracles prove His claim to fulfill prophecy and be the anointed One, the Messiah.

11. The Triumphal Entry

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9).

Zechariah 9:9 prophesies that Israelø king would come humbly on a donkey. The specific prediction is that he would ride òa colt, the foal of a donkeyö into Jerusalem. Riding an untrained animal through a noisy parade route is a specific marker for the Messiah (Matthew 21:1-7). In addition, the Gospel of John claims Lazarus was in the city *after his own funeral* and that witnesses to His resurrection were exciting the crowd to see Jesus coming on the donkey. These are strong evidences that Jesus did miracles. How could one write such claims if they were untrue? But if true, consider what this means about the power of Jesus to raise the dead (John 12:9-11, 17-19)!

¹⁴⁸ See *The Testament of Moses* written in A.D. 30 and Qumran fragment 4Q521 cited in Waterhouse, *Jesus and History*, pp. 79-80.

His Death and Resurrection

1. Psalm 22:1, 14-18 ó Could Psalm 22 be taken only as a reference to David alone? Would Old Testament readers have made the connection to the Great Son of David, the Messiah?

Some of the predictions can not be made to apply to David's life. No one gambled for David's clothes. When did David suffer wounds to his hands and feet? Psalm 22 must have been intended to be Messianic.

A. Fulfillments

(1). Words from the Cross (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) - v. 1

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? (Psalm 22:1).

(2). Hated by the people - v. 6

But I am a worm and not a man, a reproach of men and despised by the people (Psalm 22:6).

(3). Ridiculed, wagging heads (Matthew 27:29-30, 39; Mark 15:29) - v. 7

All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head ... (Psalm 22:7).

(4). Insults (Matthew 27:43) - v. 8

Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him; let him rescue him, because He delights in him (Psalm 22:8).

(5). Bones out of joint - v. 14

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint (Psalm 22:14).

(6). Exhaustion from heat and thirst (more directly from Psalm 69:21, see also John 19:28) - v. 15

My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws (Psalm 22:15).

(7). Appointed to death - v. 15c

And you lay me in the dust of death (Psalm 22:15c).

B. Impressive fulfillments in terms of apologetics ó These prophecies are distinctive, incapable of artificial fulfillment, and uncommon for a king.

(1). Distribution of garments (plural) casting lots for clothing (singular) - v. 18

They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots (Psalm 22:18).

a. All four Gospels record fulfillment but only John makes any connection back to Psalm 22 (Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24).

b. My personal conclusion is that Psalm 22:18 is probably a detailed prediction as John 19:23-24 seems to prefer. The four soldiers divided the typical four items of a man's apparel (sandals, headdress, belt, outer garment) but gambled for the singular more valuable robe.¹⁴⁹ There is evidence that the Romans allowed a loincloth in Judea so as to not offend cultural modesty.¹⁵⁰

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, "let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to

¹⁴⁹ See Homer Kent, *Light in the Darkness* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), p.209.

¹⁵⁰ *Jubilees* 3.30-31; 7.20.

decide whose it shall be”; this was to fulfill Scripture; “they divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots” (John 19:23-24).

(2). Pinning down hands and feet/wounds to hands and feet - v. 16c

í *They pierced my hands and my feet* (Psalm 22:16c).

The New Testament does not mention v. 16 as Messianic, and some modern interpreters do not think it is Messianic e.g., the Net Bible.

a. The Masoretic Text reads, “like a lion my hands and feet.” Critics assert Christians see prophecy when none exists. Perhaps the word picture only refers to restriction. However, this phrase alone still favors *both* restriction and wounds just as would happen in a lion attack (being pinned down and clawed).

b. The Septuagint - Several centuries before the crucifixion, the **Jewish** translators interpreted Psalm 22:16 by a Greek verb that means “they pierced my hands and feet.” Therefore, a Messianic reference to the Cross is not a Christian exaggeration.

c. The Dead Sea Scrolls ó the *Nahal Hever* Dead Sea Scroll predates Jesus and reads, “They have pierced my hands and feet.”¹⁵¹

d. The New Testament and Psalm 22:16 ó Unlike Psalm 22:18, the New Testament never ties Jesus’ nail wounds on his hands or feet back to Psalm 22:16! In fact, reference to any nails at all is only in John and only after the crucifixion narrative as a subordinate event. In John 20:25 Thomas will not accept the resurrection until he sees “the imprint of the nails” and feels “the place of the nails.” Only as an afterthought would we even know about the nails.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Craig A. Evans, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Nashville: Holman, 2010), p. 274.

¹⁵² The invitation to “see my hands and my feet” in Luke 24:39 would not be definitive as to nail scars without the specific reference in John 20.

e. Apologetics and Psalm 22:16 ó Bible critics used to assert that only ropes not nails were used to affix a crucifixion victim. However, in 1968 archaeologists found an ossuary of a crucified man named Yehohanan. His leg was broken and had an iron spike through the ankle.¹⁵³ The Old Testament predicts the piercing of hands and feet, and both the New Testament and archaeology confirm the fulfillment. The fact that the Gospel authors do not make any connection to fulfilled prophecy in Psalm 22:16 actually proves they were recording the historical facts regarding Jesus' death and not "fishing" the Old Testament for predictions and conforming their accounts to fit.

f. Conclusion ó Psalm 22:16 and 18 are specific and impressive predictions that could not have been artificially fulfilled. They do not refer to David but to David's greater Son. They were written centuries before Jesus. The fact that Psalm 22:16 was not quoted as fulfilled prophecy in the New Testament only serves to show the authors were writing events as they happened not conforming their accounts to the Old Testament.

2. Psalm 41:9 - Just as David's trusted advisor, Ahithophel, betrayed him, so the Messiah would be betrayed. John 13:18 records that Jesus Himself regarded Psalm 41 as a type.

Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me (Psalm 41:9).

3. Psalm 69:4, 8-9, 21 ó Contrary to the idea of a universally popular Messiah, Psalm 69 portrays one hated and rejected (see also Isaiah 53 and Psalm 118:22). Many New Testament texts teach Psalm 69 as Messianic.

A. Psalm 69: Parallels to the Messiah

(1). Verse 4, hated without cause ó Jesus in John 15:25 treats Psalm 69:4 as a reference to Himself.

¹⁵³ See Waterhouse, *Jesus and History*, p. 153.

(2). Verse 9, zeal for the Temple ó John 2:17 teaches Psalm 69:9 is Messianic.

(3). Verse 9, reproached for God's sake ó Paul in Romans 15:3 teaches Psalm 69:9 is Messianic.

B. Parallels with stronger apologetic significance

(1). Verse 8, hated by brothers

I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons (Psalm 69:8).

David's brothers criticized David's bravado of not fearing Goliath (1 Samuel 17:28ff.), but they did not hate him. Jesus' brothers thought He was crazy (Mark 3:20-21) and did not believe Him (John 7:3-5) until after His resurrection appearance (1 Corinthians 15:7). Thus, we have a type of Jesus that is not referenced as such in the New Testament.

(2). Verse 21, thirst, gall and vinegar

They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21).

Both Matthew 27:34, 48 and Mark 15:23, 36 record not only one but two offers of some kind of drink to Jesus. The first time was when the Lord was being nailed to the Cross. He was offered wine mixed with gall.ö This is believed to be a pain killer, and the Lord refused it.¹⁵⁴

Also, the soldiers evidently had some cheap sour wine for themselves. A second time after Jesus said "I thirst" they offered this "wine-vinegar" to Him. John 19:28 ties Jesus' thirst to Psalm 69:21, but no text specifically refers to gall and vinegar. However, we seem to have a specific type of two offers for drink. Jesus was offered both "gall" then "sour wine-vinegar." He refused both.

¹⁵⁴ See *Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), note for Matthew 27:34.

C. Conclusion ó Psalm 69 provides more specific types that were not literally true of David and could not have been artificially fulfilled.

4. Isaiah 50:6, 52:13-53:12 ó These texts in Isaiah contain at least twenty Messianic predictions. The Dead Sea Scrolls prove these prophecies pre-date the life of Christ. The first Christians took them as Messianic (e.g., Matthew 8:17 and Acts 8:28-35) but so did Jewish interpreters until the 12th Century.¹⁵⁵ Then they changed the definition of the õServant of the Lordö from the Messiah to the nation of Israel. Like the Psalms (22, 41, 69) and Daniel 9:26, Isaiah definitely predicts a Messiah who would be rejected and killed. Some predictions are more impressive than others in terms of apologetics. All of them reveal an impressive Savior and give a rich theology of the Cross.

A. Isaiah 50:6

I gave my back to those who strike me, and my cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover my face from humiliation and spitting (Isaiah 50:6).

The Messiah would be beaten on the back, have His beard pulled; and people would spit on Him. The Gospel records spitting both at the Jewish trial (Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:65) and by the Roman soldiers (Matthew 27:30, Mark 15:19) Of course, His back was beaten severely (Matthew 27:26ff, John 19:1ff.).

B. Isaiah 52:13-15

(1). Verse 14, a õmarredö face

So His appearance was marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men (Isaiah 52:14).

The Messiah would be disfigured. The word õappearanceö refers to Rachel in Genesis 29:17 and Esther in Esther 2:7. It can also refer to men: Joseph (Genesis 39:6); David (1 Samuel 16:18); Adonijah

¹⁵⁵ See *Ryrie Study Bible* note for Isaiah 52:13 ó 53:12.

(1Kings 1:6). One can interpret verse 14 as *comparative*. He would be more disfigured than any man. I prefer a *separative* emphasis. He would be *beyond* looking human (Matthew 26:67, 27:30; Mark 14:65, 15:19).

(2). Verse 15, priestly purification

Thus, He will sprinkle many nations ... (Isaiah 52:15).
He would sprinkle, i.e., purify the nations of the world (see 1 Peter 1:2).

C. Isaiah 53

(1). Verses 1 and 3, despised/forsaken

Who has believed our message? He was despised and forsaken of men (Isaiah 53:1, 3).

The true Messiah would be unpopular (John 1:11, 12:37-38; Romans 10:16).

(2). Verse 2

For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground (Isaiah 53:2).

The Messiah would have a humble origin.

(3). Verse 2

He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him (Isaiah 53:2).

He would not appear as a king.

(4). Verse 3

*And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised,
and we did not esteem Him (Isaiah 53:3).*

Instead, He would be repulsive in appearance (because of abuse).

(5). Also, verse 3, *öforsaken by menö ó* here is another phrase showing the Messiah would be unpopular. During His ministry even some of His followers abandoned Him (John 6:66ff.).

(6). Verses 3-4

He would be *öacquainted withö and öcarryö our grief and sorrows.* These Hebrew words can refer to emotional/spiritual *ögrief,ö* but they can also include a reference to sickness and physical pains.¹⁵⁶ The New Testament at least includes the latter (Matthew 8:14-17; possibly 1 Peter 2:24). It is best to include the basis for healing in the Lord's past atonement but to qualify that complete removal of suffering is future (e.g., Romans 8:18-23; Revelation 21:4).

(7). Verses 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, substitutionary death ó

The Messiah would *öbearö and öcarryö our sorrows* (verse 4). He would suffer for *our ötransgressionsö and öiniquitiesö* (verse 5). Like the symbolism of one laying hands on an animal sacrifice, *öthe Lord has laid on Him the iniquities of us allö* (verse 6 KJV). Others deserved the punishment, but Jesus Himself endured the *östrokeö* (verse 8). Isaiah 53 stresses the substitutionary atonement again in verse 11 *í öHe will bear their iniquities.ö*

(8). Verse 5, pierced

But He was pierced through for our transgressions ... (Isaiah 53:5).

Just as in Zechariah 12:10, Isaiah 53:5 prophesies the Messiah would be *öpiercedö* (only John 19:34, 37).

(9). Verse 5, scourging (Matthew 27:26)

¹⁵⁶ See the Net Bible translation.

And by His scourging we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

The Messiah would be scourged. It is possible to interpret the singular as one continuous injury or *öweltö* (see singular in 1 Peter 2:24).

(10). Verse 7, no defense against accusers

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth (Isaiah 53:7).

Jesus did not defend Himself at His trial (Matthew 27:12; Luke 23:9; John 19:9-11). Acts 8:32ff. directly quotes this prophecy as Messianic.

(11). Verse 8, a sham trial and execution

By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living (Isaiah 53:8, cf. "cut off" in Daniel 9:26).

The Messiah would be *ötaken awayö* (to die) after a corrupt trial.

(12). Verses 12 and 9 *ó*

The Messiah would be *önumbered with the transgressorsö* (verse 12) and expected to be in a criminal *ø* grave after execution because verse 9 says, *öHis grave was assigned with wicked men.ö* Yet, there would be a change, and He would be taken by a rich man after death (*öHe was with a rich man in His death,ö* verse 9). These amazing unexpected results give detailed prophecies that could not have been a contrived fulfillment. Jesus died between two criminals (Matthew 27:38) but was taken by Joseph of Arimathea and buried in a rich man *ø* tomb (Matthew 27:57ff.).

(13). Verse 9, sinless *ó*

The suffering servant would not sin, even with His mouth (1 Peter 2:22). Jesus challenged His enemies to produce evidence of a sin (John

8:46). In its own way this is a remarkable prophecy. The Messiah would have to make a credible claim to being sinless.¹⁵⁷

(14). Verses 10-11, the resurrection ó

Along with Psalm 16:10, Isaiah 53 predicts the death and also the resurrection of the Messiah. In verse 10 öHe will see His offspringö and öHe will prolong His days.ö The Masoretic text in verse 11 says, öHe will see and be satisfied.ö This alone supports a resurrection. Yet, in one of the few significant changes to the Masoretic text of Isaiah 53, the Dead Sea Scroll text specifically reads öHe will see *light* and be satisfied.ö While the Dead Sea Scrolls show the careful transmission of the Old Testament, the few variations that actually do occur give even stronger support to traditional interpretations of Messianic prophecy!

D. Conclusions: Isaiah 50-53 seems to contain more Messianic predictions than any other single portion of the Old Testament. It clearly predicts suffering, a corrupt trial, death, and new life. The Messiah would be scourged, pierced, considered a criminal but also buried with the rich, and raised again. This not only identifies Jesus as Messiah, but also teaches He must be a substitutionary sacrifice and would as a priest ösprinkleö or cleanse the nations.

5. Types and prophecies in Zechariah ó Concerning the Saviorø death, Zechariah gives two specific types and one prophecy.

A. Zechariah 11:4, 12-13 ó betrayal for thirty pieces of silver

Thus says the Lord my God, "pasture the flock doomed to slaughter" I said to them, "if it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw

¹⁵⁷ Note KJV verse 10, öthou shalt make His soul an offering for sin.ö Jesus suffered physically, but somehow His **soul** endured the equivalent, but not identical, punishment of eternity in hell times the billions of people who would ever live.

them to the potter in the house of the LORD (Zechariah 11:4, 12-13).

The shepherd of Israel would be valued at thirty pieces of silver. In the context Zechariah himself is the shepherd. He tells his listeners to give him what his ministry is worth. Ultimately, this also refers to what God's ministry was worth to them (verse 13). They give him the price of a slave (30 silver pieces) which he throws to the potter in the Temple.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate Shepherd in Israel. Israel's leaders in His time regarded His life worth 30 pieces of silver. Judas threw the money back in the Temple, and it was ultimately given to buy the Potter's Field. While not a prophecy about the Messiah in its original context, Matthew saw that these parallels were clear Messianic types (Matthew 26:15, 27:3, 5a, 7). Matthew mentions Jeremiah because it was the first book in the prophetic section of the Hebrew Bible, but Matthew 27:9 clearly quotes Zechariah 11 as a Messianic type.¹⁵⁸

B. Zechariah 13:7 - (followers will scatter)

... Declares the Lord of hosts. Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered... (Zechariah 13:7).

Sheep abandon the shepherd in peril. The disciples' abandonment of Jesus became another example of this truth. The Gospels quote this as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27).

C. Zechariah 12:10 (the Lord pierced)

¹⁵⁸ Babylonian Talmud, *Babba Bathra*, 14b, see John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, editors, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books 1984), p. 87.

Messianic Prophecy

... they will look upon Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son (Zechariah 12:10).

John 19:37 quotes this as a Messianic prophecy. It also supports the Deity of Christ because the Lord God is the antecedent to the one who would be pierced.

6. Exodus 12:46 (Passover Lamb without broken bones)

It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it (Exodus 12:46).

To be a type of the Passover sacrifice the Messiah could be pierced. Yet, there must be no broken bones. Crucifixion victims would often die of asphyxiation. Hanging by their arms would produce difficulty in breathing. Then a man would push up with his legs producing extreme pain because of the nails in his ankles/feet but at least allowing a breath. To hasten and ensure death the executioner would break the legs. After the report that Jesus was dead, they did not break his legs but pierced His side. This preserved the type of a Passover lamb as taught by John (John 19:33, 36).

7. Psalm 16:10 (the Resurrection) ó

Psalm 16:10 says, "You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, neither will you allow your Holy One to undergo decay." This could have been true of David only short term. Perhaps God protected Him from an immediate threat of death. However, long term David did die and decay. Therefore, the New Testament applies Psalm 16 to Jesus Christ, the Son of David (Acts 2:25-31, 13:35-39). There are two related prophecies:

A. Soul not abandoned to Sheol ó

Our present study can not consider whether Sheol here refers to the grave or to a pre-cross righteous compartment of the underworld. Either way, the text affirms entrance but not abandonment. Jesus could enter the grave (or His soul descend to Hades), but not remain there! It

seems that in Hebrew like English *to abandon* would presuppose entrance (one can hardly abandon a hat in the airport without first entering it). The precise Hebrew phrase *to abandon* occurs elsewhere only in Leviticus 19:10, Psalm 49:10, and Job 39:14. It seems to mean *to give to the possession or dominion of another.* Thus, the Messiah would die but never be under the possession or dominion of death. He would come back to life (as in Isaiah 53).

B. Body not to experience corruption

In general this prophesies death but a soon resurrection. We can make a case that the original readers would have understood a resurrection before the fourth day. Rabbinic interpretation suggested the soul hovered around the body until the fourth day.¹⁵⁹

This is not true theology (2 Corinthians 5:8), but it may explain why the fourth day was significant in the Lazarus account (John 11:39). This understanding may also mean the ancients would have interpreted Psalm 16 to permit a death and resurrection on the third day but only before the fourth day!¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

Significant prophecies about the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Messiah were definitely written centuries before the earthly life of Christ and have been correctly interpreted. This leads to the conclusion that the Bible is a supernatural book of divine origin and that Jesus of Nazareth qualifies as the promised Savior. Apologetics cannot make faith unnecessary, but it does make faith in the Lord Jesus Christ most reasonable. Trusting Jesus as Savior is not a large leap in the dark. It is a small step of faith placing trust in One who would never lie to us.

¹⁵⁹ See C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), p. 401 citing *Eccl. R. 12.6; Lev. R 18.1.*

¹⁶⁰ For a full defense of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection see Waterhouse, *Jesus and History*, pp. 168-176.