

The Gospel and Epistles of John

Sydney 2019

Genre/Approach

- John contains none of the teachings about violence, possessions, or divorce contained in the synoptic gospels.
- SINGLE REVELATION PROVIDES THRUST FOR ENTIRE GOSPEL: that Jesus himself is the one who has come from God to bring life; hence, LENGTHY DISCOURSES.

Genre/Approach cont.

- NO explicit use of Law of Moses, with exception of 5:39-40; 46-47. No appeal is made to Law; FOCUS IS CHRISTOLOGICAL.
- Disciples are in a deep sense ALIENATED from “the world” (John 17:14).
- 1 John—opposed to docetists (deny the coming of Jesus in flesh).

John's Christology: "Sent from Heaven"

- Preexistent "Logos" (John 1; John 17:5), expressing UNITY WITH FATHER/Sophia of Jewish Wisdom, Proverbs 8:12ff/*Prophetic Word* (Ps 33:6).
- 8:58—"I am"
- 3:31; 6:51-58—he has come down from heaven.
- 8:23—"you are of this world, I am not of this world."

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." ⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the

John 20:²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

“The Man from Heaven”: The Incarnation

- The Divine and Human are jointly emphasized in the writings of John.
 - These were thought to dwell in *mutually exclusive realms* (most Platonists).
 - Jesus is the Word (“Logos”) become FLESH (1 John 4:2-3)! Rather than remaining an abstract, organizing principle...

Incarnation...

He has been “touched with *our* hands” (1 John 1:1).

- Gets thirsty and asks for drink (4:7; 19:28)...
- Weeps at Lazarus’ grave (11:35)...
- Strips off outer clothing and washes grimy feet of followers (13:3-5)...
- He could be handled and wounded!

Incarnation...

- God has done the “impossible” to save us.
 - “No one has ever seen God, [but] the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart,...has **exegeted** (*exegetato*) him (John 1:18).
 - Jesus is the definitive interpretation, in human form, of God—and thus of the will of God.

Contra Proto-Gnostics (Docetism)

- Gospel of John deconstructs the dualism that governs Gnostic thought.
 - In contrast to later Gnostic redeemer myths, the **redeemer** from heaven in the Fourth Gospel is also the **CREATOR OF THE WORLD** (Genesis 1,2), and validates creation by revealing himself in it.
 - CREATION AND REDEMPTION ARE HELD TOGETHER (with important consequences).

Gnosticism

Some of the core **teachings** include the following: All matter is evil, and the non-material, spirit-realm is good. ... The creator of the (material) universe is not the supreme god, but an inferior spirit (the Demiurge). **Gnosticism** does not deal with "sin," only ignorance.

Loving One Another: The Friends of Jesus

- A. Abiding in Jesus
- Like in other gospels, Jesus gathers around himself followers that will **ADHERE TO HIM CLOSELY.**
 - Many Metaphors describing relationship with followers, such as:
 - ingest his flesh and blood (6:35-39).
 - Good Shepherd and followers his sheep given by Father (10:1-30).

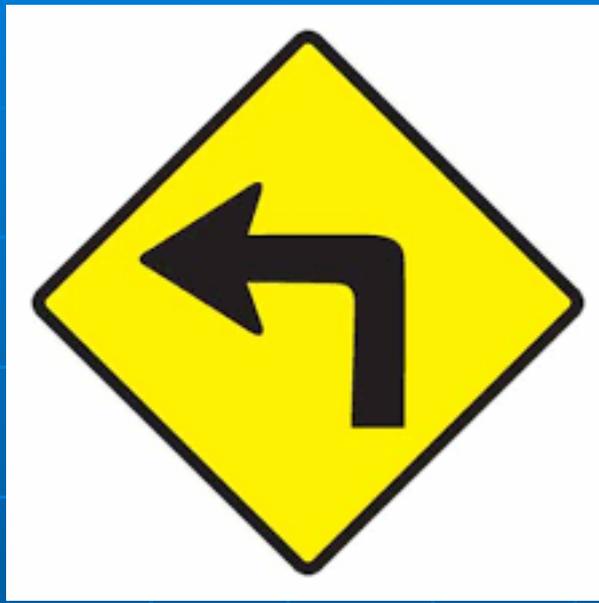
Friends of Jesus: Abiding in Jesus

- He is the vine, we are the branches who must abide in him to have life and bear fruit (15:1-8).
- Our identification with him is to be **VERY STRONG**; we are sent out to **same mission and to face same rejection** (15:8-21; 17:15-18; 20:21—"so I send you.")
- 12:26 and 1 John 2:5b-6

Glorify the Father and Son

- 14:12-14—“so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”
 - 7 miraculous “signs”—mighty works serve as signs of Jesus’ divine authority.
 - EACH MIRACLE ESTABLISHES AN OCCASION FOR A REVELATORY DISCOURSE, e.g. 6:1-14 feeding followed by “bread of life” discourse.

Works are instrumental to the ***larger goal of glorifying God before the world***--proclaiming the truth about Jesus so that all may have life in his name (see 20:31)



Miracles are called signs - points to a truth

John 6 - feeds five thousand - "I am the bread of life."

John 9 - heals a man born blind - "I am the light of the world."

John 11 - raises Lazarus - "I am the resurrection and the life."

LOVE WITHIN THE FELLOWSHIP

- John 13:3-5, 12-15, 34,35
 - CLEAR COMMAND: *love one another as Jesus has loved us.* This too has a purpose linked with testimony.
 - Jesus gives them the **new** command (?) of love **only after** demonstrating in action what "love" entails: HUMBLESERVICE.
 - This immediately precedes the PASSION NARRATIVE.

LOVE and LAYING DOWN ONE'S LIFE

- Explicit connection: 15:12-14,17.
 - Jesus' death is an act of self-sacrificial love that sets the CRUCIFORM LIFE AS THE NORM FOR DISCIPLESHIP.
 - Undermines SENTIMENTAL COMPLACENCY: COUNTERCULTURE AND COSTLY SERVICE ARE STAPLES OF CHURCH LIFE.

SEE 1 JOHN 3:11, 16-18, 23

1 JOHN 4:20-21-LOVE OF GOD

INEXTRICABLY LINKED WITH LOVE BETWEEN DISCIPLES.

JOHANNINE VISION OF CHURCH

- Closely knit community of Jews in major urban setting, such as Ephesus, with satellite communities in other towns (based on 2 and 3 John). Some become disciples.
- Tension developed over time and they were “put out of the synagogue” (John 9:22;12:42;16:2)- *aposynagogos*.

THE JOHANNINE CHURCH

- Now cut off from all that had structured their lives, they *clung to the teachings of Jesus to set their course*: the church is the SPHERE FROM WITHIN WHICH GOD GENERATES LOVE AND LIFE—
 - 1John 3:13,14; 5:19
 - The world is ruled by evil that refuses Jesus (1:10-11), thus be warned: 1 Jhn 2:15

JOHANNINE CHURCH

- 1 John 2:16—Love for brothers and sisters becomes an act of self-preservation AND **prophetic resistance**: in a world governed by HATE, pride in riches, and the power of the EVIL ONE, their LOVE REPRESENTS A BEACON OF LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

“My kingdom is not of this world”

- Vision of conversion highlights a DANGEROUS STEP ACROSS A FATEFUL LINE INTO A FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH:
 - JOHN 3—NICODEMUS used as example to **make appeal to secret Christians in high places to make a public confession—RISKY**; from persecutors to persecuted; surrender privileges??

“My Kingdom is not of this world”

- COUNTER-CULTURAL STANCE OF CHURCH:
 - John 18:36
 - John 19:10-11
 - Entire dialogue subverts Roman claims to sovereignty and SUBORDINATES ROMAN POWER TO GOD’S POWER.
 - *Followers of Jesus are to have same relation to world: abandon allegiance to idolatrous and oppressive regimes and turn to ways of God; to the sovereignty of God! Or, 19:15!*

KRISIS and the Paraclete

(judgement)

(advocate, helper)

- 3:17-19; 5:24; 11:25-26; 1 John 3:14—judgment made, fullness of life begins now!
- 14:15-17,25-26—not orphaned; ready to testify (15:26); 16:12-14.

Realised Eschatology

John 5:24-25

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.