

The Biblical Imagination: The Gospel of John

Introduction

The Biblical Imagination

Bullet Theology

An Organizing Principle

Listening to the Word as an act of Love

Key Backgrounds

The Ages (Jesus, Paul, Gospels)

Pre and Post 70

Jesus in the other 3 Dimensions

Mark: Learning to listen to Mark

His portrayal of Jesus: The Emotional Jesus, the Disturbing Presence/Power of Jesus

Key passages; The Solitary Jesus (1:35-39)

The Emotional Jesus (1:40-45)

The Jesus of Raw Power (4:35-41)

The Fearless Jesus (5:1-17)

The Luminous Jesus (8:27-9:13)

The Compassionate Jesus (10:17-31)

The Questioning Jesus (10:46-52)

Response: Have you ever experienced the disturbing presence of Jesus?

Matthew: Learning to listen to Matthew

His portrayal of Jesus: Giver of Identity, Old Orthodoxy vs New Reality

Key passages; The Royal Jesus (2:1-12)

The Absolutely Trusting Son (4:1-11)

The Open Jesus (9:9-13)

The Absolute Lord (12:1-14)

The Delighted Jesus (15:21-28)

The Jesus Who Defines Us (16:1-28)

The Intimate Jesus (17:24-27)

Response: Describe the Jesus who defines you.

Luke: Learning to listen to Luke

His portrayal of Jesus: The One who turns the world upside down. Compassion for the Marginal

Key passages; The Amazed Jesus (7:1-10)

The Patient Jesus (7:36-50)

The Joy of Jesus (10:21-24)

The Openness of Jesus (19:1-10)

Response: Describe the Jesus who has turned your life upside down.

The Gospel of John

Who is John?

Sitting at the feet of the last living disciple of Jesus.

* John the Apostle, the brother of James and the son of Zebedee (Mk. 1:19f).

* Son of Salome (?), ("Salome" Mk. 15:40, 16:1, "the mother of the sons of Zebedee" Mt. 27:56, "his mother's sister (?) Jn. 19:25) might have been Jesus' cousin.

* Position of intimacy at Jesus' right hand at fellowship meals (13:23; 21:20).

* Entrusted with the care of Mary, Jesus' mother (19:25-27).

* "The disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Identified in (John 21:24). Not a claim to an exclusive relationship with Jesus. His later writings reveal that he considers all Jesus' followers as "beloved disciples."

* Becomes principle companion of Peter after the Resurrection. They are constant companions in Acts. It is always "Peter and John." (3:1,3,4, 11,4:1,3,7,13,19,23, 8:14,17,25.)

* Last living disciple. Provides leadership to a circuit of 7 churches in Roman province of Asia. His advanced age (~90) contributed to a rumor among Christians that Jesus had said that John would not die. (21:20-23). His brother is the first disciple of Jesus to die (Acts 12:2) John is the last. cp.Mt. 20:21. As an old man his letters betray a preoccupation with the question "What is love?"

"Meanwhile the holy apostles of our Savior were scattered across the whole world...John (to) Asia, where he stayed until his death at Ephesus." Eusebius (260-339 AD) 3:1,31 (condemned to Patmos by Domitian 3:17, returns after exile to Ephesus 3:20, lived until the time of Trajan who began his rule in 98 AD (3:23) "gave little thought to the writing of books..." (3:24)

Purposes, Life-Situation

1. "...that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." (20:30f).
2. To challenge the false teaching of those who denied that the Son of God had come in the flesh (1:14; 19:34). (docetic gnosticism)
3. To clarify any false teaching that John the Baptist was the Messiah (1:8, 20, 23; 3:28; 5:35f).
4. To fill in the informational gaps left by the other evangelists.

Life Situation: John is in Ephesus (Date: 90 A.D.) and has responsibility for a circuit of Asian Churches. One of the threats to the Church was heresy, specifically docetism: the false teaching that Jesus only appeared to have come in the flesh.

The Distinctiveness of John

92% of John is unique. Matthew, Mark and Luke are referred to as the Synoptic Gospels - synoptic meaning that they see the course of events in Jesus' life by means of a similar outline.

Passages Unique to John

Jesus as the Lamb of God (Ch. 1)

Jesus' encounter with Nathaniel (Ch. 1)

The wedding at Cana (Ch. 2)

Early expulsion of the merchants from the temple (Ch. 2)

Jesus with Nicodemus (Ch. 3)

Disciples of Jesus baptizing in Judea (Ch. 3)

Samaritan Woman at the well (Ch. 4)

Healing of an official's son in Cana of Galilee (Ch. 4)

Healing of the man by the pool of Bethesda (Ch. 5)

Boy with the lunch (Ch. 6)
Jesus at the feast of Tabernacles (Ch. 7)
Unbelief of Jesus' brothers (Ch. 7)
Woman in adultery (Ch. 8)
Healing of the man born blind (Ch. 9)
Raising of Lazarus (Ch. 11)
Coming of the Greeks to see Jesus (Ch. 12)
Washing the disciples feet (Ch. 13)
High Priestly prayer of Jesus (Ch. 17)
Joseph of Arimathea receives permission to bury Jesus body (Ch. 19)
Appearance to Mary Magdalene (Ch. 20)
Appearance to Thomas (Ch. 20)
Appearance to the disciples fishing and restoration of Peter (Ch. 21)

* Only John reports the early Judean ministry of Jesus (Chs. 1-3). The Synoptic Gospels begin with Jesus' early Galilean ministry and the popular response he received reflected that he was already well known.

* John presents an intensified self-disclosure by Jesus. Jesus is the Revealer (see the "I am..." sayings). In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus shows a reluctance to have others know who he is (see Mark 1:44; 8:29f). John tells us that when Jesus is with the Samaritan woman she said to him, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he" (John 4:25-26).

John omits the parables of Jesus and instead presents Jesus life in terms of a parable.

Striking omissions and significant substitutions.

Synoptics John

Birth Narratives Incarnation - God became flesh and appeared among us! (1:1-18)

Parables An abundance of imagery (Ch. 10)

Miracles Fewer miracles and "signs" are a theological exposition of the miracles (Ch. 11)

Transfiguration John 1:14 Glory characterizes the totality of Jesus' ministry

(see 2:11 "revealed his glory" - 12:28f "Father glorify your name")

Gethsemane Ref. to the Garden; High Priestly prayer of Jesus (17:1-26; 18:1,12)

Sermon on the Mount Emphasis on keeping Jesus' commandments (commandments not defined; allusion to whole body of commandments). The

New Commandment: Love one another (13:34f)

The Lord's Supper Foot washing (Ch. 13) [ref. to "the evening meal" (13:2)]

Bread of Life Discourse (Ch. 6) Vine Discourse (Ch. 15)

Upper Room Discourse (Chs 13-14)

Mt. Olivet Discourse Ref. to experience of tribulation in this world and the Spirit bears witness to Jesus (Chs. 15-16)

Sermonic Conclusions

When we remember that John had been preaching and teaching these stories of Jesus for decades, it is no surprise to find in the early chapters a few sermonic blocks. They serve to open the gospel, to sum up and to look ahead. They are 1:1-5, 10-14, 3:16-21, 31-36

Basis in the Wisdom Literature

One reason for the uniqueness of John is his dependence upon the Wisdom Writings of the Old Testament. During the time of his writing of the gospel, the Jewish leaders were meeting at Jamnia (90 AD) to decide once and for all whether the Wisdom Writings should be included in their canon of scripture.

Law Prophets Writings

Matthew 33 36 7

Mark 17 20 8

Luke 20 18 7

John 10 8 27

The Motif of Misunderstanding

John uses a literary motif in his presentation of Jesus' life that highlights the fact that whenever Jesus said something deeply spiritual, He was inevitably misunderstood. Nicodemus' question 3:4, The Woman at the well 4:11, Disciple's question about food 4:31, The Jews don't know where Jesus is going 7:35, cp 8:19, Confusion about Lazarus' sleep 11:12, Martha confused about Jesus' comfort 11:24, God's voice misunderstood 12:28-31, Confused about the way 14:5, Disciples confused about seeing Jesus again 16:17, Jesus' word about John's death misunderstood 21:23.

2:20 Jesus' statement about the "temple"

3:4,9 Nicodemus misunderstands the New Birth

4:15 The Woman at the well misunderstands about the water

6:34 The people misunderstand concerning the bread

6:42 How can he say he came down from heaven?

6:52 How can he give us his flesh?

7:20 Who is trying to kill you?

7:27 No one will know where the Christ is from

7:35f Where will Jesus go?

8:22 Will he kill himself?

8:27 Misunderstanding about the Father

8:33 How can you say we will be set free?

8:57 You have seen Abraham?

10:6 The disciples misunderstand the image of the shepherd

11:12 The disciples misunderstand Lazarus "sleep"

11:24 Martha misunderstands "your brother will rise"

12:34 Crowd misunderstands Jesus reference to "lifted up"

13:7 Peter doesn't understand the foot-washing

14:5 Thomas misunderstands where Jesus is going

16:17f Disciples misunderstand "a little while"

21:22-23 Jesus statement on John misunderstood

John's "Whispering"

(not including translations)

1:28 "This happened in Bethany..."
1:39 "It was about 10 in the morning."
2:11 "Jesus performed this first sign..."
2:21 "He was speaking about the sanctuary..."
2:24 "Jesus would not entrust himself..."
3:24 "...since John had not been put into prison."
4:8 "His disciples had gone into town..."
4:9 "Jews do not associate with Samaritians"
4:44 "...the Galilleans welcomed him."
6:6 "He asked this to test him..."
6:59 "He said this while teaching in the synagogue."
6:64 "For Jesus knew from the beginning..."
6:71 "He was referring to Judas..."
7:5 "For not even His brothers believed in him."
7:22 "...not that it comes from Moses..."
7:39 "He said this about the Spirit..."
8:20 "He spoke these words by the Treasury..."
9:22f "His parents said these things because they were afraid..."
11:13 "Jesus, however, was speaking about His death..."
12:16 "His disciples did not understand these things..."
(large blank for Jesus longest discourse.)
18:10 "The slaves name was Malchus."
19:35 "He who saw this has testified..."(someone else whispering?)
20:9 "For they still did not understand from the Scriptures..."
21:20 "That disciple was the one who leaned back against"

The Prophet Like Moses

1:21 "Are you the Prophet?"
1:25 "...nor the Prophet..."
1:45 "...the one Moses wrote about"
3:34 "...the one God sent speaks the words of God"
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5:30 "I speak to please the One who sent me"
7:16 "My teaching is not my own, it comes from the One who sent me"
8:16 "I stand with the Father who sent me"
8:26 "...what I have heard from him I tell to the world"
8:38 "I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence"
8:42 "I have not come on my own, he sent me"
12:29 "I did not speak on my own...but the Father who sent me..."
(Jesus' last public words)
14:10 "The words I say are not my own"
15:15 "...everything I learned from the Father I have made known to you"
17:7 "...everything You have given me comes from You"
Important concept in early preaching Cp. Peter, Acts 3:22 Stephen Acts 7:37

His portrayal of Jesus: The Wisdom of God, Prophet Like Moses

Key passages; The Misunderstood Jesus pt.1 (3:1-21)
The Misunderstood Jesus pt.2 (4:1-26)
The Exasperated Jesus (5:1-15)
The Bold Jesus (7:1-44)
The Jesus Who Pursues (9:41)
Jesus the Servant (21:1-14)
Response: Describe the Jesus who has failed to meet your expectations

John

Chapter 1

John has been preaching this material for over forty years. It is no surprise that his gospel begins with three little sermons interspersed with three narrative sections.

1:1-5 First Sermon: The Word; John leaves out the Nativity and substitutes the Incarnation. This is his first significant omission/substitution.
vs. 6-9 First Narrative: Here John begins the polemic against a group who still worships John the Baptist as the Messiah. This sect still exists today as the Mandaeans.

vs. 10-14 Second Sermon: The Incarnation: The Unrecognized One

This statement prepares us for the motif of misunderstanding. Jesus was not recognized, was misunderstood by the very people to whom He had been sent.

v. 15 Second Narrative: Historical flashback

In Greek this is called the "historical present tense." John testifies, he cries out. This breaks into the narrative abruptly.

vs. 16-18 Third Sermon: Grace and Truth

vs.19-28 Third Narrative: John the Baptist, Not the Christ

John repeats once more that John is not the Messiah. This was an important message for his first readers.

v.27 When John says he is not worthy to untie Jesus' sandal, he is making reference to a rabbinic mandate (SBK I p.121) "Every task that a slave does for his master shall a disciple do for his teacher, except the loosing of the sandal. This shows John's great humility. But how much greater is the humility of the one who washed the disciples feet!

Jesus, the Lamb of God, 29-34

The background for this statement comes from Ex 12, also Isa. 53:7, Jer. 11:19. At this point John omits the baptism of Jesus and substitutes a longer scene with John the Baptist proclaiming Jesus as the Lamb of God.

The First Disciples

vs. 35-39 Andrew was one of these first two disciples. The other was almost certainly John. The first thing Andrew does is go and tell his brother Peter.

v.42 emblepo "to look straight at" This word is only used of the way Jesus looks at Peter (cp. Lk 22:61) It implies someone seeing someone else with their mind, of really perceiving who someone else is.

Note also "you will be called." Peter does not receive that title yet. That will happen in Mt 16:18 after Peter's confession.

Jacob's Dream Come True

Notice that there is no program in regards to Jesus' calling of the disciples. Each one is different. V.43 Jesus finds Phillip and simply issues the call, "Follow me." Phillip follows Andrew's example and runs to tell his friend Nathanael.

vs. 47-51 When Jesus describes Nathanael as a "guileless man," He is setting up a comparison with Jacob, who was known as the "man of guile." In verse 51 Jesus alludes to the dream of Jacob. He is telling His disciples that what Jacob could only dream about has come true!

Chapter 2

1. Jesus, the party-lover, 2:1-11

The first "unmiraculous miracle" of Jesus. It will set the tone for all the other miracles in John's Gospel.

Note the focus on Mary, whom John cared for until her death in Ephesus.

Note eyewitness detail, capacity of the water jars, knows what was whispered to the Mary and later the bridegroom.

Do the math: 180 gallons=900 5ths x \$30.00= \$31,500.00!

2. Jesus, the Temple destroyer, 2:12-25

* Note the omission/substitution, John omits the second Temple expulsion and provides the first. Matthew and Luke roughly place the temptation of Jesus here. Perhaps they show Jesus in the wilderness of the desert, in a different sort of struggle with Satan. John places Him in the wilderness of men. At the point where the second Temple expulsion should be, John places the coming of the Greeks. (12:20)

Note the wisdom emphasis, the disciples remember in terms of a psalm. (17)

Motif of Misunderstanding, (20) Jesus says something deeply spiritual about His death and the Jews completely misunderstand.

John whispers in our ear. (21)

23-25 prepare us to meet Nicodemus.

Chapter 3

The Coming of Nicodemus/ Signs Versus Faith vs. 1-12

Unique Johannine Characters: Nathaniel, Nicodemus, Woman at the well, Man 38 years lame, Woman caught in adultery, Man born blind, Lazarus v.4 Motif of Misunderstanding The "Spirit/Wind" (Pneuma/ruach)

The New Birth: 1. Makes us new persons, 2. Gives us the ability to enter heaven, 3. Gives us sonship/daughterhood, 4. "Births" us into eternal life.

The only "sign" you will receive, like the wind, cannot be "seen." But by faith you can perceive what it does. Like the serpent in the wilderness, it is a sign which must be "looked up to" in faith. Believing without demanding proof is the precondition for faith in Jesus. (see Num. 21:4-9, 2 Ki. 18:4)

Sermonic Block vs. 13 (?) - 21 Sums up what has been said as well as looking forward to next block of material.

John the Baptist, "Friend of the Bridegroom." Vs. 22-30 Jewish tradition of the "sosh-ben" who 1. Escorts the bride to the bridal chamber, 2. Waits in the darkness, guarding the door. 3. Allows the bridegroom to enter the chamber only after hearing his "familiar voice." 4. Goes away "rejoicing."

Sermonic Conclusion vs. 31-36 The Preeminence of the Son

* is above all

*His testimony is unaccepted (motif of misunderstanding)

*speaks the words of God (prophet like Moses)

*possesses the Spirit in unlimited quantity

*loved by the Father

*everything has been placed in His hands by the Father. (13:3)

Chapter 4

1. Wisdom's Fountain by the well. 4:1-26

Location: Jacob's well, one of the best attested archeological sites. Jacob gave it to Joseph (Gen.29) Here Jacob kissed Rachel for the first time and burst into tears (v.11) Joseph's bones are buried there. The covenant was renewed there when the promised land was taken. (Gen 48:22, Josh. 24:32)

Life situation: Assyrians invaded the northern kingdom 720 B.C., resettling the area with foreigners who intermarried with the few remaining Jews. When the exiles of the southern kingdom returned they hated the "squatters." (Ez. 4, II Ki. 17:6-24) Jews and Samaritans took turns defiling each others holy places.

v.23 The Spirit is not bound to one place, truth is not limited to one group. True worship encounters God everywhere.

v.12, 15 Motif of Misunderstanding

v.25 Samaritan name for messiah, "tahav" or "revealer"

v.26 First of the "I am" sayings in John

2. The disciples return. vs. 27-38

"surprised to find Him talking to a woman" rabbis did not speak to women in public, even to their own wives.

v.33 Motif of Misunderstanding

vs.34-38 A discussion of Jesus' purpose and theirs; harvesting souls. (cp Amos 9:13, Rev. 14:15)

vs. 39-42 A living example of a harvest among the Samaritans.

3. The Royal Officials Unseen Son. v.43-54

In contrast to the Synoptics, which often show Jesus' rejection in Galilee, John gives us this example of Him being welcomed. (v.45b cp 2:23)

v.46b. "Basilikos"- kings official, probably of Herod's court. He has come 20 miles to ask Jesus for a gift of healing.

v.50a. Unmiraculous miracle. Jesus is absent for the healing.

v.50b. The Miracle Behind the Miracle. The man believed Jesus without proof. (faith) (v.53 His household come to faith.)

Chapter 5

The Man of Excuses 5:1-15 (Contrast with the blind man of chapter 9)

"Do you want to get well?" Not insensitive, the perfect question.

Excuse #1 "There is no one to help me" v.7

Excuse #2 "That man told me to pick it up" v.11

Excuse #3 "I don't know who he was" v.13

Miracle Behind the Miracle Jesus found him. v.14

(note: No motif of misunderstanding. Why? See 2:24)

Jesus' testimony about Himself (and the Father) (Jesus' Self-Understanding) 16-30

"I am working" (even on the Sabbath) v.17

"I only do what I see the Father doing." v.19

"The Father loves the Son" v.20

"The Son gives life." (spiritual life) v. 21, 26

"All judgment entrusted to the Son" v. 22

"Whoever hears and believes the Son had eternal life." (spiritual life) v. 24f

"The Son has the authority to judge." v. 27, 30

"Someday those who hear the voice of the Son will rise." (resurrection life) v. 28

"By myself I can do nothing." v. 30

"I seek to please the One who sent me." v. 30

Other testimonies about Jesus

Self-testimony disclaimed v.31

John the Baptist testimony- Valuable but insufficient because it is human v.33f

The testimony of God's work- They don't believe because it requires faith v. 36

The testimony of Scripture (Moses) They have degraded it with the oral law v.38

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 represents the major turning point in John's gospel. From this point on Jesus is on his way to the cross. We begin to see the fulfillment of what was stated in the prologue, "his own did not receive him." 1:10

The Miracle Blessing, Feeding of the 5,000. 6:1-15

Miracle Behind the Miracle, perfect provision for the 12 who have served as slaves. "Peah" the leftovers given to the slaves after the meal. Vs. 12-13

The Prophet (like Moses) Dt. 18. In the wilderness Jesus provides bread (manna) as did Moses. V.14

Jesus' refusal to become a "bread king." V. 15 (cp 6:26)

"I AM, don't be afraid." The Second "Storm" on Galilee. 16-24 This is not the terrible storm of Lk. 8:22, Mt. 8 or Mk. 4 Jesus was with them, asleep. Now he is not there. Not a storm but simply contrary wind. (parallels Mt14, Mk. 6) Jesus demonstrates his divinity (cp. Jb 9:8-11) and speaks the name of God.

The Turning Point, the Scandal of the Gospel. 25-70

The true motivation, another free meal. (civic meals, a Roman phenomenon) (cp. Isa 55:2) v. 26f

The first ominous sign, the "seal of approval." Jesus is an acceptable sacrifice. v. 28

The "work" of God, a discussion between faith and works. Vs. 28-33. The "work" of God is to believe.

v. 34- This misguided question sets in motion a discussion that will end in scandal.

v. 35 (48) First of 7 "I am" sayings. The Parable of the Life of Jesus, Remember in the gospel of John there are no parables. Jesus' life is presented as the parable. This saying comes after he has fed the 5,000 (probably 15,000 including women and children). He validates what he says about himself by what he does.

v.41 (61) The "murmuring of the people in the wilderness." Remember the context of the Prophet like Moses.

The intensity of the conflict explodes, v. 52 Jesus says nothing to quell their anger, he adds fuel to the fire. v.55

The Desertion of the Disciples, the Confession of Peter. 60-69.

v. 61 Isa. 8:14 The Scandalon (cp. Mt. 11:6, John the B. stumbles when Jesus fails to meet his expectations.

Peter's loyal despair; there simply is nowhere else to go. Cp. His great confession in Mt 16:13ff where Jesus confirms his title as rock.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 presents a confused crowd, an angry group of religious leaders, as well as Jesus' own mocking brothers. Clearly John intends to show the division that occurs when Jesus comes on the scene. When Jesus stands and shouts in the middle of the Tabernacles congregation it is one of the great moments in the John's gospel.

1-5 Jesus threatened by the people, mocked by His brothers.

6-11 Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem "in secret."

12-13 The people are divided concerning who Jesus really is.

14-24 Jesus teaches at the feast. Note v.17 Prophet like unto Moses.

Tabernacles (Sukkoth, Booths) is celebrated at the end of September. It is a "festival of joy before God who blesses crops. (Dt.16:15) This festival was later Americanized into Thanksgiving. It was one of the three major feasts (Shelosh Relegim) with Passover and Pentecost.

*Agricultural significance- the "booth" was used for shelter during the harvest.

*Historical significance- the people lived in booths during the exile. (Lev.23:42ff)

25-27 Further confusion among the people about Jesus.

28-29 Another statement linked to the Prophet like unto Moses.

30-32 The crowd tries to seize, temple guards are eventually sent to arrest Him.

33-36 Motif of Misunderstanding

*37-39 Jesus connects to a particular part of the observance of Tabernacles, the high priest pours out a pitcher of water, quoting Isa.12:3 "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

40-44 The people are further divided because of Jesus.

45-52 The temple guards return empty handed, unable to arrest Jesus. They have violated a direct order from the high priest. Nicodemus, who will later help in the burial of Jesus, takes his first stand for Jesus.

Chapter 8

The Woman Caught in Adultery

This is referred to as a "textual floater" since it appears in different places in various ancient manuscripts of John. In one ancient manuscript it is even found in Luke! The best explanation is that the story was extracted from the earliest manuscripts because it seemed that Jesus was being "soft" on adultery. He did condemn adultery but not the woman who found His grace. In the brief span of 11 verses we have a crystalline picture of the forgiving love of Jesus. When we come to the end of the story we feel as if we have read an entire book on grace.

The set up is found in 7:45ff where the Jewish leaders are in conflict with Jesus.

8:1f sets the scene.

v.5 They are wrong, the law simply says "shall be put to death" (Lev. 20:10, Dt. 22)

v.6 Note John whispers in our ear the backwards perspective. Only John does this for us.
v.6b "katagraphhein" literally to "write down." Jesus is not doodling. He is making a list. Two choices: names or sins. (maybe both!) cp Jer.17:13!
Jesus has just identified Himself as the source of Living Water!

v. 7 Jesus is referring to Proverbs 20:9. This basis in Wisdom is evidence of Johannine origin for the story.

v.9 Why this detail?

v.11 In 12:47 Jesus will say He has not come to condemn but to save.

Jesus' Discourse on His Deity

Note the Promises

"Whoever follows Me will never walk in the dark." v.12b

"If you hold to My teaching...the Truth will set you free." v. 31

"If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed." v. 36

"If a man keeps my word he will never see death." v. 51

v.58f Jesus manifests the divine Name (Ex.3:14) and the people pick up stones to stone Him. At the end of the chapter Jesus finds Himself in the same place as the woman he saved at the beginning of the chapter!

Chapter 9

9:1-12 This is the only instance of Jesus healing someone stricken from birth. The story provides a backdrop for a long-standing discussion concerning the relationship between sin and sickness. (v.2)

v.5 Jesus makes the statement that He is the Light of the World. This will be enacted thru the parable of His life in the healing of the man born blind.

v.6 The use of spittle, a deliberate violation of Sabbath oral law.

v.8ff Notice the difference between the lame man (chap.5) and the blind man.

vs.13-34 The Pharisees investigate the healing. The result of their inquiry is that they are further divided because of Jesus. (v.16.) Notice that Jesus is absent for this entire block of material. This may be the longest such passage in the NT. This might be a literary device to build tension for the reappearance of Jesus in v.35.

*Because of the pressure put on the healed man, he moves forward in his understanding of who Jesus really is; v.11 "the man" v.15 "He is a prophet." v.33 "...if this man were not from God." v. 38 "Lord."

v.35ff The Miracle behind the miracle; Jesus looks for and finds the man, not content with giving him healing, Jesus longs to give the man Himself. (Jesus is not His gifts.)

v.39 Jesus functions as a judge in the same sense light illuminates. He judges by the very nature of His presence. Cp. 12:47ff where Jesus asserts that He has not come to judge.

v.40 The block of material comes to a close when John cuts back to the Pharisees. The living parable of the blind man who can now see is an indictment against them. If, when a cure is offered to a sick person, it is refused, they render themselves incurable.

With chapter 10 the action accelerates towards passion week and the cross.

Chapter 10

In preparation read psalm 23. (see also Ps. 80:1, Isa. 40:11, Zach. 13:7)

The context for this chapter comes from the previous chapter. Judgment falls on the false shepherds versus the True Shepherd, Jesus.

v.3 "watchman" is a code word for prophet. Hab. 2, Ez. 33. I Pet. 2:25, Heb. 13:20.

Note also the personal knowledge the shepherd has of the sheep.

v. 4 The sheep need only one characteristic; to recognize the Shepherd's voice!

v. 7 Because they do not understand the image Jesus shifts it for them. When He calls Himself the gate, He is still speaking about the shepherd.

The shepherd would lay across the opening of the sheep pen at night, making himself literally the gate for the sheep.

v. 11, 14 It is always significant when Jesus repeats Himself like this.

v. 19 Note, again the people are divided because of Jesus. This is a consistent theme in the gospels.

(Note between verses 21 and 22 there is a two month interval. Tabernacles is in October, Hanukah is in December)

v.22 The Feast of Dedication. This is not a biblical feast. It commemorates the rededication of the Temple after the desecration of Antiochus in 164 BC. 80,000 Jews were murdered. A pig was offered in the Holy of Holies. I Maccabees records the fight to regain the Temple. Hanukah celebrates the re-consecration of the Temple after that war.

v. 27 Now we discover why John picks up two months later. Jesus returns to the discussion of the sheep and the Shepherd. This is an interesting look at the process of the gospel writer's piecing together the words of Jesus.

Chapter 11

"A Matter of Life or Death"

This chapter is a parable about the implications of Jesus' power over death. It is about life and death on a number of levels.

11:1-16 The story of Lazarus, "the one you love." John is not the only disciple identified as the beloved!

v.4 Notice Jesus' understanding of death; a possibility for God being glorified. cp. 9:3 Was this statement given to the messenger from Martha???

v. 6 "Yet" is a big word. Jesus deliberately stays 2 more days so Lazarus can die. Jesus is failing to meet their expectations.

v. 9 This monologue reminds us of 9:5.

v. 11-13 Jesus refers to death as sleep and is misunderstood (Motif of Misunderstanding) cp Mk 5:39 and the death of the little girl!

17-34 Jesus and the sisters of Lazarus. Notice that their first words to Jesus are identical and yet His response could not be more different. Martha needed to hear Jesus' words of comfort. Mary needed to see His tears.

v.36 The tone of this statement rings like the motif of misunderstanding. Perhaps Jesus is not weeping for the reasons they believe.

v.37 Shows their level of expectation.

v. 40 An indication that the original message from v.4 was given to the messenger and relayed to the sisters.

The Miracle Behind the Miracle Perhaps the real miracle is the tears of Jesus.

v.45-54 The aftermath of the miracle. Jesus becomes the target. For giving life, His life will be taken.

v.49-53 Caiaphas was h.p. from 18-36 AD. At a time when the Romans were removing h.p.'s at a rate of one per year, he remains in office for 18 years.

55-57 These verse provide the prelude for the Passion Week.

Suggested Prayer Topics

*That we might fully realize the implications of Jesus' power over death.

*That God might be glorified in our brushed with disease and death.

*That we might be given understanding when Jesus fails to meet our expectations.

*That we might hear Jesus' words of comfort and see His tears.
*That our hearts might be prepared for the celebration of His passion.

Chapter 12

After a period (~1 month?) of retreat in the desert (11:54) where He spent time with His disciples, Jesus returns to Bethany, to a party given in His honor at the home of Simon the Leper. (There was a leper colony on the outskirts of Bethany.)

The Anointing of Jesus by Mary

John foreshadows the footwashing in the next chapter.

12:1-11 (parallels Mt. 26, Mk 14. Lk 7 is a completely different occasion)

Mt. 26:13, Mk 14:9 Jesus memorializes what she did. Totally unique! The three accounts are virtually, fact for fact, the same. The critical question to ask, "What is unique about John's account?" answer...v.3b!

v. 4-7 Only John remembers it was Judas, Mt and Mk list an unnamed disciple. John also provides the true motivation as he whispers in our ear.

v. 9-11 The plot extends to Lazarus as well. The priests want to "destroy the evidence."

The "Triumphal" Entry

Sunday before the crucifixion. Jerusalem swelled from 50,000 to 250,000.

unique to John's account; palm branches (v.13), disciples didn't understand at that time (v.16), presence of Lazarus (v.17), lament of the Pharisee's (v.19)

v.13f Waving palm branches in Judaism was connected with celebrating returning war heroes. (Josephus War 7.100-102) Common on Jewish coins, representing Judea. The implication for them is that Jesus is the warrior-king. Palms do not grow in Jerusalem, they had been brought up from Jericho, "the City of the Palms."

Riding on the donkey was a reversal. Cp Rev.19:11

v.17. Notice how Lazarus remains a character in the story.

The Coming of the Greeks

12:20-36 The rest of John's account is unique.

*John omits the second Temple cleansing and substitutes the coming of the Greeks. Jesus understands their coming as the final sign He was looking for. Finally "the time has come."(v.23)

v.23-26 The grain of wheat. (cp. I Cor 15:36)

v.28b-29 A much neglected audition of God.

*v.32 One of the most often mis-quoted verses in the Bible!

v.47-50 The closing words of Jesus' ministry. His final statement to the world.

Suggested Prayer Topics

Remember in prayer the memorial of Jesus to Mary

Ask that the principle of the grain of wheat will become actualized in our lives.

Chapter 13

A Significant Substitution; The Footwashing

At this point in the gospel narrative we should be reading the story of the last supper. John omits it and substitutes the washing of the disciples feet after the meal. For the context see Luke 22:24ff. The disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest. Jesus washes their feet in response to their argument.

13:1 the setting for the story. Jesus will show them the "full extent of His love" by doing something relatively small; he washes their feet.

v.2 Judas has betrayed Jesus but remains in the room, cp. V.26. This means Judas has his feet washed by Jesus.

v.3 Notice the things that Jesus "knows" which lead Him to become their servant; God had put all things under His power, He had come from God and was returning to God "so"...

vss. 6-9 the exchange with Peter. Note, Peter thinks he is doing the right thing, preserving Jesus' dignity. Over the next several hours Peter will say the right thing and be rebuked by Jesus for doing so. Peter's discipleship depends on him submitting to Jesus' Servant/Lordship.

vss.15-17 An echo of Luke 24:27-30

vss. 18- 30 Jesus predicts His betrayal

v.21f The setting of DaVinci's "Last Supper"

vss.23-26 The whispered exchange with "beloved disciple." He seems to be sitting on Jesus' right side. He is able to whisper in his ear.

vss. 27-30 Judas seems to be sitting on the left side of Jesus, the "place of the intimate friend." See Ps 41:9

v.31 "Now the Son of Man is glorified" The wheels have been set in motion that will lead to the cross.

vss. 33-37 An example of "selective listening." Peter only hears the first words of Jesus. This leads to the prediction of Peter's denial.

Suggested Prayer Topics

*That we might become true servant followers of Jesus.

*That we will never betray or deny Jesus.

Chapter 14

The Farewell Discourse of Jesus (chaps. 14-17)

Cp. Jacob's Gen. 49, Moses' Dt33, Paul's Acts 10:20:17-38

Imagine the tone of a conversation just after someone had washed their feet. Jesus has just said some troubling things; that He is leaving and going somewhere they cannot follow. Now He comforts the disciples.

Reasons for comfort

Jesus is preparing a place just for them. (1-4)

Jesus has a unique relationship with the Father in which they share is they will love and obey. (5-15)

Jesus will send another Comforter. (16-31)

Note that in response to the questions of the disciples (Jesus is interrupted 3 times! Thomas v.5, Philip v.8, Judas v.22) Jesus always posits Himself as the answer to their question. He has not come to give them answers, He has come to give them Himself! It is as if the motif of misunderstanding disappears at the point of this honest and vulnerable exchange. The disciples are beginning to know that they don't know!

v.12f Jesus makes a remarkable promise. The disciples will be able to do greater things than He has done. This promise is followed by a long discussion (vs. 15-31) where Jesus develops the demand to love and obey.

v. 15 If you love Me you will do what I command.

v. 21 Whoever ... obeys them.. he is the one who loves me.

v. 23 If anyone loves me, he will obey...

v. 24 He who does not love Me will not obey...

v. 31 I love the Father and ... I do exactly what my Father has commanded...

The Comforter

To answer their concern about Jesus leaving, He promises to send the Paraclete. (para "beside" kalew "to be called") This begins a discussion that carries thru chapter 17:26. The Holy Spirit will be their; helper 14:16f, interpreter 14:26, witness 15:26f, prosecutor 16:7-11, revealer 16:12-15

Chapter 15

The Farewell Discourse of Jesus: The Walk

The tone of this discussion must have contained some urgency. Don't picture a leisurely walk. Through out the passage Jesus is repeating words and images He has used thru the entire ministry. He has told numerous parables about vines and vineyards (cp. Mk. 12:1-12, Mt. 20:1-6, cp Mt 13:24-30)

v.1 The final "I am" saying in John. "I am the true vine." (image applied to Israel; Ps. 80:8-18, Isa. 5:1-7, Jer. 2:21, Ez. 15, Hos. 10:1)

"true" in light of the fact that Jesus is the only vine to which we can be connected and bear fruit. Notice the four conditional statements that follow.

v. 2f There is a play on words here between "cuts off" (airei), "trims clean" (kathairei) and "clean" (kathatoi)

v. 10 returns to obey/love theme that was introduced in the previous chapter. He repeats Himself in vs. 12 and 14.

v. 12 Note, a command (entole) not a commandment.

v. 15 Jesus extends His friendship to His slaves. Just because we have become His friends does not mean we are no longer slaves. He will return to referring to them (us) as slaves in v.20.

v.17 closes the discussion on love and opens a new discussion on being hated by the world.

vvs. 18-25 All about being hated because Jesus was hated first, we belong to Him (not the world), they do not know Him. (Note the connection to Ps 60, where the king is hated without reason.) (cp. Mt.10:29, Mk. 13:13, Lk. 6:22)

v.22 Jesus' words will condemn them on the last day. (cp. 12:48) (Again, He is repeating Himself and summoning up three years of teaching. Don't forget the urgency of this, His final discourse.)

v.26 Jesus returns to the topic of the Comforter.

v.27 "from the beginning" a theme close to John's heart. Also the basis for choosing a replacement for Judas in Acts 1:22.

Topics for Prayer

*That we might recognize and accept the pruning process of the Father and "remain in Jesus."

*That we will seriously consider the command of Jesus to love.

*That we might be faithful enough to elicit the hatred of the world.

Chapter 16

The Farewell Discourse of Jesus: "I Have Overcome the World"

vs. 1-4 This is a continuation of the discourse from chapter 15 about how the world will hate the disciples.

5-7 Jesus repeats the promise of the Comforter.

8-11 Jesus makes three new promises about the work of the Spirit. It will prove that the world was wrong about:

1. Sin; not believing in Jesus is the new definition for sin.

2. Righteousness; Jesus' returning to the Father demonstrates that He is righteous.

3. Judgment: the world is about to be "judged" as Jesus is condemned in the cross.

12-15 More about the Spirit; he will guide us to all truth. (vvs 8-11 is only the beginning) he will only speak what he hears (from the Father) he will tell us what is to come. He will "evangelize."

16 This statement from Jesus sets off a discussion that goes all the way to the end of the chapter. Jesus will leave and after a time He will return.

17f The beginning of the evidence of the Spirit working in their lives. The disciples are beginning to know that they don't know. This is a transition away from John's motif of misunderstanding.

20-22 Concerns the radical reversal that occurs when Jesus reappears; from grieving to joy. With the departure of Jesus and the advent of the Holy Spirit the disciples are being reborn into a spiritual world that will be characterized by joy.

33 This is, in effect, Jesus final word to the disciples. In chapter 17 He goes to prayer.

Topics for prayer

That we will embrace the work of the Spirit in our lives of guiding us into "all" truth.

That the joy Jesus promised would become more evident in our lives.

That we would accept from the Spirit as a gracious gift the peace Jesus promised to provide.

Chapter 17

The Farewell Prayer of Jesus: Glory and Oneness

If you really want to get to know someone, listen to them pray. This is Jesus' most personal word to the Father, an intimate prayer that reveals the character of their relationship. The predominate themes are glory and oneness.

v.1 "After Jesus said this..." reveals a shift.

"the time has come," remember that in John "His time had not yet come" occurs again and again. Now it is time.

vs. 1-5 The main theme is glory (occurs 5 times) This theme will be repeated throughout the prayer. (4 more times)

vs. 12-19 Jesus is concerned that His disciples be protected by the "power of the name." To this point He has protected them. Now E asks the Father to continue.

v.12 lit "no one has destroyed himself except the son of destruction." This confirms that Judas was lost.

v.13 Note that Jesus does not simply want them to have joy, but His joy. What would be the difference?

vs. 14-19 He repeats the request for protection and adds the note of sanctification, of "setting them apart. Not "out" of the world but "apart."

v.20 Incredibly Jesus focuses His prayer on us! With this, He introduces the other theme of oneness/unity. His last great request to the Father was that we might be one.

vs. 21-23 Our oneness should be a reflection of the oneness that exists between Jesus and the Father. "I in them and You in me..." Remember this theme from 14:20 "On that day you will realize that I am in the Father and you are in me and I am in you."

The "complete unity" Jesus refers to is only possible thru love. Cp. Col 3:14 In Jesus God lavished His love on us. You cannot stand before the cross and say, "God does not love me."

Topics for prayer

*For Unity

*To realize our "set apart" natures

*That we might reflect the glory Jesus pleaded for in this prayer.

*That we might take part in being the answer to His prayer.

*

Chapter 18

The Arrest

"There are only two possibilities of encountering Jesus, man must die or he kills Jesus"

v.1 Now, after the lengthy discussion, (5 chapters!) Jesus crosses the Kidron Valley and moves into Gethsemane, the “place of crushing.

vvs. 2f Judas moves in with a “speria” of soldiers, 2-6 hundred armed men.

v. 5 “Ego emi” “I am” Note two separate responses, “falling down” and “falling back.”

v. 10 Peter strikes with the sword Jesus had told them to buy in Lk. 22:35f. Notice John’s “local knowledge.”

vvs. 12-14 Jesus is bound and taken to Annas. This step is omitted in the Synoptics.

Outline of Arrest and Trial

(2 trials, 3 stages each)

Jewish Trials

1. a Before Annas, held for questioning.

b. Before Caiphas with the Sanhedrin at midnight (Mt. 26:57) The Principle Jewish trial. c A daylight mock trial to ratify the former illegal trial (Mt. 27)

Roman Trials

a Before Pilate, shortly after daylight. (Mt. 27, Mk. 15, Lk. 23)

b Before Herod, a courtesy call from Pilate.

c Before Pilate

vvs. 15-18 Peter’s first denial. Note he is there with another acknowledged disciple of Jesus.

vvs. 19-24 The action cuts back to Jesus and the high priest. Jesus makes a point of Jewish law from Code of Maimonides. A man cannot be convicted based on his own testimony. Annas sends Jesus “still bound” to Caiphas.

vvs. 25-27 Peter’s second and third denials.

vvs. 28-40 Jesus before Pilate. Pilate simply wants to be rid of Jesus (v.31) The Jews keep insisting and concoct a charge of sedition. Pilate is momentarily drawn into a discussion with Jesus but still does not want to get involved. His question in v.38 is spoken as he is walking out the door. He does not wait for nor want an answer from Jesus

Chapter 19

The Crucifixion

v. 1 Note, this is a Roman, not a Jewish flogging. Paul receives 39 stripes with a rod in the synagogue (I Cor. 11) The only stipulation for a Roman flogging was that a man would be flogged “until the flesh hangs from his back.” People were often disemboweled by flogging. This is illegal since it is given before Jesus is even found guilty. (cp.v.4)

v.3 Lit “kept giving Him blows with their hands.”

v. 5 “ecce homo” cp v.14. “Here is your king.”

v.6b This is a flagrant violation of Roman law.

v.7 cp. Lev.24:14-16

v. 12 “upon this” When Jesus extends the benefit of the doubt to Pilate, he seeks again to have Him released. The turning point for Pilate is when he hears a voice in the crowd accusing him, “you are no friend of Caesar’s.” Pilate’s benefactor, Sejanus, had earlier been executed for lying to Tiberius about the Jews. Pilate is on thin ice. He is eventually called back to Rome because of his cruelty to the Jews and disappears on route.

v.13 At this point Matthew tells us Pilate’s wife sends his word of the troubling dream she’s been having about Jesus. (Mt 27)

v.14 As the Jews of Jerusalem are preparing to slaughter their Passover lambs, Jesus, the Lamb of God, is being sacrificed.

v.15 This is the formal abdication of the messianic hope and a picture of the madness of hatred.

Jesus Crucified

The shudder of the cross is remembered in the word “excruciating.”

v.17 “gugoloth” Hebrew for “skull. “Calvaria” Latin, hence “Calvary”

v.18 Note the absence of detail. “And here they crucified Him.” It is the same in all the gospels. The most vivid description of the crucifixion is found in the Old Testament. Ps 22. Isa. 53:12

v.19 The wording of the titulus is slightly different in all the gospels. Mt “This is Jesus. The king of the Jews.” Mk. “The king of the Jews.” Lk. “This is the king of the Jews.”

v.22 inegmatic?

v.23 indicates there were 4 soldiers assigned to the crucifixion.

v.25 Salome, Jesus’ aunt was also there (Mk. 15, Mt. 27)

v.26 It makes sense that only John would have recorded this detail. John is only about 14 years old. At this point he needs Mary as much as she needs him. She will eventually die in his arms in Ephesus.

Jesus Dies

v.28 He was earlier offered a stupefying drink, which He refused (Mt 27, Mk. 15) Now He consciously fulfills Ps. 69:21. Sour wine was given to soldiers on duty.

v. 29 the stalk indicates a “high cross.”

vs. 31-33 This was accomplished by means of a heavy wooden mallet. Apparently the other two thieves are still alive.

v. 35 This is a strange testimony, almost inserted into the narrative. Could this soldier have become a believer and a part of John’s community in Ephesus?

Jesus Buried by 2 Pharisees

v.38 Mark tells us Joseph came “boldly” to ask for the body, thereby identifying himself with a known criminal. Both men become ritually unclean for the rest of Passover by handling the dead body of Jesus.

v.40 75 pounds of spices were used to make a bed to rest the body in.

v. 41 “in which no one had ever been laid,” indicates that it is fit to be used by a king.

Chapter 20

The Resurrection

v.1 “early” a technical term for 3-6 A.M.

vs. 2 Mary comes to the tomb. The Synoptics tell us she had come to anoint the body. That fact reminds us that she had absolutely no expectation of the resurrection. In fact, everyone’s actions reveal the same. “we don’t know...” indicates the presence of the other women.

vs. 3-9 Peter and John become consistent companions. They will constantly be together in Acts. Peter takes over the big brother place from Jesus in John’s young life. Note that this story is filled with eye witness detail.

The grave clothes are literally “lying their folds” as if the body had evaporated thru them. The “sweat cloth” is folded up separately, as if to indicate a lack of haste.

v.9 John whispers in our ear.

Jesus’ First Appearance... to a Woman

v.10 This is a pitiful picture of Mary.

v.13 Angels questions usually indicate that the person spoken to has no idea what really happening.

v.14 Mary turns before He speaks, either she sensed His presence or the angel looked up at Him.

v.15 She still has no expectation of the resurrection, hence she thinks Jesus is the gardener.

v.16 She recognizes His voice saying her name, just as Jesus said his sheep would recognize His voice when He called them by name.

- v.17 This is said almost laughingly. "I'm not leaving yet, so you don't have to hold onto Me."
- v.18 Luke tells us that the disciples thought she was delirious.
- v.19 This is after the Emmaus incident. Jesus' usual greeting.
- v.20 He shows them his scars. Note the crucifixion account did not mention His being nailed to the cross.
- v.22 This is a symbolic activity. Cp. Ez.37:5 The forgiveness of God must be displayed in your lives, if not, it will not be displayed at all.
- vs. 24-28 Note that Thomas is not condemned for doubting. "Only he who doubt can truly believe." Kierkegaard.
- v.30f This was the original ending for the gospel of John. Chapter 21 was added by his disciples after his death. It contains the purpose of the book.

Chapter 21

Breakfast With a Wounded Slave

This is the story of the second miraculous catch of fish. The first is in Luke 5. This is a genuine story from John's preaching/teaching but has been appended by his disciples to explain the false rumor that has begun to spread after the death of John (v.23)

- v.1 "it happened this way" John never uses that phrase anywhere else.
- v.4 The disciples do not recognize Jesus. He is only recognized by his scars. In v,13 they will still be uncertain and afraid to ask.
- v.5 This would have been an irritating question. "Friends, you haven't caught any fish, have you."
- v.6 Note the eyewitness detail, "right side of the boat." John recognizes it is Jesus because of the first catch in Luke 5.
- v.9 More eyewitness detail, 100 yards, coal fire. (v.11 "153 fish")

Peter Encouraged

I do not believe Jesus was trying to humiliate Peter but rather to challenge and encourage him. Jesus gives him three chances to reaffirm his love for Jesus but reminds Peter that love is seen in deeds (feeding and caring for the sheep) and not just words.

v.18 Jesus empowers Peter with the knowledge of his own death. In Acts we will see Peter asleep in a Jewish jail because he knows how he will die, by crucifixion. "Stretch out" and "lifted up" were the two most common metaphors for crucifixion.

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