



Intro to the New Testament:

The Gospel of John

Session Three

Introductory Issues & Genre

- This Gospel offers a very distinct portrait of Jesus, underlining distinct themes found in the other Gospels in a unique way.

Author

- Scholars propose many options for the Gospel's writing: John the elder, John the apostle, a disciple, a circle or school surrounding either of these persons, or others whom we can't reconstruct
- Internal evidence points largely to the apostle John: the most reasonable person from the synoptic Gospels possible to be the beloved disciple in John is the apostle John
- External evidence also favours John the apostle as the author; both Gnostic and mainstream Christian authors regarded the son of Zebedee as the author

Writing Setting & Date

- In the absence of firm evidence to the contrary largest number of scholars continue to place the writing of the Gospel in Ephesus which follows early Christian tradition as to where John settled late in life
- Most associate this work with other Johannine works, one of which is Revelation which circulated Asia Minor where Ephesus was the most prominent city
- For a time it was customary for critical scholars to date John's Gospel to the late 2nd century, however with the discovery of a fragment of his Gospel has led the majority of scholars to date John to the last decade of the 1st century which is the period specified by Christian tradition

Background

- Luke seeks to promote Christianity in the Greco-Roman world at large which gives his Gospel a unique narrative with material missing in the other Gospels
- Like Matthew, Luke includes the great commission to evangelize all nations, however Luke's commission is a Hellenistic universality
- So, where Matthew concentrates on Jesus and the kingdom, Luke concentrates on Jesus and people drawing a picture of a more cosmopolitan saviour with broad sympathies
- Luke's Gospel also emphasizes Jesus as a man of prayer to a degree the others do not.

Purposes

- Specifically John wants to highlight Christology: Jesus is the unique, divine, preexistent Son of God who was obedient to the Father becoming a real human being to die sacrificially for the salvation of other human beings
- The Jesus of John's Gospel demands this type of christological belief through a series of "I AM" statements:
 - a. The bread of life
 - b. Light of the world
 - c. The gate
 - d. The good shepherd
 - e. Resurrection and the life
 - f. The way, the truth, and the life
 - g. The true vineyard

Features

- John builds suspense through conflicts from John 2:18–20 onward, culminating in the passion narrative
- One feature of suspense is John's use of Jesus's hour or time referring to his pending death
- John's Gospel includes characters who are multifaceted like Peter as well as flatter characters like the Jews who are usually confused or hostile; they stand for the Jewish elite not all Jewish people
- His Gospel is full of irony like Jesus's enemies admitting they know nothing at all and do not do anything good

Features

Mark 14–15	John 13–19
Jesus's prayer of anguish and submission in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36)	Jesus's prayer of anguish and submission (12:27–28)
Judas and Jesus dip bread in the bowl (14:20–21)	Jesus gives Judas the morsel (13:26)
The Last supper interprets Jesus's death in light of Passover (14:12, 22–26)	Jesus dies as the Paschal lamb (19:31, 36)
Simon of Cyrene carries Jesus's cross (15:21)	Jesus carries his own cross (19:17)

Outline

- 1:1–18 Prologue: Jesus is the revelatory Word of God
- 1:19–12:50 structured around festivals and includes more scenes in Judea than Synoptics
 - Sometimes called the book of signs as much action surrounds Jesus's signs
 - First is water into wine; last is raising of Lazarus: inverted echo of Moses?
Water to blood and death of the first born
 - Plot: hostility of Jerusalem authorities build toward Jesus as Jesus reveals more of his identity
- 18:1–20:31 Jesus's passion and resurrection
- John 21 Epilogue

Theological Themes

- **Christology:** John frames both the prologue and the main body of his Gospel with confessions of Jesus's deity
- **Revelation and Salvation:** in the Gospel revelation and salvation are divine initiative, but demands human response; Jesus is the only way to the Father so he must be embraced through persevering faith
- **The Spirit:** John follows the Jewish stress of the prophetic dimensions of the Spirit as well as Ezekiel's focus on the Spirit as the source for eschatological purification from sin
- **John's Ethics:** John doesn't overturn love of neighbour and enemy but he focuses on loving fellow believers; they are to serve each other like he did (foot washing) which is the new standard for loving even to the point of death for a fellow believer

Theological Focus

Exodus 33–34	John 1:14–18
The Law	The Word
Moses pled for God’s continued presence (33:15–16)	The Word tabernacled among us (1:14)
Moses beheld God’s glory (33:18–19)	The eyewitnesses beheld his glory (1:14)
the glory was abounding in covenant love and truth (34:6)	The glory was full of grace and truth (1:14)
Grace and truth were present at the giving of the law (34:6), but Moses’s revelation was partial (33:20, 23)	The law came through Moses, but grace and truth through Jesus Christ (1:17)
No one can see God, so Moses saw only part of God’s glory (33:20, 23)	No one has seen God, but God the unique Son has revealed him (1:18)