



Advent Workshop

16 December 2024

This will be an Advent examination of Jesus and the life he makes possible, as described in John 1:1-18. How might OT and Second Temple background guide us in our study? What might we need to be reminded of today as we move towards Christmas?

Introductory Remarks

- John's Gospel is [quite plausibly] the last Gospel written, and John seems to be **"transposing the Synoptics into Johannine key"** (from Joshua Jipp)

Synoptic Gospels	John's Gospel
Kingdom of God	Eternal Life
Lord's Supper (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20)	Eating Jesus's flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:53-58)
Last Supper (Matt 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-21; Luke 22:7-34)	Farewell Discourse (John 13-17)
Jesus's transfiguration (Matt 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36)	Jesus's revelation of the Father's glory
Prediction of the Temple's destruction	Death and resurrection of Jesus's body as the Temple
Miracles	Signs (7 + 1 = 8!) Note also the "I AMs" (7 of those!)
Cross as instrument of shame	Cross as revelation of glory and honor
Historical Jewish lawsuit	Cosmic lawsuit
Virgin birth of Jesus (Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:30-38)	Eternal preexistence of Jesus (John 1:1-18)
Exorcism of demons	Satan and constant chief antagonist of Jesus

- Outline or Structure? Chiasm (from JoAnn Brant): **"an organizing principle in which literary elements form a mirror pattern ... This pattern sometimes points to the ultimate importance of the central, unrepeatd element."**

A The Word with God (1:1-2)

B What came through the Word (1:3)

C What was received through the Word (1:4-5)

D John announces the Word (1:6-8)

E The Word enters the world (1:9-10)

F The Word and his own people (1:11)

G The Word is accepted (1:12a)

H The Word's gift to those who accept him (1:12b)

G' The Word is accepted (1:12c)

F' The Word and his own people (1:13)

E' The Word enters the world (1:14)

D' John announces the Word (1:15)

C' What was received through the Word (1:16)

B' What came through the Word (1:17)

A' The Word with God (1:18)

- John’s Prologue gets us ready for the whole book. It’s not a summary, but it introduces themes to be explored elsewhere in various ways: **Life** (1:4) occurs 36 times in 32 verses; **Light** (1:4, 5, 7, 8, 9) occurs 23 times in 16 verses; **Witness** (1:7, 8, 15) occurs 14 times; **World** (1:9, 10) occurs 78 times in 57 verses; **Truth** (1:9, 14, 17) occurs 25 times in 20 verses; and **Glory** (1:14) occurs 19 times in 15 verses. *Notably, Word (logos) as a title for Jesus doesn’t really appear past the prologue.*

John 1:1-5 – The Logos and New _____

Texts: [Genesis 1:1–2:3](#) (cf. [Psalm 33:4-9](#); [Isaiah 40:6-8](#); [55:10-11](#)); [Proverbs 8:22-31](#); [Wisdom 9:9-11](#); [Baruch 3:29–4:4](#); [Sirach 24:8-9, 19-23](#). John 8:12; 9:5; 10:10; 14:6. Elsewhere in the NT, [Colossians 1:15-20](#); [Hebrews 1:1-2](#).

Discuss:

1. [**Breakout**] How do the background texts inform the Logos subject?
 - a. What is John trying to communicate to his audience with this term?
 - b. John’s Jesus is the newer, better, fulfillment of all sorts of things. What is new here that the Logos (Jesus) brings about, and what does John want his audience to know or understand because of this new reality?
2. John’s claim is that true life and light is only available through Jesus. Do we believe this? What other [rival] claims are made today about true light and life?

John 1:6-13 – The Logos and New _____

Texts: [Hosea 1:10–2:1](#); [Jubilees 1:23-25](#); [Psalms of Solomon 17:27](#) (17:30 on this webpage); John 11:52 (cf. [Romans 8:12-17](#); [Ephesians 2:11-18](#); [1 John 3:1-3](#)); on sentness, see John 20:21-23 (cf. [Mark 13:9-11](#); [Acts 1:8](#))

Discuss:

3. What is new here that the Logos (Jesus) brings about, and what does John want his audience to know or understand because of this new reality?
4. John is the prototypical witness: He is “sent” by God (cf. Jn 20:21) and “bears witness” (3x in vv. 7-8). What can we learn and apply from John’s witness in the Prologue and beyond?
5. Jesus’s *own* do not receive him (ironically, those who claim to be able to see [and have the light of the Torah] are in fact blind!).

- a. Many who claim to also “walk in the light” today might struggle to “receive” Jesus. Not just others, but us, as well. This is especially appropriate to ponder in the Advent season. Explore!
 - b. Like Jesus (and his follower’s in John’s day), there are those today who are rejected by their kinship group (sometimes, ironically, in the name of Jesus!). Explore!
6. **Central idea: life by the power of Jesus’s name (cf. Jn 20:30-31).** “Children” implies kinship, which was special in that day, when belief in Jesus might cost a person their biological kinship group. However, Jesus creates a new kinship group. What has been your experience with this kinship group of God’s people? What has it been like for you to be with fellow children of God?

John 1:14-18 – The Logos and New _____

Texts: [Exodus 33:12–34:7](#); [Wisdom 10:15-21](#) (cf. [2 Corinthians 3](#)); on Moses, see John 1:45; 5:45-46; on temple, see John 1:51; 2:18-22 (cf. [Ephesians 2:19-22](#); [1 Peter 2:4-10](#)); on revealing God, see John 14:9 (cf. [Colossians 1:15, 19](#))

Discuss:

- 7. [**Breakout**] How do the background texts inform the Logos subject, and what does John want his audience to know or understand because of this new reality?
- 8. With the incarnation, John is telling his audience here that the presence of God formerly contained in the holy of holies “has now burst forth into the world in the form of the incarnate God, Jesus Christ” (from Greg Beale). What implications does it have for us today?
- 9. Jesus has truly made God known. If we look at Jesus, we are looking at God (Jn 14:9); Jesus is the fullest revelation of God to humanity (Col 1:15-19), who’s glory was made most manifest at the Cross (Jn 12:23). If all this is true, what implications does it have for us today?

Concluding Thoughts This Advent Season

“Perhaps more powerfully than any other New Testament composition, the Gospel of John raises the questions of human existence, desire, and the meaning of life. In particular, John’s Gospel is oriented around the question of revelation, that is, how can humans who are alienated from the God *of life* come to know God and thereby have life?”

This raises all sorts of difficult questions for us today (as it would have for John’s original audience).

“[I]t is worth pondering whether our desires and loves are accurately aimed at what will satisfy our craving for life. ... [T]he Gospel of John indicates that we were created for life and transcendence, and yet humans in North America suffer today more than ever due to isolation, loneliness, lack of friendship, narcissism, and meaninglessness. Humans are inherently social creatures in need of meaningful social connection. Humans need friendship, in other words, in order to flourish. ... And yet loneliness and isolation mark our society, as it is estimated that in the United States alone more than sixty million people ‘feel sufficiently isolated for it to be a major source of unhappiness in their lives.’ ... The direction of human love and desire, it would seem for at least many, is misdirected and disordered as the object of love — whether it be the material satisfaction of the desires of a consumer, recreation and entertainment, ideologies of power and prestige, or sexual gratification — and fails to make good on humanity’s quest for life.”¹

Questions for Self-Reflection:

10. **Light and Life.** Do we believe the promise of John’s prologue that light and life are only found in Jesus? What might need reordering or redirecting, in terms of our attentions, cravings, and love?
11. **Mission, Witness, Sentness.** Are we appropriately arranging our lives around what matters most of all? Bearing witness to light and life as sent ones?
12. **Children of God.** Think about family and friend dynamics this holiday season. Who is not welcome and why? Could something be done about it?

¹ Both quotes are from Joshua Jipp, *Saved By Faith and Hospitality* (Eerdmans), 78-79.



Thank you for joining us!

May you be blessed with a deeper experience of the light and life of Jesus this holiday season.

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