

Adult Faith Formation: Advent 2022 The Gospel of John

Week 1: The Prologue John 1: 1-18

Refutation of Heresy

- Greatest apology for Logos Christology
- Title of Jesus as pre-existent second persona of the Trinity
- Cerinthus (fl. 50 – 100 CE)
- Early Gnostic (Docetism) teacher (heresiarch) of Ephesus
- Visible world created by the Demiurge

Logos – Jesus is the Logos

- Thought and speech blended together
- 1) Jesus = creator of the visible universe
- 2) Jesus = source of the intellectual, moral, spiritual life of humanity
- 3) Jesus = climax of divine revelation (The Logos became flesh)

Philo (20 BCE – 50 CE) formulated Logos Christology

- Hellenistic-Jewish philosopher
- Use of allegory to align Hebrew Torah and Greek philosophy

Who was John?

- Junior partner with father, Zebedee, and brother James in a successful fishing business
- At the time of the Gospel writing, John had returned from Patmos and was living in Ephesus

Learning to read and understand John

- 1) He was an eyewitness to Jesus' life. Offers details that only an eyewitness would know
- 2) He was a pastor (preacher). Much of the Gospel presents as sermons in between the narrative
- 3) His location in Ephesus contributed to the nuances he used for familiarity. Ephesus was an imperial pagan city with the Temple of Artemis

Major Themes of the Gospel

- 1) Misunderstanding
 - Synoptic Gospels focus on the Law. John focuses on the Wisdom writings
 - Jews of Jesus' time were broken into 3 groups: Levites; Pharisees; and Sadducees
 - John relied on the Wisdom writings, but these books give a more important theme: the inadequacy of wisdom
- 2) A Prophet like Moses
 - Jesus understands himself as the "sent one"
 - Jesus' relation to God is one of father and son
 - Moses only said what God himself told him to say
- 3) The Gospel that Whispers
 - The Gospel is filled with stories that have lasted through the years
 - The Gospel is filled with "asides"

- John uses parenthetical phrases more than any other Gospel writer
- John sits beside us as we read

The Prologue (Vss. 1-18)

Vss. 1-2

- Forms bookends with Genesis
- Logos mentioned 3 times; Theos mentioned 3 times (they are equal/one in same)
- Logos = very difficult word to translate. Logically it could lead one to Gnosticism/Docetism
- Greek = Logos/ Hebrew = Dabar (word and action together)
- Logos concept rooted in Wisdom writings

Vs. 4

- Jesus as light and life
- God brings life into being through his dabar (Jesus)

Vs. 5

- Closes the sermon and begins a narrative
- Narrative presents the struggle that is presented in the Prologue
- 3 cousins are presented in this narrative: John the Gospel writer, John the Baptizer, and Jesus. John the Baptizer is presented as the character of denial

Vs. 10

- Closes the narrative and returns to the sermon, but on a discordant note
- Song to the Incarnation
- Discord based on misunderstanding: the light shines but is not comprehended; the world was created by Jesus (Logos) but the world didn't recognize him.
- Jesus is the teacher that no one understands

Vs. 14

- 4 significant words: The Word became flesh
- Strong statement against Docetism
- The most remarkable statement regarding the nature of Jesus. This statement is the keystone of High Christology
- "full of grace" GK: = charis/HEB: = hesed
- "and truth" but not as truth is generally understood

Vs. 15

- Abrupt interruption, literally and grammatically
- John changes scenes to the Jordan River literally and shifts into historical present tense
- In his "crying out", we are suddenly in present tense. And again John the Baptizer denies

Vs. 16-17

- John returns to the topic of "grace and truth"
- The Law came through Moses. It was good and perfect and was the gift of God to his people
- But something far better has been granted by the same God, who was, in the beginning, grace and truth

Vs. 18

- God is only approachable through the Logos, God the only son.

