

The Gospel of John

Week Two

The Prologue to the 4th Gospel (1.1-18)

1. Introduction

- All information, study notes and related material can be found on the internet at <http://www.rtrc.net/biblestudy/john/john.htm>
- Course Syllabus
- Weekly Outlines (notebook)
- Discussion Forum: <http://www.rtrc.net/forum/> [go to the forum marked “Bible Studies”]

2. Review: Purpose of the 4th Gospel (20.30-31)

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (NASB)

3. The Christology of the Prologue

- The Son of God’s Nature: His Divinity (1.1-2, 9, 15)

Introduction

- Three Statements
 - “In the beginning was the Word...” – this echoes the first words of Genesis 1.1. As God was in the beginning so was the “Word”. As the “logos” was present in the first act of life giving, so is He present in this one.
 - “...and the Word was with God” -- could be translated “and the Word was faced towards God” indicating an intimate relationship with God
 - “and the Word was God” -- this indicates the stress of relationship that John is trying to convey. Relationship indicates different persons and this moves us away from unitarianism (one God, one person) and towards trinitarianism (one God, three persons)

- Introductory Comments on the Divinity of Christ
 - When we speak of the divinity of Christ we are speaking about His place in the eternal godhead as member and as the 2nd person of the Trinity. He is God, the Son.
 - Consider the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 8.2

The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.

- Scripture elsewhere affirms the importance and reality of this doctrine: Romans 9.5; Hebrews 1.8; Titus 2.13; John 8.48-59; 20.28; 2 Peter 1.1; Acts 20.28; 1 John 5.20
 - This doctrine of the deity of Christ is central to the entire biblical record. Without it one cannot possibly be a Christian. Consider the implications of this fact.
- Aspects of His Divinity
 - The “logos” –
 - John utilizes this word to prove that Christ is, in fact, deity.
 - A “word” is that by which we communicate our will or by which we convey our thoughts or by which we issue commands.
 - Christ here is properly called the “Word”. Consider Hebrews 1.1-3:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

- This term was in use before the time of John:
 - It was used in the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament, as, “e. g.,” Isaiah 45:12; “I have made the earth, and created man upon it.” In the Aramaic it is, “I, ‘by my word,’ have made,” etc. Isaiah 48:13; “mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth.” In the Aramaic, “‘By my word’ I have founded the earth.” And so in many other places.
 - This term was used by the Jews as applicable to the Messiah. In their writings he was commonly known by the term “Mimra” - that is, “Word;” and no small part of the interpositions of God in defense of the Jewish nation were declared to be by “the Word of God.” Thus, in their Targum (Aramaic translation or paraphrase of the Old Testament when the Hebrew language ceased to be a spoken language) on Deuteronomy 26:17-18, it is said, “Ye have appointed the word of God a king over you this day, that he may be your God.”
 - In the Targum of Jonathan (covering the books of Joshua-2 Kings [exception: Ruth] and the prophetic works [exception: Daniel] the term is used 320 times) as a replacement for God.
 - The “true light” -
 - In this gospel “truth” and “true” are often used to signify what is everlasting or heavenly as opposed to the merely temporal or earthly (John 4.24; 6.32)
 - Implications - false light leads to error. True light leads to truth and can be depended upon. For instance, consider the “pillar of light” that guided the children of Israel. (Exodus 13.21-22)
 - The “Creator” -
 - Creation was effected by the Word (Colossians 1.16; Hebrews 1.2). The “Word” was the agent, or the efficient cause (Hebrews 1.10). All things were created

through Him and nothing that does exist falls outside that rule. There are no exceptions.

- Implications – God often appeals to His omnipotence to prove that He is God (Isaiah 40.18-28; Jeremiah 10.3-16; Psalm 24.1-2)
- The Son of God’s Nature: His Humanity (1.14-18)

Introductory Remarks

- The second aspect of the nature of Christ is that of His humanity. This is to say that Christ was both God and man at the same time yet without sin (Hebrews 4.15). He suffered from the affects of sin yet was not tarnished by it. He suffered from the normal results of sin. He was subject to normal physical limitations:
 - Weariness (John 4.6), hunger (Matthew 21.18), thirst, (Matthew 11.19) and eventually death.
 - He also experienced the full range of human emotions: Examples: joy (Luke 10.21), sorrow (Matthew 26.37), love (John 11.5) compassion (Matthew 9.36), astonishment (Luke 7.9), anger (Mark 3.5)
- Consider what John Calvin states: Those who imagine the Son of God was exempt from human passions do not truly and seriously acknowledge Him to be a man.
- Aspects of His humanity
 - He “dwelt among us” (1.14a) –
 - Literally means “to tabernacle” or “to tent or camp”; “to reside”. A better translation would be: “and the Word became flesh and “tabernacled” among us...” This vivid word picture would be very clear to the Jewish readers of the day. **Consider Exodus 40.34-38**. As it was in the days of Moses the very presence of God was localized in Jesus, the incarnate Word.

- “full of grace and truth” (1.14b; 16-17) –
 - Used only two times in the NT (other occurrence: 1.17) rendering of a similar expression in the LXX as a translation of the Hebrew expression “love and faithfulness”. (Exodus 34.6-7)
 - Implication: the love and faithfulness showed to Moses was now living and breathing among the very presence of humanity. These very expressions (“love and faithfulness”) are now found in the incarnate Word

- He reveals/explains the Father (1.18) –
 - If you are really interested in knowing what God is like then look to the Son (Hebrews 1.1-3)
 - The revelation of Christ was a fuller revelation than even what Moses enjoyed. Exodus 33.19-20
 - He makes God known. That is, His very character, nature and will (Hebrews 1.1-4)
 - “only begotten” Greek, literally monogenes “God the One and Only”
 - “Bosom” – used in John 13.23 describing the disciple who Jesus loved “reclining next to Him”. This highlights the intimate relationship the Son had with the Father.

- The Son of God’s Mission (1.6-13)
 - John the Baptist (1.6-8) –
 - His mission/role was to preach repentance and baptize those who heeded his call. In the 4th gospel there is no mention of his preaching. The emphasis is on John’s witness to “the light”.
 - Depicted as a prophet (“sent from God”)
 - The Mission – The Atonement: “the light of the world” gives light to every man through his preaching and teaching.

- Definition: The reconciliation of God and humans brought about by the redemptive life and death of Jesus.
 - To save His people from their sins (Matthew 1.18-25)
- The Response (1.10-13) –
- Rejection (1.10-11) – the Jewish people rejected Christ though He came to His own land they did not acknowledge Him as Messiah and put him to death thus fulfilling the words of the prophet **Isaiah 53.2-4**
 - Implications – (a) it is reasonable to that those who have been especially favored should welcome the Messiah (b) it is not the abundance of mercies that incline men to seek God (c) All would reject the Savior if left to themselves. All people are by nature wicked. There is no more universal proof of this then the universal rejection of Christ.
 - Acceptance – those that believed/received Him were granted the right to become children of God. Consider: tekmon (Greek for “child”) as opposed to huioi (“son”.) The evangelist reserves the latter term for Jesus alone. This differs from Paul as he commonly referred to believers as ‘sons [and daughters]’ (Romans 8.14; 9.9.26; 2 Corinthians 6.18; Galatians 3.26; 4.6-7)
 - Implications – to believe in a persons name is to believe the person because the name stands for the person. Receiving Him involves accepting the teaching and revelation of God that He brought. (3.11; 32-33; 5.34; 12.48-50; 17.8)
 - Implications – verse 13 introduces the idea of being “born again” but does not elaborate, (this will be handled in depth in the third chapter). However, what is said is that no one comes to this conclusion and actually believes in Christ unless the Father wills it (“born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh but of God”). We are utterly dependant on God for our very lives and existence, not to mention our salvation.

- Concluding Remarks and Application
 - To believe on Christ means far more than mere mental assent. It requires and demands a life that actually does what He says. Luke 6.46-49
 - Our understanding of our Lord and His Mission should further our desire to serve Him with our whole hearts. It was in His humiliation that we get a glimpse of the love that the Father has for us in that He sent His beloved Son to atone for our sin – an atonement that we could never earn. Ephesians 2.4-5, 8-9