

The Gospel of John (Part II)

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A Review, Preview, and Overview of the Gospel of John

*****Explain some of my own hermeneutic, theological method, and approach to interpretation.***

a. Literary and Canonical Interpretation - “The literal sense is equivalent to the literary sense (Vanhoozer).” I prefer a very text-oriented approach (Sailhamer). I ask two main questions: (1) What does this say? (2) Why is it here? With reference to Canonical interpretation, I believe that the individual parts of the Bible must be understood in light of what Canon says as whole. In other words, it is not sufficient to simply interpret John’s Gospel isolated from what the Holy Spirit has authored across the entire spectrum of the Canon, namely the inspired 66 books which we call the Bible.

b. A Christological Hermeneutic

1. Lk 24 – Jesus’ teaching about the OT
2. Jn 20:30-31 – Jesus, the Son of God
3. Col 1:28-29 – Him we proclaim!
4. Hebrews 1 – Jesus, better than the prophets and angels
5. Rev 1:1; 21:6-21 – the testimony of Jesus

****If we take our understanding of Creation from the NT’s interpretation of the OT as well as the fact that Christ created and sustains all things, and then attach to that the fact that the Bible ends with the words of the Spirit and Bride crying out, “Come Lord Jesus”, then the Canon as we have it begins and ends with Christ.**

c. Word and Spirit

1. Jn 15:26-27 – (1) The Spirit bears witness to Christ. (2) We also are to bear witness to Christ; Jesus, in turn, leads people to the God the Father (Jn 14:6; Jn 17).

2. The Spirit is the Minister of the Word (1 Cor 1:9-16).

- I. He teaches the Word.
- II. He guides interpretation.
- III. He leads the reader to application.

***This calls for 3 main things:**

- (1) Prayer

(2) Meditation

(3) Community

d. Interpretive Virtues (Vanhoozer):

A. Ethical Virtues

1. **Honesty** – Be honest about what you bring to the text. Acknowledge your preconceptions, presuppositions, and preunderstandings.
2. **Openness** – Closed-mindedness keeps the text from penetrating the person and transforming the heart. Be ready to change. Be open to hear and to consider the ideas of others and the voice of the text.
3. **Attention** – Thinking of the text better than yourselves. Be observant, pay attention to details, be attentive to the whole, and have a certain respect for the text.
4. **Obedience** – Follow the directions of the text. Do not gratify the desires of the flesh and sidestep the issues and implications. *First step*: Be obedient to the author's intention. *Second step*: Be obedient to what the text is saying.

B. Theological Virtues

1. **Faith**
2. **Hope**
3. **Love**

e. For the Church

A. Ephesians 4:12ff – building up the body of

Christ.

B. Col 1:28-29 – presenting everyone mature in

Christ.

The Purpose of John's Gospel

A. The Epilogue

1. 20:30-31 ~ John's Stated Purpose

- a. **What is the main purpose of John's Gospel?** Is it evangelistic? Is it primarily polemical? Is it intended to provide a space, time, historical argument for the Incarnation? In light of this verse, what should we say is the main purpose which is at stake in the Beloved Disciple's intention for constructing his own gospel narrative?
- b. **Proposed Overall-arching Purpose:** *Who is the Messiah?* Not simply who is Jesus as a person, but instead who is Jesus as the Christ? Who is the Son of God? John's gospel is overtly Messianic. So, why not just ask who is Jesus or rather, what kind of person was Jesus? Why aren't these appropriate questions? The appropriate question would not be "What kind of Christ?" or "What kind of Messiah?" The accurate question should be asked in the sense of disclosing the Messiah's proper identity.
- c. **John's audience was not biblically-illiterate:** For instance, the allusions to the OT in Jn 1:1ff, Jesus as the bread of heaven in Jn 6, and John's portrayal of Jesus' usage of the feasts. Thus, the way he integrates Jesus' life, ministry, and atoning work into his narrative in a fashion that presupposes much about the Messianic anticipation of the Jewish community, one must conclude that his audience would have been persuaded by John's gospel to put the pieces together having the light come on, and accepting Christ as the true, actual Messiah, the Son of God.
- d. **"Show us Jesus!" (Clowney)** – This is the motto during times while I'm teaching this class. That is why I am so happy to be teaching the Gospel of John who has so explicitly stated that this also is exactly his authorial intention. How do we accomplish this goal?
 1. The Presence of Jesus in the Scriptures
 2. Teaching Jesus in Redemptive History
 3. Direct Discourse: The Quotable Jesus
 4. Where the Spirit is at Work, Jesus is glorified.
 5. Practicing the Presence of Jesus.

2. 21:24-25 ~ What two things does this verse tell us about the Gospel of John?

- a. This is the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, John.
- b. His testimony is true.
- c. How does v 25 contribute to the cohesiveness of the gospel?
 1. An allusion to the Prologue by reaffirming Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God. The Word that has come into the world cannot be contained by the world. His Word is great and greater than anyone else's word.

B. Subsidiary purposes

A. **Polemical aims:** *a strong verbal or written attack on someone or something*

1. **Correcting inaccurate views concerning John the Baptist's identity** (see 1:8, 19-23, 29-31; 3:25-30).
2. **John's polemic against "the Jews"** (Jn 3-Nicodemus, Jn 4-Woman at the Well, appeal to Moses in Jn 5, Jn 7-the Feast of Booths, and Jn 10-Jesus as the Good Shepherd).
3. **Anti-Gnostic Polemic** – John writes with Sensory perception in mind. He is perhaps combating a prevailing doctrine within early Gnosticism named Doceticism. Notice in 1:14, John points out very specifically that the Word which existed before creation, *became flesh*. He could have just as easily said that the Word became a man, but instead used the Greek word for flesh. Likewise, there is a heavy emphasis on "flesh and blood" in Jn 6:51-58. And also the Beloved Disciple shows the graphic imagery of the blood and water flowing from Jesus' body in 19:34. Notice, however, what follows his depiction of this event in v 35: a statement very reminiscent of 20:30-31. (Garret on Docetism: A. D. 70-170; first Christological heresy; body and matter is evil; Jesus only appeared or seemed to be a man; derived from Greek word, *dokein* meaning "to think or suppose" or "to seem or appear")
4. **Detailed purpose** – This may be a mere consequence of John's efforts in accomplishing his other more important tasks of constructing his own Gospel account independent of the Synoptics. However, John contains more details of time and place of Jesus' ministry than do the Synoptics.

The Theology of the Gospel of John

- A. Some categorize Johannine theology into 3 Main groups: **(1) Christology (2) Soteriology (3) Eschatology**. However, these can oversimplify John's theology since there are so many themes that are distinctive only to him.
- B. **The "Word" or Logos** – Only John calls Jesus the "Word". Jn 1:1-18.
- C. **Lamb of God** – Again, John is the only NT writer to call Jesus by this title. Jn 1:29, 36, and 27 x's in Revelation.
- D. **The Godhead/Trinity** – John has much that reveals all three persons of the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Jn 1:1 – Jesus is God; seven "I am" statements; One with the Father in Jn 10:30-33; Thomas' confession in 20:28; The Holy Spirit as an equal Counselor who replaces Jesus on earth in 14:16.
- E. **The Holy Spirit** – He is the paraclete. John lists him as a the helper, interpreter, witness, prosecutor, and revealer.
- F. **Election and the Security of the Believer** – Jn 6:39, Jn 10:29, 15:16, 17:12.
- G. **Miracles/Signs** – in John's gospel signs function in a revealing and positive way in regards to promoting faith and disclosing the Christ.
- H. **Salvation** – John develops soteriology in a unique way. It is wrapped in the identity of the Messiah, namely the ontology, life and work of the Jesus.
- I. **Eschatology** – This is obscurely seen through John's usage of the phrase "the hour" and his portrayal of the kingdom of God as already not yet.
- J. **OT Theology** – John shows Jesus replacing OT figures and festivals. Bread of heaven, Jesus is the new temple, the serpent in the wilderness, and so forth. He has many OT allusions which are at times subtle.