

LECTURE 1, The Gospel of John

John 1:1-14

INTRODUCTION

1. The meaning of **SYNOPTIC** (from σύν = together + ὄψις = the act of seeing = **the act of seeing together**; or from Plato, σύνοψις = a **general view**). Discuss for Matt., Mark, and Luke.

“. . . because of the **high degree of similarity found among Matt., Mark, and Luke in their presentations of the ministry of Jesus**. These similarities, which involved **structure, content, and tone**, are evident even to the casual reader. They serve not only **to bind** the first three gospels together but **to separate** them from the gospel of John.

Comment on the **priority of Mark** and what NT scholars think . . .

1. Some **DIFFERENCES** between the Gospel of John and Matt., Mark, and Luke.

DIFFERENCE in **CONTENT**:

- a. Matt., Mark, and Luke **all give a somewhat extended account** of the three years of Christ's ministry. John, on the other hand, **does not give an extended account** (although John more than the others makes it clear that it was a 3-year ministry) – John **selects out of those 3 years ONLY ABOUT 20 DAYS . . . in fact, 1/3 of the Gospel, Chapters 13-19, occurs all in one day**. (Naturally, the day of crucifixion must loom large in any Gospel, and so there is a certain amount of overlapping between John and the Synoptics.)

But, **as for the other 19 days**, John seems to have deliberately avoided (with one main exception) repeating the events recorded in Matt., Mark, and Luke. **There was no need to repeat!!!!** (John's omission of the **virgin birth** does not mean that he had never heard of it or that he repudiated it, acc. to Bultmann).

- b. A comparison will show that, **apart from the Passion week . . . , there are only two clear contacts with the other three gospels, (1) the FEEDING of the 5,000, and (2) the walking on the sea.**

All of these differences simply show **John's independence of the other writers**. (1) He did **not intend to set them aside**, (2) He did **not intend to correct them**, (3) It was **not his main intention to supplement them, although he does supplement them . . . but that is not his purpose.**

DIFFERENCE in **METHOD**:

John relied upon **personal reminiscences**. He was an **eyewitness** and he wrote about **what he saw and heard**. Apart from Matthew, after his conversion, neither Mark nor Luke had heard or seen the Lord Jesus Christ. By contrast, John **depends upon a vivid memory** and reports many **apparently trivial details**. These are signs of an **eye witness**.

1. John **notes accurately the passage of time**
2. John **gives precise geographical locations**
3. John **tells us that the water pots at Cana were made of stone!**
Who cares????
4. John **tells us what he SAW and HEARD. John 1:14; 1 John 1:1.**

DIFFERENCE IN **INTIMACY**: (John gives a **MORE PRIVATE VIEW** of Jesus Christ)

The **synoptics** show us Christ **before the multitudes**; John does some of this, but John chiefly **describes lone individuals** before Christ.

Nathaniel – Who in a few moments confessed, “Thou are the King of Israel.”

Nicodemus – Who had to go home and think awhile.

Woman of Samaria – Who accepted Him as the Messiah; and the people of the village said, “**Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.**”

Officers sent by scribes & Pharisees to arrest Jesus (John 7:45-46) – “No one ever spoke like this man!!!”

JOHN HIMSELF: “ . . . the disciple **whom Jesus loved**, who leaned upon His breast . . . ”

THE SEVEN SIGNS:

1. **Why** they were given: John 20:30-31, “And truly Jesus did many signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you might believe that Jesus in the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His Name.”

2. The **SEVEN SIGNS**:

- 1) **FIRST SIGN: John 2:1-11** – Changing **water into wine**, proving Himself to be the **MASTER OF QUALITY**.
- 2) **SECOND SIGN: John 4:46-54** – Healing **the nobleman's son**, proving Himself to be the **MASTER OF DISTANCE AND SPACE**.
- 3) **THIRD SIGN: John 5:1-9** – Healing **the impotent man**, proving Himself to be the **MASTER of TIME**.
- 4) **FOURTH SIGN: John 6:10-14** – Feeding the 5,000, proving Himself to be the **MASTER of QUANTITY**.
- 5) **FIFTH SIGN: John 6:16-21** -- Walking on the Water, proving Himself to be the **MASTER of NATURAL LAW**.
- 6) **SIXTH SIGN: John 9:1-12** -- Healing the **man born blind**, proving Himself to be the **MASTER of MISFORTUNE**.
- 7) **SEVENTH SIGN: John 11:1-46** -- Raising of Lazarus, proving Himself to be the **MASTER of DEATH**.

EXPOSITION

John 1:1-14

The **PROLOGUE** (John 1:1-18) of John's Gospel **reflects in almost every line the influence of the Old Testament**.

In the beginning . . . Ἐν ἀρχῇ

1. Different from **Genesis 1:1** and **1 John 1:1** ("from the beginning")
2. In Gen. 1:1, the "beginning" is with reference to **creation**; in the Epistle is apparently refers to the **beginning of the Gospel of Christ** . . . some take it back to the **incarnation**.
3. This "**beginning**" in John 1:1 **ANTEDATES** both of those beginnings. This is a reference to the distant past of eternity, which is immeasurable.

The **λόγος** = The **Word**

1. The **meaning** – See **Clark notes** (Democritus, Stoics, Plato, Philo, Mystery religions, the use in the O.T., and John's use)

Democritus (500 BC). He was a Greek scholar/philosopher who lived in Ephesus about 500 BC. He believed that of the four substances (air, water, earth, fire) noted by early philosophers the **universe was made of fire**. He noted that everything observable was in a state of **flux**, always changing, so that one could never put his finger into the same river twice. By the time he put it in the 2nd time, the river would have completely changed. However, he believed that throughout this state of **constant flux** there was a **universal law** that never changed. This he called the **LOGOS** (= the original fire itself) and referred to this **logos** as the **WISDOM which directs the COURSE OF NATURE**.

Stoics (300 BC). Accepted most of what Democritus taught. They believed that the universe was made of fire and that the **kosmos** would end in **universal conflagration**. However, they believed that at the present time, this **fire** takes on the form of mountains, animals, and men . . . i.e., the spark of the **divine logos** is in every individual thing – ANIMISM!!!!

(NOTE: It is obvious the the Apostle John DID NOT get his view of the **LOGOS** from either Democritus or the Stoics or from any pagan sources. A colossal difference: The pagans **did not say that their LOGOS was incarnate in ONE PARTICULAR MAN at a given date in history . . . their logos was entirely natural, repeated in every event – NOT something that occurred only once!!!!**)

Plato (4th cent. BC). Didn't say much about **logos**. Regarded **logos** as simply an **expression of thought**. Plato believed in a **supersensible** world of **IDEAS**. The world of ideas was Plato's highest reality. He even believed that this world of ideas transcended the **Demiurge** (God?), who was believed to have created heaven and earth.

Philo (An Alexandrian Jewish philosopher at the time of Christ). Made great use of the term **LOGOS**. Philo represented Plato's "world of ideas" as **ideas in the mind of God**, something Plato would never have done. Philo called this "world of ideas" the **LOGOS**, the Son of God.

Mystery Religions. Mixture of all kinds of beliefs. Growing primarily out of the mystery religions were the **Gnostics** (early centuries of Christianity). They imagined themselves to be possessed of superior intellect and knowledge and their harm to the church prompted the Apostle John to write his Gospel and the Epistles. They **took over the term LOGOS**. In their **Hermetic Literature**, they describe **LOGOS** as emanating from a "**light**," later called "**Father-Intellect**." **LOGOS** is called "Son of God" by the Gnostics, but for some He was not "in the beginning" (to others, He was). They also believed that the **Father-Intellect** brought forth man as **co-equal** with himself.

Old Testament. The Hebrew **דבר** = word = **LOGOS**, where **logos** = the **idea of thinking or thought expression** = **LOGIC** = **WISDOM**.

Turner & Mantey: "The Word of God may mean the **written word** (Rom. 9:6), it may mean the **creative word** (Psa. 33:6), it may mean the **recreative word** (or regenerating) (Jas 1:18), it may mean the **Living Word** (Heb. 4:12), or, as here, the **Incarnate Word**.

The **POWER** of the Word of God is manifest in **creation**.

The **WISDOM** of the Word of God is displayed in the **illumination** which comes to man with the advent of God's Word.

But it is the **love** of God which is **demonstrated in the Incarnation** (John 1:14).

The closest known literary parallel for the *Logos*, as used here, appears to be the personification of wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-30. God's word and wisdom are said to create and sustain the world (Ps. 104:24; Pro. 3:19). The *Logos* here is more than reason, more than word; it is more than wisdom personified. The term designates a Person, distinct from and yet co-eternal and identical in essence with God – all that God is the Logos is" (p. 54).

2. Explain the phrase: "**and the Word was God**" using Colwell's rule.