

# That You Might Believe

Exploring the Gospel of John

# Christology in John

- “Highest” C



# Christology in John

- “Highest” Christology of the four Gospels
- Clearest portrait of Jesus as fully divine
- What John *omits* is as important for the development of his Christology as what he includes
- Begins in the Prologue and continues to be developed throughout

# The Prologue in John (1:1-1:18)

- Believed to be based on an early Christian hymn
- Functions as the introduction for the rest of the Gospel
- Sets the stage for what is to come





# Logos - The Word

- From the outset, Jesus is referred to as *o logos*, the (divine) Word
- Can mean speech or utterance
- Also right reason, wisdom, command of God, chief messenger of God
- Unique to John

# Logos - The Word

- Co-eternal with God, *is* God (1:1,2)
- Agent of Creation (v. 3)
- Giver of life and light; *Is* light (v. 4, 5, 8, 9)
- Gives power to become children of God, born of God (v. 12, 13)
- Became flesh and revealed glory (v. 14)
- Delivers grace and truth (v. 14, 17)
- God the only Son, making the Father known (v. 18)
- John stakes a theological claim about the divinity of Jesus from the first verse and drives it home for the next twenty chapters

# What's *Not* There

- John includes no information about Jesus' worldly origins, his human genealogy or the circumstances of his birth
- John's driving concern is different than the Synoptics
- Matthew is concerned to locate Jesus within the Davidic lineage to validate his status as Messiah
- Luke is concerned to present Jesus as divinely conceived, in terms reminiscent of imperial claims to authority
- John's concern is to name Jesus as the co-eternal, equally divine Son of God and lord of all creation

# John (tB) in John (tG)

- John the Baptist occupies familiar role as forerunner/witness
- Note: never explicitly referred to as “the Baptist/Baptizer”
- John (the Gospel) is concerned to give John (the Baptizer) his proper place, but to remove any doubts about who is superior
- Thus, Jesus’ baptism by John tB is not reported (compare to concern expressed by John the Baptizer in Matthew 3:14)

# Lamb of God

- John the Baptizer: “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”
- One of the most important Christological titles in John
- Meant to evoke the Passover lamb “without blemish” in Exodus 12
- The one who purifies is himself pure
- “A lamb like no other” (Michaels)
  - NOT a sacrificial victim
  - Initiates sacrifice himself

# Lamb of God

- John is as concerned with locating Jesus within Judaism and Jewish thought as Matthew
- Compare John 19:31 with Mark 14:12, Matt. 26:17, Luke 22:7-8
- In the Synoptics, the Last Supper is a Passover meal, with Jesus as head of household
- In John, it is specifically *not* a Passover meal; Jesus is crucified on the Day of Preparation, before the Passover
- Jesus is crucified on Golgotha at the same time that the Passover lambs are being slaughtered in the temple

# “I AM” - *EGO EIMI*

- Exodus 3:14 - God reveals name to Moses as “I AM” or “I AM WHO I AM”
- In Hebrew, YHWH
- In the Septuagint (LXX), *EGO EIMI*
- Jesus uses this phrase repeatedly in John
- Implicit claim about the divinity of Jesus

# “I AM” Statements With Predicates

- 6:35 - “I AM the bread of life”
- 6:41 - bread that comes down from heaven
- 6:48 - bread of life
- 6:51 - living bread that comes down from heaven
- 8:12 - light of the world
- 10:7 - gate (or door) of the sheep
- 10:9 - gate
- 10:11, 14 - good shepherd
- 11:25 - resurrection and the life
- 14:6 - the way, the truth, and the life
- 15:1 - true vine
- 15:5 - the vine

# “I AM” Statements Without Predicates

- 2x understood to mean “I am he” or “It is I” (4:26, 6:20)
- 6x carries undertone of “I AM” or “I AM WHO I AM”
  - 8:24 - “you will die in your sins unless you believe that I AM”
  - 8:28 - “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM”
  - 8:58 - “Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was, I AM”
  - 13:19 - “I tell you this now, before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I AM”
  - 18:5, 6, 8 - “Who are you looking for?” “Jesus of Nazareth.” “I AM.”
- The effect of all of these statements and their repetition is to drive home the point of Jesus’ divine identity

# Unity with the Father

- God as Father
  - 42x in Matthew
  - 4x in Mark
  - 17x in Luke
  - 120x in John
- 10:30 “The Father and I are one”
- 10:38 “The Father is in me and I am in the Father”
- 14:7-9 “From now on you do know him and have seen him...Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”

# What Else is Missing

- No temptation, no anguish in the garden, no cry of dereliction
- Instead...
  - “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.” (10:17-18)
  - “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.” (12:27)
  - “...carrying his cross by himself...” (19:17)

# John's Christology

- Jesus is fully divine and co-eternal with the Father
- The relationship between Father and Son is so intimate that they are “one”
- Despite the pretensions to power by other characters, Jesus remains fully in control
- The pure and sinless Lamb lays down his life for his friends

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