

That You Might Believe

Exploring the Gospel of John

Revelation of Glory to the World

- Glory is a divine attribute in the New Testament
- Particularly true for John
 - Uses the word *doxa* 16x, more than any other book in the NT
- John understands Jesus as one who reveals the Father's glory
 - 1:14, 2:11, etc.
- Responses to this revelation are mixed

Jesus and Torah

- Supersedes, but does not negate
- God the Father is the God revealed in Torah
- Jesus is the interpretive key to properly understand Torah
- Key concepts from OT must be reevaluated in light of Jesus

Messiah

- Literally, “anointed one”, chosen and sent by God for a purpose
- Translated *christos* in the Septuagint
- Kings of Israel (and other nations) described as *messiah*
- Interpreted in terms of national restoration by time of Jesus
- John is emphatic that Jesus is *the* Messiah
 - However, not in the way the world understand that term
- Cross is evidence *for*, not against
- *INRI* inscription on cross is ironically accurate

Excursus: John and Anti-Semitism

- Opponents in John described with two terms:
 - οι φαρισαιοι (“the Pharisees”)
 - οι ιουδαιοι (“the Judeans”, but often translated “the Jews”)
- John has been misused to justify persecution of and violence against Jewish communities and people
- Luther was a virulent anti-Semite
 - Luther’s anti-Semitism wasn’t repudiated by the ELCA until 1994(!)

Excursus: John and Anti-Semitism

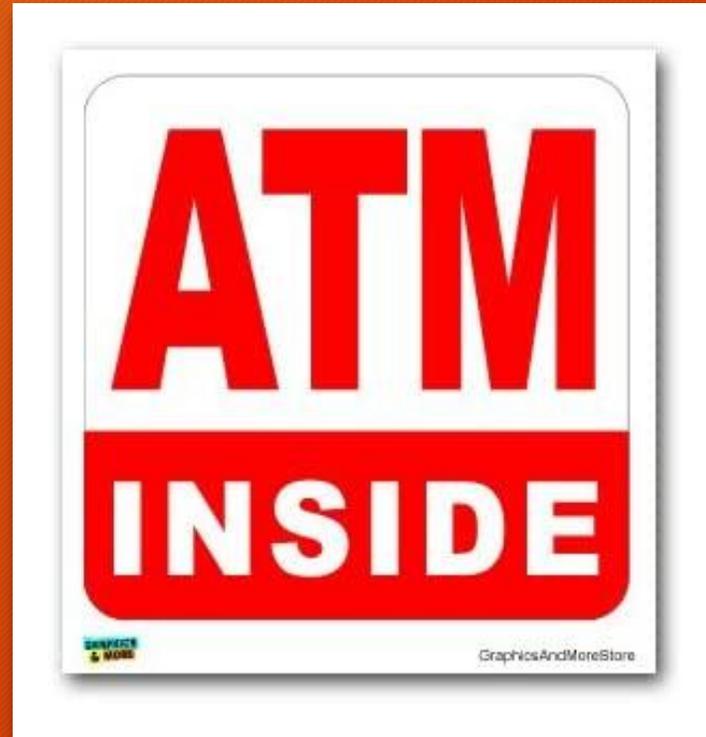
- Jesus was a Jewish rabbi
- Almost all characters in John's account are Jewish
 - Disciples
 - Mary, Martha, and Lazarus
 - Family
 - All of the apostles
 - Women at the crucifixion
 - Joseph and Nicodemus
 - Mary Magdalene
- Even if they weren't, there is no place for an ideology of hatred within genuine Christianity

Excursus: John and Anti-Semitism

So-called “Christian anti-Semitism” is a blasphemous heresy antithetical to everything Jesus taught and did, and is to be unequivocally condemned. You cannot worship as Savior and Lord a Jewish rabbi described in Jewish terminology as God’s anointed one (Messiah or Christ) while hating, scapegoating, or vilifying Jewish people. You can be a Christian, or you can be an anti-Semite, but you cannot legitimately be both.

Signs and Works

- Jesus' deeds described as "signs" (σημειων, *semeion*) or "works" (εργα, *erga*)
- Signs are not important for their own sake, but for what they point to



Signs and Works

- Profoundly symbolic
- Often misunderstood (or even unnoticed) by their direct beneficiaries
- At the same time, John tells us that the signs should engender belief (20:30-31)

Words

- Signs lead to opportunities for conversation or teaching
- Common pattern:



- Jesus always gets the last word
- Words always focus on identity and relationship with Father
- Designed to engender belief



Christ Driving the Money changers from the Temple, by Theodoor Rombouts -
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Flipping Tables and Nick at Night

- Sign leads to dispute with Judeans about Jesus' authority
- “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”
- Focal point of relationship with God is now Jesus, not a building
- After this sign, Nicodemus comes to see Jesus
- Dialog and misunderstanding about being born from above (3:1-9)
- Monologue from Jesus about his identity and purpose (3:10-21)
 - God sent Son out of loving desire to save world
 - Belief or unbelief determines salvation or condemnation
 - Jesus will be lifted up (i.e., crucified) to accomplish this

Misunderstanding

- Audience is thinking in concrete terms while Jesus speaks metaphorically
- Recurring theme throughout John
- Misunderstanding symbolize and dramatize the world's inability to understand Jesus on the world's terms
- Openness to understanding Jesus on God's terms, especially post-resurrection, is key to understanding Jesus' words

Mixed Reactions

- Jesus' signs and works prompt mixed reactions (positive, neutral, and negative)
- Reaction determines fate
- Those who respond negatively to signs and works (e.g., Judeans) never come to faith
- Those who respond positively (e.g., man born blind in Ch. 9) do come to believe
- Those who are neutral or perplexed (e.g., Nicodemus) hold open possibility of faith

Symbolism and Dualism

- Nick at Night comes to Light Shining in the Darkness
- Jesus then riffs on this symbolic dualism of light/darkness

Symbolism and Dualism

“¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Symbolism and Dualism

- Nick at Night comes to Light Shining in the Darkness
- Jesus then riffs on this symbolic dualism of light/darkness
- Dualities are common throughout John
 - Light/Darkness
 - From above/From below
 - Earthly/Heavenly
 - Blindness/Sight

The Role of the Monologues

- Jesus never directly teaches disciples during public ministry
- Disciples (and readers) get to overhear Jesus' words
- Consistent with John's concern for second and third generation Christians
- Those not present for public ministry have just as much access to belief as those who *were* present

Next Week...

Revelation of Glory to the Community:
Jesus and the Disciples at the Last
Supper