

INCARNATION: GOD MADE FLESH IN JESUS CHRIST

Schedule and Topics

Dates	Subjects
11/8/20 and 11/22/20	What is incarnation – an Introduction
11/29/20	The Epistles, Baptismal Creeds (50-110 CE), Evolution in the Creeds (40-450 CE)
12/6/20	Gospel of St. Mark (68-73 CE)
12/13/20	Gospel of St. Matthew (80-90 CE +/- 10 years)
12/20/20	Gospel of St. Luke (85 CE +/- 10 years)
1/3/20	Gospel of St. John 1:1-18 Prologue (80-110 CE)
1/10/21	Gospel of St. John 1:19-12:50 Book of Signs (80-110 CE)
1/24/21	Gospel of St. John 13-12:50 Book of Glory (80-110 CE)

INCARNATION CLASS #7: GOSPEL OF JOHN (80-110 CE)

Mark: 8:29 “He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?”

What is an Epistle?

“The Epistles are letters written to specific church communities to address issues in the early Christian movement. They were added to the Gospels because they show how the early church struggled to document the central truths of the Christian experience, the main truths of Christian beliefs and the chief principles of Christian conduct. Christian doctrine grew out of a direct living experience – and the early writings attempt to reach across language and cultural barriers to explain the essence of the shared Christian experience.”¹⁴

What is a Creed?

“Creeds are statements of our basic beliefs about God.”¹⁵ “The Apostles Creed is an ancient Creed of Baptism... the Nicene Creed is the creed of the universal church used in the Eucharist, (and the) Athanasius Creed is an ancient document proclaiming the nature of Incarnation and the Trinity.”¹⁶

What is a Gospel?

Euaggelion, Greek for Good News, is the word we translate into Gospel. A Gospel is a highly selective arrangement of Jesus material, stories, sayings, reflections, made by an evangelist in order to promote and strengthen faith that brings people closer to God. It is not a history or a biography.

3 Phases of Gospel Formation: the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth (27-30CE); the Apostolic teaching/preaching about Jesus (30-60CE); the written Gospels (70-100 CE).¹⁷

OPENING PRAYER

Proper 28¹⁸

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:

Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn,
and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever
hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have
given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with
you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

¹⁴ Alan Richardson, “Creeds in the Making” Notes

¹⁵ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.851

¹⁶ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.852

¹⁷ Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament

¹⁸ Episcopal Book of Common Prayer pp.236

1:19-12:50 PART ONE: BOOK OF SIGNS NOTES

1:19-12:50 Part One: Book of Signs Summary

The Word reveals himself to the world and to his own, but they do not accept him.

1. Initial days of the revelation of Jesus to his disciples under different titles (1:19-2:11)
2. First to second Cana miracle: themes of replacement and of reactions to Jesus (chapters 2-4): changing water to wine; cleansing the Temple; Nicodemus; the Samaritan woman at the well; and healing the royal official's son.
3. Old Testament feasts and their replacement; themes of light and life. (Chapters 5-10)
 - a. Sabbath – Jesus the new Moses replaces the Sabbath ordinance to rest (5:1-47)
 - b. Passover – The Bread of Life¹⁹ (revelatory wisdom and eucharist) replaces manna (6:1-71)
 - c. Tabernacles – the Source of Living Water and the Light of the World replaces water and light ceremonies (7:1-10:21)
 - d. Dedication – Jesus is consecrated in place of the Temple altar (10:22-42)
4. The raising of Lazarus and its aftermath (Chapter 11-12)
 - a. Lazarus raised to life and Jesus condemned to death by the Sanhedrin
 - b. Lazarus' sister Mary anoints Jesus for burial
 - c. Entry into Jerusalem
 - d. The end of the public ministry and the coming of the hour signaled by the arrival of the Gentiles

1:19-12:50 Part One: Book of Signs Incarnation

3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

John 3:16

Jesus' "I Am" statements:

- "I am He" (John 4:26)
- "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
- "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12)
- "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58)
- "I am the gate of the sheep." (John 10:7,9, 30-31)
- "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25)
- "I am the good shepherd." (John 10:11, 14)
- "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)
- "I am the true vine." (John 15:1, 5)

9:5 "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

9:35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"[e] 36 He answered, "And who is he, sir?[f] Tell me, so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." 38 He said, "Lord,[g] I believe." And he worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."

READINGS

1:32 And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' 34 And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

1:49 Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" 50 Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." 51 And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, [m] you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."²⁰

2:19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

4:23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." 25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." 26 Jesus said to her, "I am he, [d] the one who is speaking to you."

5:15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. 16 Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is still working, and I also am working." 18 For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

5:19 Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father[e] does, the Son does likewise. 20 The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. 21 Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. 22 The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not

²⁰ "Nathaniel's encounter with Jesus (1:47-51).

A. Once Nathaniel actually meets Jesus, Nathaniel converts, and like many new converts, he becomes overenthusiastic ("Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel!")

B. Jesus responds that Nathaniel has come to faith on flimsy evidence and will see something greater, namely, "the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Humanity."

C. The greater thing that Nathaniel will see is that Jesus is God incarnate.

1. The normal meaning of "Son of Humanity" in scripture is "a human being."

2. The "angels of God ascending and descending" alludes to Jacob's dream in Genesis 28:10-17.

3. Jacob dreams that he has found the ladder between heaven and earth, the point where the divine and human connect.

4. John's Gospel then symbolically says that Jesus replaces Jacob's ladder and is the place where the divine and the human meet.

5. In other words, Jesus is the incarnation of God.

6. But as a new convert Nathaniel cannot yet know this."

Source: Sinclair, Scott Gambrell, "John's Gospel and the Truth of the Incarnation [Course Lecture Notes]" (2016). The Scott Sinclair Lecture Notes Collection. 4. <https://scholar.dominican.edu/religion-course-materials/4>

honor the Father who sent him. 24 Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.

6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

6:66 Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. 67 So Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." [h]

8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

8:41 You are indeed doing what your father does." They said to him, "We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me."

8:56 Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad." 57 Then the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" [k] 58 Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am." 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

9:5 "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

9:35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" [e] 36 He answered, "And who is he, sir? [f] Tell me, so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." 38 He said, "Lord, [g] I believe." And he worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."

10:7 So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes [a] 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."

10:31 The Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" 33 The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God." 34 Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, [d] 'I said, you are gods'? 35 If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'—and the scripture cannot be annulled— 36 can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'? 37 If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not

believe me. 38 But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand[e] that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” 39 Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands.

11:21 Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” 27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

12:44 Then Jesus cried aloud: “Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. 47 I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, 49 for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.”

COMMENTARY

Chapter 1:

Christology: John incorporates confessions of Jesus’ titles we find in the other Gospels – most often later in his ministry. Seems the evangelist wants to start where the others ended; the sight of the Son of Man accompanied by angels will come at the end of time; and in John that occurs during the ministry because the Son of Man has come down from heaven.²¹

1:29-34 JBap central and important role in the NT is to point towards Jesus – In John’s Gospel he points him out as “God’s lamb”. This foreshadows how the story will end. Jesus is to die a sacrificial death for the sins of the world.²²

The meaning of the image of the lamb: John 12:38 the suffering servant, who is like a lamb led to the slaughter (Isa 53:4-5) and the Passover lamb (John 19:31, 34).²³

Chapter 2

Jesus Christology

1. Jesus’ self-aware nature, 2:4 Jesus is aware of his own “hour” his coming “glory” his death and resurrection.
2. Jesus knows people’s hearts and does not trust easy faith
3. The references to the disciples reflection after the resurrection
4. The narrator’s point of view is as an enlightened, post resurrection observer

Role of signs in John’s Gospel: “Signs” are moments of the miraculous, when heaven and earth intersect – they are stories that point away from earth to a heavenly (Godly) reality.

The main point of the miracle at the Wedding in Cana is Christological and not to underline the importance of the water and the wine. The messianistic time is inaugurated when Jewish purifications give way to Jesus revealed glory.²⁴

²¹ Raymond E. Brown, Introduction to the New Testament

²² John for Everyone, Part 1-2, Tom Wright Notes

²³ Oxford Bible Commentary Notes

²⁴ The Oxford Bible Commentary

John uses the word “sign” for clue or indication – they are the signposts of his story
The signposts are moments when heaven is opened up and people of faith get a glimpse of the transforming power of God’s love in the present world

People who say that these “signs” are stories or fables miss the point. They are moments of the miraculous, when heaven and earth intersect – they are stories that point away from earth to a heavenly (Godly) reality.

These are stories about when the “Word became flesh” 1:14²⁵

Chapter 3

3:15-21 Johannine theology of salvific²⁶ incarnation²⁷:

- 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”
- Because of God’s love for creation, Jesus, God’s Son come into the world bringing God’s own life, so that everyone who believes in him has eternal life and thus is already judged.

3:16 The central Christian declaration of faith is “3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.*”

This is the heart of the Gospel. Not “God is love”. Which is also true. But the affirmation of a divine act for our redemption. No object is sufficient for the love of God except the entire world. This is the essence of the universal/catholic argument. God acted to save the entire world – all of creation.²⁸

3:16 This is the first time the Gospel of John talks about God’s initiative – this is a prologue to the explanation. It is also where the theme of “Loving” is introduced.

Here is where God’s love for humanity and Jesus’ death are joined in order to give eternal life.

3:17 God’s initiative is to save the world, i.e. humanity, by sending his son into the world as a human.

3:18 the importance of faith and consequences of not having faith – not believing.

3:16 and 3:18 Jesus reaffirms what was said in John 1:14 and 1:18

3:19-21 The idea of Judgement which was introduced in 3:18 is now developed.

Some people love darkness, do evil deeds and thus hate the light and do not want their deeds exposed. The essence of the scene is that the Son of God has been sent into the world as light, and the people who turn away from the light are running away from God because they choose to.²⁹

3:16-21 God’s objective is to call creation back to the creator, into a right relationship with God. To be deprived of God is to be deprived of our own existence. The sending of the son does not force salvation on anyone, it makes it available, and people can chose to be saved. But Nicodemus coming in the night, in the darkness is John’s interpretation of the human condition outside of Jesus and a relationship with God.³⁰

Chapter 4

4:23 Hour that is coming and is now here see also John 5:25-29; 16:21, 32

Spirit and Truth are connected with Jesus and belief in him see also John 1:14, 17, 33, 3:5-8; 6:63; 7:39; 8:31-32; 14:6; 17:17-19; 18:37; 20:22

²⁵ Tom Wright, John For Everyone

²⁶ Salvific: having the intent or power to save or redeem. Source: Dictionary.com

²⁷ Incarnation: In Christian theology, the incarnation is the belief that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, also known as God the Son or the Logos (Koine Greek for "Word"), "was made flesh" by being conceived in the womb of a woman, the Virgin Mary, also known as the Theotokos (Greek for "God-bearer").

²⁸ Readings In St. John’s Gospel, William Temple, Notes

²⁹ The Oxford Bible Commentary, Notes

³⁰ The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel, L. William Countryman, Notes

The Samaritan woman is developed as a character in order to represent a specific kind of faith encounter with Jesus. The portrayal centers on how one first comes to faith and the many obstacles that stand in the way.

Savior of the world – Jesus is often misunderstood in John’s gospel. But some people break through to a statement of truth that is so profound that it stands as a summary of everything John is trying to tell us. John’s message is that Jesus is the Saviour of the World, and salvation is from the Jews, but now is reaching past them to everyone in the world.³¹

4:23-24 Jesus questions the two places, Jerusalem and Gerizim, in spirit and truth – it means having an openness to the Spirit whom Jesus gives (3:16, 4:14). God is Spirit -- God will give his spirit through his Messiah. A new cult will be revealed by Jesus which will supplant Jewish and Samaritan worship, purification rites, and Temple worship.³²

Chapter 5

Jesus is God Arguments

5:19-29 Jesus argued that monotheists can believe that he is really God because his equality with the Father does not diminish the Father or himself

5:30-47 Jesus shows that his claim to be equal with God the Father is verifiable and defensible because of the witnesses he describes.

5:30 Jesus is not going to rely on himself alone but seeks the will of He who sent Him. Jesus is not saying that his witness to himself is not proper; but for the sake of those he is trying to reach he will point to witnesses other than Himself and God the Father to prove his point.

1. 5:33 JohnBap whom the Jewish authorities recognized and should have listened to
2. 5:36 Jesus’ own miracles and signs testify to who he is. All of his seven signs in John’s Gospel and then resurrection from the dead are all designed to give them reason to believe that he is equal with God the father.
3. 5:37-38 The Scriptures themselves speak of Jesus. Jesus does not explicitly say how the Scriptures bear witness about him. Instead he seems to be saying that all of the OT points to him.
4. Moses is a witness and wrote about Jesus
5. Deut 18:15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.”

Chapter 6

The question comes to a head: who is Jesus?³³

6:27 The one on whom the Father has set his seal. Jesus is doing things God would do. And God is making a demand on the people. That they believe in Jesus and not treat him as a free healthcare, food service and national liberation hero.

35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. This is the first of the I AM statements by Jesus. Fusing I AM from the OT with metaphors for God.

6:35 Jesus is expanding his theological argument:³⁴

In John 3:16 John declared that God sent his Son to save all who believe. Jesus now affirms that – the whole point of his coming is to lose nothing of what has been entrusted to him.

³¹ William Temple, Readings in St. John’s Gospel, Notes

³² Oxford Bible Commentary, Notes

³³ Tom Wright, John for Everyone, Notes

³⁴ L. William Countryman, The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel, Notes

Chapter 8

8:24 “I Am he part of Jesus divine revelation of his true divine identity in John. It functions virtually as a divine name based on the OT assertions of God’s identity (Ex 3:14; Isa 43:10-11, 25; Isa 51:12)

8:24 I AM occurs here in verse 28 and in verse 58 and combines three meanings:

1. I am what I say – The Light of the World;
2. I am He – the Messiah; and,
3. I am – absolutely the divine name for God

No one definition is indicated – it is up to the reader to determine the meaning for themselves.

8:48 The question of origin persist in John: Jesus is speaking of his spiritual paternity -- the authorities are speaking of his personal family and father. Their reply infers that there is some question about Jesus father – is he legitimate or not? There were rumors that Jesus was illegitimate.

Chapter 9

Raymond E. Brown Notes³⁵

This chapter is a masterpiece of Johannine dramatic narrative.

9:7, 11 “The Light of the world” and the pool of Siloam are a loose relationship to the Feast of the Tabernacles – that is what has kept Jesus in Jerusalem at the Temple.

The man born blind³⁶ is an archetype for a specific kind of faith encounter with Jesus. The Samaritan woman exemplified the troubles one has in coming to believe in Jesus on the first encounter. The blind man, washed in the waters of Siloam, (Being sent), exemplifies one who is enlightened on the first encounter with Jesus, but comes to see who Jesus really is only later, after undergoing trials and being cast out of the synagogue.

L. William Countryman Notes³⁷

33 “If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” The man has experienced a moment of enlightenment. And it is the great turning point in John’s Gospel.

The authorities respond by rebuking the man and driving him out of the Temple, i.e. he has been cast out.

9:39-41 Jesus is dealing with how religious positions can in fact be in darkness.

True sight means seeing things as they really are. Seeing the truth. This is difficult because we are alienated from the Creator (John 1:1-18) We cannot see what we are afraid to see. The essence of the blind man’s enlightenment was to recognize in Jesus the touchstone of reality.

The physical restoration of sight to a blind man is a metaphor for our more significant, interior discovery of sight. From knowing one thing” with certainty – the fact of his healing – the man born blind moves outward to rebuild his whole understanding of the world. The experience of mystical enlightenment is precisely this kind of world shattering and world rebuilding episode. It is an encounter and embrace with the ultimate reality, Jesus Christ.

Josh Moody Notes³⁸

9:1 Jesus sees the blind man – observed him and had compassion for him.

9:2 The disciples raise the question about the origin of the disorder – is it sin? Is it his or his parents?

9:4 Works – Jesus job, mission and purpose given him by the Father.

³⁵ Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament

³⁶ Augustine (*In Johannem* 44.1: CC 36:3881 “This blind man stands for the human race.”)

³⁷ L. William Countryman, The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel

³⁸ Josh Moody, John 1-12 For You

9:5 “I am the light of the world.” The whole point of the healing story is who sees that Jesus is the light and who does not see.

9:35 Jesus asks the man does he believe on the Son of Man?

9:36 The man is willing to believe what Jesus tells him – so he asks “Who is he sir? Tell me so that I might believe in him.”

9:37 Jesus tells him that he is the Son of Man.

9:38 The man throws himself on the ground and worships Jesus. Which is the right response to Jesus – the first person to actually really get it.

9:39 This line is counterintuitive – if you believe that Jesus’ is everyone’s friend – Jesus is saying we need to get on Jesus side³⁹ -- The reality is Jesus actions lead to people having to take sides and judgement follows on what they decide and how they act.

Spiritual Blindness 9:40-41

The religious authorities refuse to learn or see anything new – they cannot hear Jesus arguments or the facts on the ground with this sign.

What does it take to be healed of our blindness?

Look to Saul of Tarsus as an example. By God’s grace his spiritual pride was broken by an encounter with Jesus. (Acts 9:3-9)

William Temple Notes⁴⁰

9:8-12 Notice the man uses the I am language and recognizes his obligation to the one who healed him.

9:35-41 The man is driven out by the Pharisees. Jesus then finds him as an outcast. This is one of the deepest truths about the Christian faith – we can be cast out because of our faith, but Jesus will find us – our fellowship in him is rooted in his compassion for us.

Jesus offers explicitly what and who he is – the Son of Man and the man states that “I believe Lord”, and worships him. This is the first time Jesus explicitly offers himself as an object of faith and receives someone who has become an outcast because of his upholding Jesus to the community.

The Son of Man is the title of the Messiah both as fulfilling divine intention for humanity, and as reigning divine glory.

This man confesses that Jesus is from God – will he go further and put his entire trust and faith in the Son of Man?

The man answers yes if he knows where to find him. Jesus points to himself – and think about it the man has just gained his sight and now he is looking at the Messiah. And his response is to say I believe and worship Jesus.

Tom Wright Notes⁴¹

9:1-12 Jesus in this story rejects the notion that sin is the cause of infirmity – automatically. In this case it is not.

³⁹ Example of argument: During the American Civil War someone said that God was on the Union side. Abraham Lincoln replied, “Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God’s side, for God is always right.”

⁴⁰ William Temple, Readings in St. John’s Gospel

⁴¹ Tom Wright, John for Everyone

When Jesus heals the man it is so we can see God's truth and the world's history rushing together into on. The "I am the light of the world" sends us back to the Prologue and forward to see that Jesus' light was for all of the human race and creation.

9:35-41 The chapter ends with a complete reverse of how it started.

The disciples assumed that blindness was caused by sin. The chapter ends with Jesus and the man opposing that view, Jesus healing the man, and the man seeing Jesus as the Messiah and from God. The accusers claim that they see everything clearly – when in fact they don't. And Jesus saying it is a sin to be able to see God in the world, but refusing to do so or recognize it.

Jesus presence in the world, and later through the Holy spirit, divides the world into those who "see" and acknowledge and worship him; and those who do not "see" remain in darkness and are enslaved to sin.

By the end of the chapter the healed man has progressed from seeing Jesus as a prophet, and a unique healer, to the Son of Man, the Messiah and from God.

Chapter 10

10:36 The logos/son is both identical to God and distinct from God. Accordingly whether Jesus call himself the Son of God or claims full unity with God, the formula of "the father in me and I in the father" comes to the same thing.

"I am the Good Shepherd" 10:1-18

10:1-5 The shepherd imagery is royal imagery. Shepherd was a common synonym for ruler in Jewish scripture and Homeric epics. The Lord is my shepherd could be translated into the Lord rules me. One must recognize that Jesus is both the speaker and the touchstone of truth. One's next step is to place oneself under his direction, to know his voice and to follow him. This is how we signal our recognition of his legitimacy.

10:6-21 Jesus is deepening the metaphors of the gate and the shepherd. The only legitimate point of access to God, and the true ruler. The sheep are really his, and he is really an agent of creation. He knows the sheep as intimately as he knows his father. His sheep will listen to no one else. There are unexpected sheep to be brought into the flock. And all of this at a cost of Jesus life.

Jesus losing his life is not a forced sacrifice. Jesus has volunteered to do so. He is acting with complete freedom and in continuity with the father's loving command.

The language is deliberately mysterious. Jesus has no intention to clarify things. Indeed for the enlightened there is no need to do so. For the unenlightened this makes no sense. Jesus audience goes on fighting with themselves while his opponents try to find some way to validate who he is.

Division among the Jews again 10:19-21

10:19-21 The Jews including the Pharisees are now divided into two groups: some believe Jesus has a demon; and some defend Jesus on the basis of his healings.

Jesus at the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem 10:22-39

10:22-30 This challenge from the authorities elicits from Jesus the ultimate statement of his identity: I and the Father are one. (See Prologue 1:1-18).

And it gives Jesus confidence that his opponents cannot harm him until his hour.

10:31-38 Jesus seems perplexed that "I and the Father are one." Is taken as blasphemy.

10:36 “I’m God’s son.” Is not a short hand statement, or a legal plot, but a natural consequence of Johannine theology and language. The logos/son is both identical to God and distinct from God. Accordingly whether Jesus call himself the Son of God or claims full unity with God, the formula of “the father in me and I in the father” comes to the same thing.

Psalm 82 Jesus responds quoting Psalm 82 “I have spoken; you are gods.” The mere arrival of God’s word makes humans gods – how then can anyone complain about Jesus’ words? Jesus assertion is so far outside the audience’s understanding of the Psalms that they ignore his statement and go back to active hostility.

Chapter 11

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” 27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

The Raising of Lazarus

25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

11:25-26 “I am the resurrection and the life... the one... believing in me will never die.” Life in the Bible means life to its fullest extent. It does not mean just existence. It conveys the fullness of life. A lie for which we are ideally made where we experience Jesus and God fully.

Eternal life begins not when we die, but when we become a Christian, albeit that that life is interrupted by the painful and horrible realities of our physical death.

Mary going to the tomb to weep and meet Jesus foreshadows Mary Magdala who goes to Jesus tomb to weep and meets the risen Lord. Martha calls Jesus rabbi as does Mary Magdala.

25 “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

Mary already believes in the Pharisaic tenet about resurrection on the last day. The problem is that it brings her no comfort. Jesus responds saying he is the resurrection and the life.

How can Jesus be the resurrection? Fellowship with Jesus Christ is participation in the divine life which finds its fullest expression in triumph over death. Life is a larger word than Resurrection; but Resurrection is the crucial quality of Life. The inclusion of it therefore adds vastly to the effectiveness of the saying, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

11:17-27 This is all about faith. Jesus is bringing God’s new world to birth. The key to sharing the new world is faith; believing in Jesus, trusting he is God’s Messiah, the one coming into the world, into our pain, sorrow and death.

This is part of the mystery of John’s Gospel. God made flesh, fully flesh, fully human. And the flesh being the Word/God incarnate, fully divine.

11:51 Caiaphas is prophetic – and does not know it. John sees, after the fact, that Caiaphas unwittingly prophesized what would happen to the Jewish people and the Temple. John views it as divine will that Jesus die. The Good Shepherd laying down his life for his sheep.

Chapter 12

“the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.”

Greeks Seek Jesus; Discourse on His Death

12:20-50 The end of the public ministry is signaled by the arrival of the Greek/Gentiles. This causes Jesus to exclaim “The hour has come” and to speak of the grain seed that dies and is buried to bear much fruit. The overall atmosphere resembles Jesus evening in Gethsemane garden⁴².

12:23 The hour when Jesus is to be glorified is the hour of his death, resurrection and ascension, which also glorifies God’s name. This provides a model for his followers.

12:23 Jesus sees this as the indicator that his time has come. This is key. This is when John is moving us from his Book of Signs to his Book of Glory. It follows on the raising of Lazarus, the anointing of Jesus, the triumphant entry and now the appearance of the Greeks. It will also mark the transition from the public ministry to the private ministry with his disciples.

12:26 Jesus then assures people that in losing our life we will rise again to new life. 12:29 The voice from heaven is clearly audible. Some interpret it as thunder, others as angels. John believes it was a theophany – an appearance by God – the people around Jesus realize that somehow they have experienced a voice from heaven and in the presence of Jesus they are in the presence of God. This is God incarnate for John.

In Greek philosophy there is no appreciation of the excellence of self-sacrifice. Greek philosophy does not hold love as an ultimate value – and sacrifice comes from love.

Plato never took the step from Justice to Love in his Idea of Good. This is the point at which the ethics of Christianity leaves Greek philosophy behind. The Gospel of John directly confronts this with this story and the entire Gospel.

“25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Self-love is self-destruction, self-centeredness is sin, and self-love is hell. The soul feeds on itself and destroys itself. Eternal life is essentially life focused on God and the spiritual, not self and the material.

Jesus then calls on the Greeks and the audience to Follow me – the same as in Chapter 1 with the original disciples. It is a Christian’s duty to follow Jesus Christ. And the reward is being where Christ is.

12:27-33

“28 Father, glorify your name.” For the Father’s glory Jesus has lived. (Incarnation) He will soon die for his Father’s glory. His prayer is not to avoid death but to at whatever cost glorify his Father’s name. John does not record the scene in the garden at Gethsemane. But he points to it clearly (18:1 and 11) and here we find the substance of his prayer.

12:34-36 “The Son of Man must suffer...” is in all four Gospels. The identity of the title in that declaration and in this passage gives a clue to the interpretation. The Son of God is the apocalyptic Christ comes with the clouds of heaven; that apocalypse is actualized in the moment of crucifixion. Of course the idea is too novel to find acceptance. It can be received only by the faith that grows from habitual companionship with the Lord.

12:27 Troubled – The Word has become flesh, is fully human, and is deeply troubled. The time has come and his natural, human instincts are to ask is there any way to avoid what is coming? His troubled heart knows about the dangers ahead. But also knows that it is by moving through the danger that glory will shine out to the world.

Jesus' troubled hearty and prayer is answered by God's voice, thunder. God is telling Jesus he is loved, be obedient, follow the way and watch.

The Unbelief of the People

12:37-50 John the Evangelist is speaking on his own – this is his summary of where we are in the Gospel. We have an echo from the Prologue, and quotes from Jesus: the light has come into the world; the words come from the Father; Jesus glory and the importance of faith. Part 1 (12:27-43) the people's faith and unbelief and Part 2 (12:44-50) different sayings of Jesus on faith and belief. The use of repetition is an important factor in Johannine technique.

12:39 John is viewing the lack of faith through Isaiah 53:1⁴³. Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophetic ministry also fulfills what happened to prophets themselves, even those who performed miracles. They were rejected.

The human heart is not naturally good and not liable to believe good. It is naturally wicked and liable to be suspicious of what is right and beautiful. In the Bible, we naturally have blind spiritual eyes, and need the sovereign work of God to enlighten our eyes.

A person's rejection of truth leads to a further inability to be able to receive truth; shutting the eyes against the truth so we paralyze spiritual sight.

12:43 What glory do we seek? The glory and approval of people is far less satisfying than the glory and approval of God. It is infinitely disappointing and ultimately murderous. To hear one word of praise from God can feed us for our entire lives.

Going forward, Glory is going to be a key concept, a decisive criterion, a divider between those who follow Jesus and those who retreat from the disapproval of others. In the end there is a choice to make: are we seeking man's glory or God's? Man's definition of greatness or God's? Man's praise and approval or God's? Man's standards of success or God's?

12:37-43 John and his community wrestle with why don't people believe in Jesus? Their conclusion is that somehow people have had their hearts hardened, their eyes closed and their ears turned off. John also points out that there are also people who believe, but keep their beliefs in secret out of fear.

Judgment by the Word

12:44-50 The chapter ends with Jesus summarizing his ministry: The light has come into the world constituting the occasion for self judgement between those who believe in him and are delivered from the darkness and those who reject him and are condemned.

12:44-50 Jesus calls out that the real villain is darkness – a darkness that John has not yet named. He will name it in 13:27 "Judas son of Simon Iscariot.[h] 27 After he received the piece of bread,[i] Satan entered into him." Jesus is battling Satan, the darkness.

Jesus also states that those who choose to remain in the darkness, he has not come to judge the world, but their choice will be the basis of a future judgement of them.

In a way with the light in the world shining brightly it also makes the darkness darker.

Jesus at the end of Chapter 12 is staring into the darkness and the darkness is staring back at him. Everyone who reads this chapter must at some point decide where to stand, in the light or in the darkness.

⁴³ Isaiah 53:1 (NRSV)

53 "Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

PRAYERS

"It is not you. It is me in you. Why are you worried about doing? You are an instrument. An instrument in the Master's hand will be well used." *The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun*

Most Loving and Life-giving God.
You are ever more ready to hear,
than we are to Listen,
and Ponder the Mystery of your Love,
Ever seeking us, in all circumstances.
Grant to us your Grace, your Truth,
That your Word may restore us,
In your Image,
That we make You Present,
In all we say and do.
Come, Lord Jesus, Come,
Be borne in us each Day.

Amen.

The Rev. Zoila Schoenbrun

REFLECTIONS:

How do I "see" the incarnation?
In myself?
In others?
In creation?