

Introduction to the Gospel of John, Part 1

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Session 1

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. David Turner introduces the Gospel of John as a multidisciplinary study that combines narrative flow, historical background, and theological interpretation. Dr. Turner explores the genre of the Gospel as stylistically simple yet symbolically dense, as exemplified by the historical and metaphorical dimensions of terms like 'night' and 'light.' He presents the structural division of the Gospel into the Book of Signs and the Book of Glory, highlighting the ascending scale of Jesus's seven miraculous signs. Finally, the lecture outlines major Johannine themes, including ethical dualism, John the Baptist and Moses typologies, and the Christocentric role of the Holy Spirit as Jesus's continuing presence.

Outline

I. Introduction to the Course and Approach

- A. Multidisciplinary approach to the Gospel of John
 - 1. Narrative flow and text-focused analysis
 - 2. Historical background and research
 - 3. Cultural context and contemporary application
- B. Course structure: Two lectures on the introduction
 - 1. Session 1: Literary and theological matters
 - 2. Session 2: Historical and textual matters
- C. Historical views of the Gospel of John
 - 1. Traditional association with the four creatures of Ezekiel and Revelation 4
 - 2. Association with the Eagle: John's Christology "soars" over the world

II. The Genre of the Gospel of John: History, Theology, and Literature

- A. Is John historical or theological?
 - 1. Creative synthesis of both: creative theological significance of historical events
 - 2. Comparison with Synoptics: John has more similarities than differences
 - 3. Dynamic of investigation (facts/data) vs. interpretation (meaning/edification)
- B. Literary creativity and aesthetic quality

1. John has a clear literary and theological agenda
2. Selection and crafting of material to inspire faith and life
- C. Test Case: "It was night" (John 13:30)
 1. Historical/chronological fact: Judas departed after sunset
 2. Symbolic/metaphorical meaning: spiritual darkness and lack of illumination
 3. Broader Johannine theme of light and darkness (John 1, John 8:12, Nicodemus in John 3, John 21, 1 John 1, Revelation 21-22)
 4. Augustine's comment: "Judas himself personified and epitomized the night"
 5. L.T. Johnson's characterization: "Stylistically simple, yet symbolically dense"

III. Structure of the Gospel of John

- A. Prologue / Preface (John 1:1–18)
 1. Introduces Jesus as the Word (Logos), Creator, and ultimate revealer of God
 2. Connects Jesus to Moses and John the Baptist
- B. Book of Signs / Public Ministry (John 1:19–12:50)
 1. Jesus' public encounters and signs
 2. Illustrates responses to Jesus (receiving him vs. rejecting him)
- C. Private Ministry / Farewell Discourse (John 13:1–17:26)
 1. Preparation of the disciples for Jesus' departure
 2. Washing of the feet as spiritual cleansing and service
 3. Promise of the Comforter/Advocate (Paraclete)
 4. High Priestly Prayer of Jesus in John 17
- D. Passion and Resurrection Narrative (John 18:1–20:31)
 1. Arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection
 2. Meeting with doubting Thomas
 3. Original statement of purpose (John 20:30-31)
- E. Epilogue (John 21:1–25)
 1. Appearance to disciples fishing in Galilee
 2. Re-affirmation and restoration of Peter (threefold query of love)
 3. Final sign-off by the beloved disciple

IV. The Seven Signs and their Relation to Faith

- A. The Ascending Scale of Miracles
 1. Changing water into wine at Cana (John 2) - Understated sign
 2. Healing of the royal official's son (John 4) - Second sign in Galilee
 3. Healing of the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5)
 4. Feeding of the multitudes (John 6) - Manna typology
 5. Walking on the water (John 6) - Stilling of the storm
 6. Healing of the man born blind (John 9) - Irony of sight vs. blindness

7. Raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11) - Ultimate sign, brings Jesus to Jerusalem

B. Signs, Works, and Faith

1. The term "works" as parallel to "signs" in John
2. The complex relationship between signs and belief
 - a. Disciples see signs and believe truly
 - b. Crowds believe superficially because of physical provisions
 - c. Jesus' knowledge of humanity and reluctance to commit to superficial believers
 - d. Blessing of believing without seeing signs (Thomas vs. future believers)

V. Major Johannine Themes

A. Jesus as the Ultimate Revelator of God

1. The Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14)
2. Seeing Jesus is seeing the Father (John 14)
3. Explaining (exegeting) the Father from within the Father's embrace (John 1:18)

B. Ethical Dualism

1. Contrast between God and Satan (John 8)
2. Dualism of values: heaven vs. earth, light vs. darkness

C. Typology and Fulfillment

1. John the Baptist as the witness to the light
2. Moses typology: Moses longed to see God, but Jesus is the full revelation of God (John 5, Exodus 33-34)

D. The Paraclete (The Holy Spirit)

1. Descent and remaining on Jesus
2. Spirit given without measure
3. Jesus as the source of the Spirit (John 7:37-39)
4. The expediency of Jesus' departure: physical presence replaced by Spirit's presence
5. Role of the Spirit: continuing presence, reminding, teaching, and convicting the world
6. Inbreathing of the Spirit to commission the disciples (John 20:22)