

The Gospel of John

The Eternal/Cosmic Christ

Literary World

1. John the Baptist prefigures ministry of Jesus
2. Jesus' hearing before religious authorities & Pilate, and crucifixion are similar
3. Share a number of specific events:
 - Cleansing of Temple
 - Feeding of 5000
 - Calming of storm
 - Anointing of Jesus
 - Triumphal entry into Jerusalem
 - Last supper with disciples

Differences Between John & Synoptics

1. Synoptics suggest 1 year vs. John 3 years (3 Passovers)
2. Jesus pre-existent as eternal logos
3. Synoptics say Jesus baptized by John the Baptist vs. John that says Jesus was announced by John
4. Synoptics - first disciples called from their professions (Peter, Andrew, James, John) vs. John - first disciples were followers of John the Baptist (Andrew, Peter, Philip & Nathaniel [not in synoptics])

Differences (cont.)

5. Synoptics - Jesus primarily in Galilee vs. John -Jesus' ministry is primarily in Judea
6. Synoptics - cleansing of Temple week before arrest vs. John -Temple cleansing at beginning of public ministry
7. Synoptics - last supper is Passover meal vs. John -last supper is day before Passover (no mention of bread & wine)

Differences (cont.)

8. Synoptics - parables, sayings, short narratives vs. John -long discourses with deep symbolism (Vine & Branches, Good Shepherd, Bread of Life)
9. Synoptics - theme is kingdom of God/heaven vs. John -theme is eternal life

Christology

- Jesus as logos
 - Logos=word, law, reason, speech
 - Logos important in Greek philosophy - natural law, i.e., the law by which God gives order, rationality, harmony to universe
 - Used in Hellenistic Jewish writing to refer to Torah
 - Used same way that Sophia is in Old Testament (Septuagint)
 - Sophia - wisdom of God by which all things are made (Proverbs 8:23-31 and Wisdom of Solomon)

Other Titles

- Lamb of God (1:29)
 - Passover Lamb of Exodus sacrificed day before Passover on Preparation Day
 - Lamb offered for Atonement sacrifice (takes away sins of world)
- Intercessor (Paraclete)
 - In Old Testament used for Moses who interceded for Israelites before God

Historical World of the Gospel of John

- Docetism - Greek word meaning “seem,” the view that Jesus was not a physical being but a spiritual being that seemed human, seemed to die on cross. Resurrection is proof Jesus was not physical being.
- Gnosticism - Greek word “gnostic” means “know.”
 - A religion before Christianity that picked up Christian ideas or a form of Christianity that emerged on its own?
 - Little is known of ancient gnostics. Most views based upon modern gnostics of Iraq & Iran called Mandaeans

Gnostic Beliefs

- God is pure spirit utterly removed from physical/material world
- World created by “fallen angels” or spirit beings that turned against God -material nature of world represents corruption of spirit, i.e., matter is evil
- Human beings originally were spiritual beings, but fall of Adam and Eve caused them to be trapped in material body; heavens above guarded by “archons”
- Only release from material world is through a redeemer sent from spiritual world who will give secret knowledge to escape “archons”

The Gospel of John's Approach to Gnosticism

- Use of Gnostic Ideas and Language to Repudiate It
 - John 1:1-14 - how does this relate to gnostic ideas?
 - Jesus publicly announces his identity - it is not secret knowledge
 - John 6:51-60 - Jesus is "bread" of life which is to be eaten
 - John 11:35 - human dimension of Jesus is accented
 - Crucifixion details - blood & water from side
 - John 20:24-29 - resurrected body has real wounds [any significance that the doubter is Thomas?]

Additional Points

- Peter's threefold denial followed by threefold affirmation of love
 - Agapan or philein?

Authorship

- 21:20-24 – testimony of beloved disciple
 - Is this testimony the basis of gospel or just of the statement that the beloved disciple would not die?
- Who is the beloved disciple?
 - John?
 - Who is actually is described as loved by Jesus?
