



AND THE WORD  
BECAME FLESH  
the Gospel of John

Sept. 14 - Nov. 16  
Sundays at 9:15am

# INTRODUCTION

- Who, what, when, where, why?
- A Gospel that transcends history and all its associated questions



Nevertheless, it is a Gospel written in the simplest of language.



"I like the comparison of John's Gospel to a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. [The Gospel] is both simple and profound. It is for the veriest beginner in the faith and for the mature Christian."

Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, p. 3.

John 1:1-18

I. "IN THE BEGINNING..."

# WHAT IS THE TITLE OF THIS BOOK?

- Gospel of John? Gospel according to St. John?
- In pre-modern (pre-printing) times, titles of books were the initial words of the book or passage...
  - *Magnificat*
  - *Benedictus*
  - *Nunc dimittis*
  - *"Genesis" = "Bereshith" = "In the beginning"*
- *John's Gospel =*

*"In the beginning"*

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE

- The author indicates that there is a connection between Genesis and this book
- Is this book going to be a re-telling of the creation story as in Genesis?
  - All things were created sequentially from the energy of the universe that was created on Day 1 (i.e., "light")
  - All creation is material in some way
- No, this is a NEW creation story
  - This is a NEW creation story about things being created BY GOD and FROM GOD
    - God's offspring (vs. 12-13), not created by flesh and blood and human will
    - "Born of Spirit", like the wind (John 3)
    - Note the word "born"!

# 'HOW CAN THIS BE?'

- Are you a teacher of Israel and don't know how this can be?
  - Today we might say: Are you a mature Christian and you don't know how this can be?
- Genesis creation: God speaks and what is to come into being does come into being
  - Reiterated in the opening verses of John's Gospel
  - Material creation continues to develop (evolve?) following God's initial creation
- New creation: God's Word itself speaks from within the created world and in doing so creates something completely new that transcends the created world
  - It starts with the Word coming into being in fleshly form

... AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH ...

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# GOD'S WORD

- “Word” is not a very good translation
  - Why? Ask yourself: how does God, who has no body, speak?
  - *Logos* = Reason, Plan, Mind, Speech (NOT utterances, sounds, single words)
- This Word is full of glory → “We have seen his glory”
  - This is not the Law: words written on stone or on paper
  - This is not the Word spoken to prophets (as throughout the Old Testament)
  - This is the Word Himself!
- But who is the Word?
  - Vs 1: God
  - Vs. 18: ὁ ὢν (ho ōn) = “the being one” or “the one who is”
  - Exod 3:14: אֲנִי הוּא / ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν (LXX) = “I am the One who is”



John 1:19-34

## II. THE WITNESS

# THE PROPHET (OR BETTER "THE WITNESS")

- The people of Israel knew that God speaks without a body
  - Testimony of the patriarchs (Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses)
  - Testimony of the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Malachi)
- John is highlighted in this Gospel as a prophet (the primary witness to the Word speaking)
  - Negatively:
    - John is interrogated by specialists in the Law (purity-establishment)
    - John negates all that they attribute to him
      - Not the Messiah / Not Elijah / Not a new Moses (Deut 18:15)
  - Positively:
    - First man spoken of in the entire Gospel
    - Sent from God
    - Jesus is first identified by John: Lamb of God who takes away sin (not sins)

# JOHN'S BAPTISM

- John is not first of all a "baptizer"
  - In fact, in John's Gospel there is no scene of John baptizing Jesus
- John as prophet and witness is the fleshly pointer to Jesus
  - "Water" will regularly be a kind of fleshly medium by which the Word is made known
  - The "children of God" are born of water and spirit.
    - Without spirit they would remain merely fleshly creations.

John 1:35-51

## III. THE FIRST DISCIPLES

# THE DISCIPLES

- John's disciples (What does the word "disciple" mean?)
- Of the disciples of John, one at least becomes Jesus' first disciple
  - Andrew → Peter
  - Philip → Nathanael
- John himself does not become a disciple of Jesus: his job is to point to Jesus
- The disciples' job is to learn from Jesus... Because that is how they will be born as children of God!
  - As they learn from the Word made flesh, they will (super)naturally draw others to the Word.

# THE DISCIPLES' FIRST IDENTIFICATIONS OF JESUS

- Like John, the disciples identify Jesus:
  - Rabbi (Andrew and the unnamed disciple; Nathanael)
  - Messiah (Andrew to Peter)
  - One written about by Moses and the Prophets (Philip to Nathanael)
  - Son of God (Nathanael) – probably from Ps 2
  - King of Israel (Nathanael)

All of these are inadequate (not untrue but not adequate)

- Why? Because all of them are less than who this is
- Most of them reflect Israelite (especially Judahite) political aspirations

# THE WORD'S OWN FIRST SELF-IDENTIFICATION (JOHN 1:51)

- When the Word speaks about Himself He identifies Himself in relation to ....
  - Angels ascending and descending
    - Jacob's "ladder" (Genesis 28:10-22)
  - The Son of Man
    - Daniel 7 (to whom dominion is given)

# HOW WILL THE WORD MADE FLESH MANIFEST HIS GREATNESS?

- Jacob = Israel = full of guile! (in contrast to Nathanael, "a true Israelite")
  - Samaritan woman to Jesus: "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us this well?"
  - Jacob provided water and riches to Israel (the material – fleshly – goods)
- Jesus will bring true life to the world. How?
  - Through his death!
  - First hint in 1:51:
    - The Heavens opened
    - Angels ascending and descending on the κλίμαξ = *klimax*
      - Translated "ladder" but also the cross beams of the cross of crucifixion

When the flesh that He has become is stripped from Him, then He will be seen by those who have eyes to see as the Word.

# HINTS FOR READING JOHN

# JOHN WAS WRITTEN FOR A FIRST-CENTURY GREEK-SPEAKING JEWISH AUDIENCE

- No one can read John's Gospel and ultimately understand it without understanding the Jewish culture of Jesus' day and the "constitutional" text of Judaism in that day, the Scriptures
- No one can read John's Gospel and ultimately understand it without Greek the way it was understood in Jesus' day

# CONCLUSIONS

# THREE OPENING INSIGHTS FROM JOHN

- The Gospel of John is simple at one level (the child wading in the pool)
  - God came among us!
- The Gospel of John is more profound than almost any other text in the New Testament
  - How does the pre-creation God enter creation?
- For the Word made flesh, as for the offspring of God who have the DNA of the Word made flesh... death is not something to be feared but the stripping away of what keeps them from being fully who they have become in God .... In our case, through the Word.