

Week 11: November 17, 2009
EDU 603
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VII. Background to the Gospel of John. Subject matter in principle has been taken from the Ignatius Catholic Bible Study on the Gospel of John.

A. Destination and purpose of Gospel.

1. Consensus date on the Gospel is before 100 A.D and probably before the destruction of Jerusalem.

a. Probably written for Jews and Jewish Christians throughout the world, primarily the Mediterranean world (Greece as well).

2. John's Gospel has an evangelistic purpose in his intent to communicate the deeper and richer themes of the Old Testament. Its secondary purpose was to seemingly fill in the gaps of the intent of the Synoptic supplementing the Gospels already in circulation (reemphasizes trips to Jerusalem and less attention on the region of Samaria).

a. Differences include the ministry of Christ before the arrest of John the Baptist and the exclusion of the narration of the Last Supper with an emphasis on the Bread of Life discourse.

B. Themes and Characteristics.

1. Deepest message and towering theme is that of the "Divine family"; God revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Along with mystery of God as family, we also read John speaking to the human family to in turn live in the love of the "Divine Family."

a. Divine family: God sends his Son into the world as a man (cf. 1.14; 16.28) so that we might learn of the Father's love (3.35; 10.30; 14.11) through the gift of the Holy Spirit in His glorious works (5.19; 10.25). What we learn from this revelation is that we please the Father by in turn glorifying the father (8.29) through living in His Presence (14.17)!!!

b. Human family: men to become children of God (cf. 1.12) through the spiritual rebirth in Baptism (cf. 3.5), and nourished with divine food and drink (cf. 6.32) while being educated in the Truth (cf. 8.31; 16.13) and protected from danger (cf. 17.15). Ultimately, we are not left orphans (14.18) after Christ returns to the father (20.17) because his presence dwells within us (14.17-23). Our full union with the Trinity awaits us if we submit our will with His as Jesus Christ will return to escort his children home into his house as their heavenly father (14.2-3).

VIII. Prologue (Jn.1.1-18). Acts as a kind of overtone to the themes in Tradition that belong to the Word and Creation. *"The entire revelation concerning salvation is ordered to this manifestation of the Word, as to a central point-in a forward direction in the apostles and in the whole history of the church to the end of time, in a backward direction in the Old testament in word and in history, backward to the law and the prophets and even to the creation."*--Von Balthasar. John Uses things that are familiar to explain things that are unfamiliar.

A. Christ, the Eternal Word (Jn.1.1-13). The meaning of the Word (seen 330 times in NT) is threefold: (1) A powerful utterance of God that brought all things into being at the dawn of time (cf. Gn.3; Ps.33.6; Wis.9.1) (2) God's eternal companion in Wisdom (prov.8.23; Sir.9), the craftsman who labored alongside God at creation (Wis.7.22) who remains a source for the life of the world and the (3) Word associated with the order and design of the universe.

1. Jn.1.1-1.5...The Word of God is not some abstract principle or an audible person, but rather a Divine Person. This person once mediator of creation is now the mediator of our salvation through the incarnation.

a. John traces the author of eternity past where God the Son was with God the Father during creation. There is a direct allusion to the opening verse of Scripture where the Word Brings with it light, darkness, life and the creation of days.

b. John's direct implication is that the earth, once created through the Word of God, is now being renewed through that same word in Jesus incarnate.

1. Earthly reality is being graced through Christ.

c. Light and darkness...symbolic of the struggle between good and evil. Jesus himself is the true light, driving out death, deception, and the devil (cf. Mark). Other contrasts in the Gospel of John include: (1) flesh and spirit; (2) truth and falsehood; (3) heaven and earth; (4) life and death

2. **Jn.1.12-13...** "*children of God*"; by the grace of divine generation we are filled with divine life and reborn as sons and daughters of the Father.

a. This transformation requires faith and takes place in Baptism. This is a common theme discussed throughout the Gospel of John.

A. Christ, the Word made flesh (Jn.1.14-18). The Word became flesh. Asserts the mystery of the incarnation. Man, fully Divine, enters human history as a man.

1 **Jn.1.14-15...** The Gk for "*dwelt among us*" is **tabernacled or pitched his tent** among us (Rev.21.3).

a. John is making a clear distinction between the incarnation of Jesus and the erection of the tabernacle in the O.T. The tabernacle is the prophetic image of Christ's presence among us.

b. "His glory"... speaks to the magnificence of God's presence and Being once visible in the fiery cloud that indwelt in the wilderness tabernacle and later the Jerusalem temple. His divine reign is being veiled in his humanity but manifested in his miracles--signs.

2. **Jn1.16-17...** "*grace upon grace*"...implies that the grace of the Old Covenant has been superseded by the blessings of the New Covenant. Grace and truth fulfills the old law of Moses.

a. Marian dimension...DeMontfort and DeLigouri.

3. **Jn.1.18...** God is pure spirit and thus invisible to human eyes. Even still, the face of the Father can be seen in the face of Christ, who is the visible image of the invisible God.

IX. The Book of Signs (Jn.1.19-12.50). Not just a miracle...points towards mystery, which is the Church as it communicates itself through signs.

A. The witness of John and the Calling of the Apostles (Jn.1.19-51). The role of John the Baptist was to communicate that Israel's restoration was upon them in Jesus Christ (Jn.1.31). In the calling of the twelve Apostles, Christ establishes the new Israel that would oversee God's new covenant people.

1. **Jn.1.24-28...**The water Baptism of John is merely a sign of the sacramental baptism of Jesus. The former signified our need for cleansing and renewal; the latter effects this by the infusion of the grace and new life of the Spirit (Acts 2.38 and Tit.3.8; CCC 720).

a. Baptism in the Gk. **Baptismo** means, "*seal; to sprinkle and clean; cleansing.*"

1. OT understanding to Baptism is found in Nm.19; Ez.36.

2. **Jn.1.29, 36...** "*Lamb of God*" points to the sacrificial dimension to Jesus' mission.

a. This was prefigured by the Passover lambs of the Exodus, whose blood was a mark of divine protection for Israel and whose flesh was eaten in a liturgical meal (Ex.12.1-27), and prophesied by Isaiah, who portrayed the suffering Messiah as an innocent lamb being slain for the sins of others (Is.53 and CCC # 608).

3.**Jn.1.30-34...** "*The Spirit descends as a dove.*" This is the manifestation of God's mercy to the new Israel (Gn.8.10).

a. The revelation of God's Mercy leads to sacrifice.

4. **Jn.1.35-42...**The first disciples of Jesus.

a. "*Cephas*":...the rendering of the Aramaic is Kepha meaning rock. Rarely in antiquity was this used as a name. This in of itself reveals meaning and purpose behind why Jesus would call Peter this name.

5. **Jn.1.43-51...**Jesus calls Phillip and Nathaniel.

a. Moses...the prophets. Mosaic fulfillment continues to run its course throughout this Gospel as a central theme for John (Deut.18.15).

b. "*Son of God*" and "*King of Israel.*" These were titles that were again often

seen in ancient Israel, specifically within the kingdom of David. If you were in the line of David, you were called a “son” of Yahweh and a King of Israel (2 Sam.7.14.). Christ, in contrast to his predecessors is Son by nature and not by divine adoption.

c. Nathaniel’s calling. Nathaniel speaks from his knowledge of the O.T.

1. Nathaniel’s call while sitting under a “fig tree” echoes Zechariah’s prophecy of the coming of the messianic Age (Zech.3.10).

2. The mentioning of Nazareth draws out a connection to Is.11.1, where we read about the “branch” which sprouts forth from the stump of David’s line (Hebrew for Nazareth, *Nester*, means “branch”). For Nathaniel, there is a convergence of oracles spelling out for him clearly that Christ is the branch who will restore hope for the new Israel

d. “*Ascending and descending*”... an allusion to Jacob’s dream in Gn28.11. Jacob dreamed of a ladder spanning heaven and earth that enabled the angels to pass in and out of the world. He ultimately renames this *place* “*the house of God*” and “*gate of heaven.*”

1. He is the place where heaven and earth touch.

2. He is the true house of God.

3. He is the mediator in whom the angels exercise their ministry.

B. The inaugural signs of Jesus’ ministry (Jn.2.1-4.54). I reiterate here the great significance of his ministry beginning with a great sign. The miracles of Jesus are not just mighty works, but signs that unveil the power and glory of God working through Jesus Christ in and toward the sacramental Church of the NT.

1. Jn.2.1... “*the third day.*” Chronologically this refers to the third day since the encounter with Nathaniel. Theologically this refers to the seventh day. Note how the beloved disciple places the third day on the succession of the other days: 1.29; 1.35; 1.43.

a. John wishes for the reader to see that the creation fashioned in seven days is being renewed and transformed in and through Jesus Christ via the new covenant in the marriage feast.

b. Jesus manifests his glory on the third day in the wedding Feast, but also prepares the reader for another great manifestation--the Resurrection.

1. The Third day was the Theophany in the Old Testament.

2. Jn.2.2-4... “*Woman, what have you to do with me... My hour has not yet come*”

Although it might offend the standards of modern etiquette, this was a title of respect and endearment in antiquity (Jn.19.25-27; Rev.12 for further understanding of the role of the ‘woman’).

a. Mary reverses the fortunes of the fall in the garden. As Eve prompted Adam to defy the Lord and drag the human race into sin, so Mary prompts Jesus, the new Adam, into His mission of salvation.

b. ‘*What is that to you or me*’ is a Hebrew idiom rendered in the Gk. The meaning is flexible and must be understood in its greater context.

1. This particular idiom speaks to the free consent of one party to the expressed will of another, with or without a sense of reluctance. Note that Jesus promptly replies to her consent and thus the first sign of his new dispensation--the sacramental church.

3. Jn.2.4b... “*My hour has not yet come.*” This statement seems exaggerated unless the provision of wine was somehow connected to Mary’s petition.

a. This points to the whole meaning of Christ’s purpose, which was the appointed hour of Christ’s passion and its direct correlation to the liturgy, the Wedding Feast at Cana.

1. The hour is liturgical:

a. Jn.2:1-11: we receive wine at the occasion of a miracle

b. Jn.4:23-24: we are empowered to worship in spirit and truth.

c. Jn.5:25: We hear God’s word to receive new life.

- d. Jn.4:23; 12:20; 13:1: we gather as a universal people to celebrate the new Passover.
- e. Jn. 12:23-24.: We receive the living bread, the fruit of the grain of wheat that has died.
- f. Jn.12:32: The Lamb of God will be lifted up drawing all men unto himself.

2. A martyr's meal: Polycarp and Ignatius's "hour"

- 4. Jn.2.5...** *"Do whatever he tells you."* Mary's last words are mediating the divine life of the sacramental church. This is her spiritual testament as our mother.
 - a. Gn.41.55...The command to follow Jesus echoes the same command to follow Joseph. The Patriarch went on to provide bread in abundance during a time of famine. Therefore, it is that Jesus provides bread in abundance for the people of God.
- 5. Jn.2.6...** *"six stone jars."* The purpose of these jars is outlined in Nm.19.11-22, which stipulates that any Israelite defiled by contact with the dead must be purified with water on the third day and then again on the seventh day. The event at Cana takes place on the third and seventh day.
 - a. Jesus first miracle was the changing of the into wine...the first miracle of Moses the water into blood.
- 6. Jn.2.9...** *"the bridegroom."* The unidentified groom at the wedding is what Jesus fulfills at the spiritual level.
 - a. Mt.25.1-13; Rev.1.1; 19.7 (CCC 796)...Marriage Feast is the highest identity of the Eucharist in its Truth in the covenant.
- 7. Jn.2 10...** *"the good wine."* This was a biblical symbol with many associations.
 - a. A sign of the messianic age (Is.25.6; Joel 3.18; Amos 9.13).
 - b. It signifies the joys of marital love (Song 1.2; 4.10; 7.9).
 - c. The anticipation of the transubstantiation (1 Cor.1016).

***jumping to Eucharistic discourse

C. The Bread of life (Jn.6.1-72). This sign is highlighted by the Passover (6.4). Three times this feast is mentioned in John (2.13; 11; 55). It was celebrated annually in Jerusalem to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery (Ex.12). Central to the feast is a liturgical meal, called the Seder, in which the story of the exodus is retold, psalms are sung, and a lamb is eaten with unleavened bread and other condiments. The evangelist mentions this upcoming feast in this "bread of life" discourse to hint that Jesus will give a new and greater meaning to the Passover.

- 1. Jn.6.1-14...** *"The Multiplication of the Loaves."* **Note here that the two food miracles in John's Gospel involve bread and wine. Together this anticipates the Eucharistic liturgy.**
- 2. Jn. 6.4...** *"The Passover."* Christ is the true "Lamb of God" whose redeeming work will accomplish a new deliverance from the slavery of sin (8.31-36) in a sacramental and liturgical meal.
 - a. **Afikoman** tradition. The Jewish tradition see this loaf, which is first hidden and then brought forth, as a symbol of the longed-for coming of the Messiah. There was an anticipation of the Messiah as fulfilling a new king of thanksgiving.
 - 1. We must ask as children of God, What does this mean (Ex.13.14)?
 - b. Christ transforms this feast into Eucharistic meal of the new covenant at the Last Supper (Mt.16; CCC 1340).
- 3. Jn. 6.9;12...** *"barley loaves...twelve baskets."* Similar to Elisha, but greater (2 Kings 4.42-44).
 - a. Twelve baskets similar to the twelve tribes/apostles and the disbursement of the food.
- 4. Jn. 6.11;23...** *"given thanks."* Renders the Gk. **Eucharisteo** (ros), from which the English word Eucharist is derived.
 - a. The miracle of the loaves thus foreshadows the institution of this sacrament as

the Last Supper.

b. The OT vision of Thanksgiving was always accompanied with praise and blessing. For the faithful Jew it was a way of life. In this line of thinking, the early Christian saw each day as a resurrection and an opportunity for praise and thanksgiving.

1. Ps.50.23; Heb.13.15...God has blessed the world and he expects us to give back in a “sacrifice of praise” (Liturgical and anthropological)...also see Mal.1.11

5. Jn. 6.35... “*I am the bread of life.*” Note here that Christ associates the title “*I am*” with the bread of life. John is clearly associating God’s own identity with that of the Eucharist.

6. Jn. 6.41... “*The Jews then murmured.*” Recalls how the Israelites were complaining against Moses in the wilderness (Nm.11.1; Ex.16.2).

7. Jn. 6.52... “*his flesh to eat.*” The crowd here is thinking of cannibalism.

a. For cannibalism to be present you have to kill to eat, and Christ willingly offers his own life that we may eat of the living bread.

8. Jn.6.53... The Greek word used for eat used throughout the Eucharist discourse is **esthio/fago**, in verse 53 it suddenly changes to **Trogo**, which means to “*crunch or gnaw on animals...ie, lamb.*” This word was usually used for the animals humans would consume. In addition, the tense of the verb **trogan (pl)** implies the continual consumption of the Corpus Christi.

a. I note here that Christ was born in a manger in the city of Bethlehem. The Latin word for manger is **mandere**, meaning to “*chew or gnaw*“, the Hebrew root to Bethlehem means “*house of Bread.*”

9. Jn.6.60... “*Who can listen to this*”...if this was just some symbol the disciples would have not responded the way they did (66) in this passage.

*** The seven “*I Am*” (Jn.8.58) titles of Christ echo the revelation of God’s identity in Exodus 3... “*I am*” : “*...the bread of life*” (**Jn.6.48**); “*...the light of the world*” (**Jn.8.12**)...*the door*”(Jn.10.9); “*...the Good Shepherd*” (**Jn.10.11**); “*...the resurrection*” (**Jn.11.25**); “*...the way, the truth, and the life*” (**Jn.14.6**); “*...the true vine*” (**Jn.15.1**) . Again, these titles of identity refer to his relationship with man and the world and to the **HOW** he will draw us closer to him!