

The Gospel of John

Week 2

Patrick Reeder

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OUTLINE

John the Baptist
Who He Isn't
Who Is He?

Two Private Meetings

Satisfaction from Christ
Feeding Five Thousand
Feast of Tabernacles

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THE CHRIST

Much expectation surrounded John's prophetic ministry. The excitement around his work clearly raised the question as to whether he himself was the Messiah:

Luke 3:15—Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were [e]wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ...

Here we see John explicitly denying that he's the Messiah:

John 1:20—And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

Elsewhere he says as much by distinguishing how they baptize.

THE PROPHET

What do they mean “The Prophet,” a title that appears throughout the gospel?

Deuteronomy 18:15 “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.”

Moses had in mind (at least) a succession of prophets that we witness throughout the history of Israel.

However! There was a current interpretation that there would be an eschatological, final Prophet at the end of the ages. To some (but not all) the Prophet would actually be the messiah.

ELIJAH

Why would anyone ask if he's Elijah?!

Malachi 4:5-6—“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

John also denies being Elijah. But what about this passage?!

Matthew 11:14—And if you are willing to accept it, [John the Baptist] is the Elijah who was to come...

ELIJAH

Reconciling Jesus' and John's words:

- ▶ Jesus uses the phrase, “if you are willing to accept it,” indicating the he's not speaking literally.
- ▶ John was born, but Elijah never died. Indeed, during his birth's announcement, the angel says he will come “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” but that's not quite the same as being identical to Elijah.
- ▶ In Matthew 17, during the transfiguration, Elijah actually *appears!*
- ▶ John the Baptist is almost certainly a *type* of Elijah which is different than one-one identity (Cf. Rev 11:1-13)

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A VOICE CALLING IN THE WILDERNESS

To indicate his identity, John quotes the first line from this oracle:

Isaiah 40:3-5; 9-11—A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. 4 “Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; 5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” 9 Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Here is your God!” 10 Behold, the LORD God will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him. 11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

What follows implicitly from this citation?

A VOICE CALLING IN THE WILDERNESS

What follows implicitly from this citation?

1. John's arrival anticipates a final chapter in History
 - ▶ v.5—"glory of the LORD will be revealed"
 - ▶ v.10—"LORD God will come with might"
2. John's arrival anticipates the Messiah:
 - ▶ Powerful king's arrival—cf. Psalm 2:7-9;
 - ▶ Shepherd imagery is linked to Davidic messiah—cf. Psalm 78: 70-72; Eze 34:23, 37:24
3. The Messiah is in some sense God Himself (Cf. Isaiah 9:6-7).

Boiled down—John is saying, "I'm here to announce the arrival of God himself!"

A VOICE CALLING IN THE WILDERNESS

John the Baptist also offers explicit praise of Jesus:

- ▶ “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (v. 29)
- ▶ “a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.” (v.30)
- ▶ “the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.” (vv. 32-33)
- ▶ “this is the Son of God.” (v. 34)

FIRST CENTURY IMPACT

This is less emphasized in John but it's worth noting his role to the Jewish people:

- ▶ There were no prophets for roughly four centuries (Josephus, *Against Apion* I.8)
- ▶ Gentile proselytes were baptized as a sign that they were converting and would follow the law. For John to baptize Jews, he's saying, you're no better than a Gentle. You actually have to live repentantly before God.
- ▶ The fact that he was baptizing beyond the Jordan indicates that when people left John they would have to re-enter Israel!

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DIFFERENCES

Let's take stock of the differences between Jesus' appointments.

	Nicodemus	Woman at Well
Economic	Rich	Poor—divorced
Social	Highly-regarded	Lowly, unloved
Educational	Well-learned	Ignorant, syncretist
Moral	Pious—self-righteous?	Immoral
Racial	Jewish	Samaritan
Gender	Man	Woman

SIMILARITIES

What makes their differences so striking is that Jesus delivers virtually the same message!

Topic	Nicodemus	Woman at Well
Offered Eternal Life	"kingdom" (3:3,5)	"living water" (4:10)
	"eternal life" (3:16)	"eternal life" (4:14)
Not by Works	"born again"(3:3)	"would have asked..."
	"whoever believes" (3:16)	"...would have given" (4:10)
Must Receive Spirit	"born of Spirit" (3:3,6)	"in Spirit and truth" (4:23)
		"well of water"[cf. 7:38-9]

Galatians 3:28 should be ringing in your ears!

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

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MAN DOES NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE

The feeding of the 5000 is one few episodes (let alone miracles) that appears in all gospels.

Manna is mentioned explicitly in this section. The following passage seems particularly relevant:

Deuteronomy 8:3—He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

COMMUNION AND SALVATION

Some of have used some of Jesus' remarks in 6:53 to indicate the communion is necessary for salvation.

Some problems with this interpretation:

- ▶ There is no evidence anywhere else in Scripture that communion is necessary for salvation (Cf. Eph 2:8,9, Titus 3:3-7).
- ▶ "This is a hard teaching. . ." (6:60) indicates that Jesus is saying something well outside of expectations, perhaps even to alienate.
- ▶ This statement should color our reading: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (6:63)

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WHAT IS THIS FEAST?

First commanded in Leviticus and echoed in Deuteronomy.

Lev 23:42-44—“⁴²You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, ⁴³so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”⁴⁴ So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the Lord.

Deut 16:13—“You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat . . .”

It is a celebration that starts on one Sabbath and doesn't end until the end of the next Sabbath.

It is one of only three times the people must come to Jerusalem (Passover, Pentecost—or Weeks—and Booths). Pentecost starts the harvest and Booths ends it.

WHAT IS THIS FEAST?

How was it conducted in Jesus' day?

On the seven days of the feast, a golden flagon was filled with water from the pool of Siloam and was carried in a procession by the High Priest back to the temple. As the procession approached the watergate on the south side of the inner court three blasts of the šōpār [shofar]—a trumpet connected with joyful occasions—were sounded. While the pilgrims watched, the priest processed around the altar with the flagon, the temple choir singing Hallel (Pss. 113-118. . .) When the choir reached Psalm 118, every male pilgrim shook a lûlāb̄ (willow and myrtle twigs tied with a palm) in his right hand, while his left raised a piece of citrus fruit (a sign of the ingathered harvest, and all cried 'Give thanks to the LORD!' three times. The water was offered to God at the time of the morning sacrifice. . . (Carson, 321,2)

On the seventh day they processed around the altar seven times. . . People believed that when the Messiah came he would provide water (as he would provide manna) just as Moses had done. (Kruse, 191)

JESUS AND TABERNACLES

As it concerns us, we find Jesus remarking as follows:

³⁷Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

What can we infer from what Jesus is saying given this background?

- ▶ Jesus is the Messiah!
- ▶ Jesus is at least as great as YHWH who satisfied the Jews in the desert with water (Exodus 17, Numbers 20)
- ▶ Practically, Jesus will satisfy us in the deepest way.

JESUS AND THE END

Furthermore, Jesus is declaring that these are, in some sense, the Last Days. The End is often illustrated with both an outpouring of water and the Holy Spirit:

ISAIAH In both 32:15; 44:3-4, Pouring out of Spirit is illustrated using water

EZEKIEL 36:25-27—Spirit is poured out; Eze 47—Water flows out from the temple

JOEL 2:28,9—Spirit granted; 3:18—Water flows out of the temple

ZECHARIAH 12:10—Spirit poured out; 14:8—Living water pours out from Jerusalem

Fortunately for us, John connects the water to the Spirit.

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