

The Gospel of John

Week 5

Patrick Reeder

September 28, 2017

OUTLINE

The Son and the Father

Resurrection

Harmonized Time Line

Minimal Facts Argument

Concerning the Empty Tomb

CAN GOD BE DEPENDENT?

How would you reconcile the following pair?

John 10:30—I and the Father are one.

John 14:28c—the Father is greater than I.

- ▶ During week 3 we discussed the kenosis (“emptying” of Phil 2:7) which at least explains things in terms of Jesus’ earthly ministry.
- ▶ In both verses above, there are relevant presuppositions in play:
 - ▶ Regarding 10:30, one must ask, “one” *in what way*? They’re obviously not one-one identical!
 - ▶ Regarding 14:28, one must ask, “greater” *in what way*?
- ▶ In context, “Presumably it would mean that Jesus is going back to the one who commissioned him, under the assumption that Jesus has all but completed his task, *for* the one who sent him greater than the one is sent (*cf.* 13:16).” (Carson, 507)

TRINITARIAN CHRISTOLOGY

As the above indicates, John's formulation of Jesus' identity is not simply as God but as a member of a community of divine persons (the trinity):

These Johannine patterns of identifying Jesus place him squarely within the identity of God by pointing to what he holds in common with his Father as the one and only true God . . .

Nevertheless, these identifying patterns do not themselves constitute a trinitarian claim about the identity of Jesus.

*Perceiving John's trinitarian Christology involves requires that we identify not only what Jesus holds in common with the Father but also the distinctive personal way in which Jesus holds what he holds in common with Father. According to John, Jesus holds the unique divine identity in common with the Father as the Son of the Father. (Köstenberger & Swain, 112, *emph. original*)*

MODES OF DEPENDENCE

Insofar as it's explicit in John that Jesus is divine, it is also explicit how dependent Jesus is on the Father:

1. **Power**— “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing...” (5:19)
2. **Life**—“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself” (5:26)
3. **Authority**—“[The Father] gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man” (5:27; see also 17:2)
4. **Mission**—“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.” (6:38; see also 14:31)
5. **Message**—“My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me.” (7:16)
6. **Knowledge**—My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me (8:16)
7. **Glory** From Jesus to the Father, “...my glory which You have given me” (17:24)

OUTLINE

The Son and the Father

Resurrection

Harmonized Time Line

Minimal Facts Argument

Concerning the Empty Tomb

FRIDAY, BURIAL

Here is the rough sequence of events using Matthew 27:51ff, Mark 15:38ff, Luke 23:47ff, John 19:31ff. The symbol '∇' means it is common to all gospels and 'Σ' for Synoptics only.

1. Joseph of Arimathea requests the body from Pilate who concedes (∇)
2. The guards note that Jesus is already dead, preventing them from breaking his legs. (Jn 19:33)
3. The centurion pierced his side. (Jn 19:34; Cf. JAMA 255: 1455-1463)
4. The body was prepared by Joseph (∇) and Nicodemus (Jn 19:39) using fresh linen and spices.*
5. The body is placed in Joseph's own (Mt 27:60), new tomb (Mt 27:60, Lk 23:53, Jn 19:41) cut from a rock (Σ) which was very close by (Jn 19:41-42)
6. Mary Magdalene and Mary mother of James and Joseph saw him buried so they could return with spices.* (Σ)

How would you resolve the fact John has Nicodemus preparing the spices* but it's the women in the Synoptics?

FRIDAY, BURIAL

How would you resolve the fact John has Nicodemus preparing the spices but the synoptics have the women?

- ▶ Possibly the women did not know much about Nicodemus' preparations. It only says they saw the tomb. J&N's secrecy is especially noteworthy (Cf. John 3:2, 12:42-3; 19:38)
- ▶ There's no reason to think the women couldn't add additional spices/perfume! Is there a limit?
- ▶ In keeping with both the *ignorance* or *additional spices* suggestions, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea as members of the Sanhedrin (John 3:1, Luke 23:51) would have had the benefit of preparing further in advance than the women and Sabbath was approaching.

SUNDAY, RESURRECTION

Here is the rough sequence of events using Matthew 28:1-15, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, John 20:1-25. The symbols '∇,' 'Σ' are as before.

1. At the very beginning of the day (∇), some women visited the tomb (∇), including Mary Magdalene (∇), Mary the mother of James and Joseph (Joses) (Σ), Salome (Mk 16:1), and Joanna (Lk 24:10).
2. Upon reaching the tomb, the large stone covering the entrance had already been rolled away (∇) by an angel (Mt 28:2).
3. The women entered the tomb (Mk 16:5, Jn 20:11) and spoke to angels (∇) who told them he rose from the dead (Σ).
4. The women reported what they saw to the disciples (Mt 28:8,11; Lk 24:9; Jn 20:2), saying nothing *on the way* (Mk 16:8).
5. Peter (Lk 24:12) and John (Jn 20:2) examined the empty tomb themselves but did not see Jesus.
6. Jesus appears to the women (Mt 28:9, Jn 20:14).
7. Jesus appears to the disciples (Mt 28:17; Lk 24:36; Jn 20:19).

OUTLINE

The Son and the Father

Resurrection

Harmonized Time Line

Minimal Facts Argument

Concerning the Empty Tomb

THE STRATEGY

The Minimal Facts argument uses what's called an *inference to the best explanation* (IBE). Here are some examples of IBE:

- ▶ There is a kilometer sized circular indentation in the middle of a desert. The best explanation of this phenomenon is that there was a meteoric impact.
- ▶ The couch is torn to pieces, the dog is home and has stuffing in his mouth. The best explanation is that the dog tore the couch up.
- ▶ A man is face down in a pool of blood with a knife in his back. The best explanation is that he was murdered (Wallace, 36)

The advantage of the Minimal Facts argument is that it begins with historical facts that all but the most skeptical historians take for granted.

THE ARGUMENT

What are these minimal facts of which we must give an account?

- ▶ Jesus of Nazareth was crucified by Pontius Pilate (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44)
- ▶ The disciples *claim* to have seen the risen Christ, notably Saul/Paul of Tarsus (Scripture at least as personal report; Cf. 1 Cor 15:1-8)
- ▶ The sudden appearance of a religion of a “dead man” reaching even into Rome itself. (Tacitus, *op. cit.*; Cf. Pliny the Younger, *Letters*)

The claim is that the best explanation (not an absolute guarantee) is that Jesus rose from the dead.

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis	Claim	Problems
Hallucination	People saw Christ: in their grief? “spiked” water?	No historical e.g.s of common hallucination; grief tends to draw on only one sense
“Swoon”	Jesus never died	Roman’s were torture experts (Cf. JAMA article)
Mystery	We will never know what happened	Despair of historical inquiry

THE PLACE OF THE EMPTY TOMB

Some place the fact that the tomb was empty among the minimal facts. It's probably too contentious to say that most scholars accept this.

Nevertheless, a good case can be made that the tomb was empty:

- ▶ If it weren't empty, the Jewish and Roman authorities would have simply produced the body
- ▶ Criterion of Embarrassment: the women discovered the empty tomb and were the first to see Christ; the disciples remain obtuse until Christ appears directly to them.
- ▶ Skeptical conversions: James and Paul

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES

Here are some alternative explanations of the empty tomb.
How would you respond to these?

- ▶ Disciples Stole the Body
- ▶ Women were confused
- ▶ Joseph of Arimathea Stole It
- ▶ “Where is the tomb?”
- ▶ Aliens

ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis	Problems
Disciples Stole the Body	Nothing to gain (political? economic?) Died believing they saw risen Christ
Women were confused	Misogynistic... Confirmed by Disciples
J. of Arimathea Stole It	Like Disciples, nothing to gain; unlike disciples, much to lose!
"Where is the tomb?"	Low view of Ancient People Ancient Jerusalem is <i>small</i>
Aliens	Are alien abduction more plausible than the existence of God?

RESURRECTED? SO WHAT?

The purpose of the book is stated right after a remark from Thomas during a resurrection appearance:

John 20:29ff—Then Jesus told [Thomas], “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Some people argue that Jesus' resurrection is actually the 7th (8th?) sign of the book, not counting walking on water.

RESURRECTED? SO WHAT?

More to the point, the Resurrection has a number of absolutely central theological values.

1. John's placement of the purpose statement indicates that the resurrection is a sign to convince people.
2. The Resurrection is the undeniable certification that Jesus was sent from God.

Romans 1:3-4 [NASB] . . . His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared (appointed, NIV) the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead . . . (Cf. Deuteronomy 13)

3. The Resurrection is central to our faith in God's salvation (next slide).

THE RESURRECTION IN SALVATION

The Resurrection plays an essential role in our personal faith in each phase of salvation:

1. **Justification** Romans 4:25—He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.
2. **Sanctification** Romans 8:11—And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.
3. **Glorification** 1 Corinthians 15:49—And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man

REFERENCES

1. Carson, D.A. *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to John*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.
2. Edwards W.D. et al. "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association* Vol. 255, No. 11, 1986, pp. 1455-1463.
3. Köstenberger, Andreas J. and Scott R. Swain. *Father, Son and Spirit: the Trinity and John's Gospel*. Inter-Varsity Press, 2008.
4. Kruse, Colin G. *Tyndale New Testament Commentary: John*. IVP Academic, 2011.
5. Metzger, Bruce M. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*, 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press, 1968.
6. Wallace, J. Warner. *Cold-case Christianity*. David C. Cook, 2013.