

TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY
August 2003

Topic: The Gospel of John 1: 1 - 34 The Context

Why study the Gospel of John? Well, historically and theologically it comes next. According to historical studies--which are numerous--Mark is the first Gospel written, and is the foundation on which we build our experience of the Good News: Jesus Christ is the Messiah (a Jewish understanding). Mark explores Jesus' mission and purpose. This mission was to get to Jerusalem and to jump on the cross.

Now the "mission" changes. John's gospel is a heavy theological statement with an emphasis on "The Word" or The Logos. Where Mark is written with a Jewish context, John is written in a Greek context. John's audience are Jews living in diaspora; i.e., those living in a Roman controlled world outside of Israel, but who live and think and believe within a Greek culture.

Later, our third study will be Matthew whose approach is more Jewish. Our fourth and fifth studies will be Luke/Acts. The latter are always studied together because of a common purpose.

I. Read the assigned verses in one setting: John 1: 1 - 18

II. vss. 1: 1 and 2

These 24 words (in the NIV) form the foundation of all modern studies of Christ (Christology). I am particularly fond of this beginning because it places the study of Christian theology as creation centered. The study of theology can begin in several places: Christmas (Incarnational--God made flesh), Easter (Resurrectional), and Creation (Creational). The difficult problem for theology to solve concerns "our human nature." Creation based theology uses the myth of Creation (Genesis 1), and the myth of The Fall (Genesis 2 through 11) to explain why humans are so--well---human.

Concerning the chart -

When the chart is published (soon, I hope), my overall title for this entire gospel is "THE WORD AS JESUS THE CHRIST." The first section I've titled "Illuminating the "Word" made Flesh" (vss. 1:1 to 6:24). The sub-section that includes our session today is titled "Signs that the 'Word' is made flesh." (1:1 to 3:21).

Finally, our first two studies are:

This week: Read John 1: 1 - 18 as The Context for the entire gospel. This includes John 1: 19 - 34 to cover John the Baptist's denial he is the Logos, and his affirmation that Jesus, the Lamb of God, is the Logos.

With these things in mind, please turn your attention to the following:

Vss. 1: 1 and 2 -

These brief words are among the most familiar in the entire Bible. However, they are heavy with "head trip" stuff. We begin by taking a few minutes to establish a "gut trip

analysis.” Take each of these ideas and re-ground them in your human experience. Avoid talking about these words as understandings. First, push yourself to identify your experience of them, and then you will automatically know what they mean.

In the beginning was the Word - This term is translated from the Greek Word Logos. This whole beginning reminds us that John uses a Greek context for his gospel. Do some research on the context of John’s gospel and grasp the importance of what this means for our study. To refresh your mind, turn to Genesis 1 and note what God used to create.

. . .and the Word was with God - Next, take time to review your experience of the term “G-O-D.” My definitions for God are “The Perfect At-One-Ment,” “The Meaningfulness,” and “The Guarantor.” I like these words because they are grounded in our human experience.

. . .and the Word was God - Note in Genesis 1: 26 the use of the words, “Then God said, ‘Let US make man in OUR image, in -OUR likeness. . . “ Who is the “US” and “OUR” that is used here? Many theologians assume the duality of God referred to is God and The Logos. Later on the Holy Spirit gets into the picture too, and it can be assumed that these words refer to the presence of all three. This is one basis for Christians being “Trinitarians.”

With this background in mind, read/study the rest of the assignment to see how John uses this information. In particular, note the use of the word LIGHT - this is a common Greek figure of speech. Then, note the introduction of John The Baptist.

Speculate on why John uses John the baptizer to defend his context. The next verses 1: 15 - 34 depend on your answer.