

Lesson 5: John's Gospel – Prologue Part IV

Review: Themes/Items to Watch For

1. Cosmic, “Spiritual/Mystical” Gospel: Jesus is Sent from God, Bringing the Heavenly Down, and then Returns
2. The Heavenly is Salvation as Revelation of the Truth (7s – Signs, I Am statements, etc.)
3. Truth→Cosmic Trial – and Reversal: Jesus Vindicated, All Others Convicted
4. Salvation involves Individual Belief in Jesus the Truth and a Relationship of Love & Friendship with Jesus and One's Fellow Disciples
5. This Coming Down is the Descent of a Glory that Ultimately Includes the Cross
6. In this, Christ IS the Life of all AS the Way to God, Truth, Glory, and Love
7. The Life, Glory, and Love Jesus thus shares with Us is grounded in Life, Glory, and Love He Shares with the Father and the Spirit from Eternity (i.e., in the Triune Life itself)

Review: Structure of the Gospel

- **Revelation-Drama** (Jn 1-12)
 - **Prologue:** Jesus, the Word Made Flesh (Jn 1:1-18)
 - **Act 1:** Messiah's Signs and Rejection by “His Own” (Jn 1:12-12:50) – Sign-Drama
- **Love-Drama** (Jn 13-21)
 - **Act 2:** The Messiah's Passion and Preparation of “His Own” (Jn 13:1-20:31) – the Cross-and-Resurrection Drama
 - **Epilogue:** Final Resurrection Appearance and Commissioning of Peter and John

Review Prologue: Opening Notes (Weinrich, 83)

- Like the Overture to an Opera; also a personal confession of what was witnessed
- Three clear sections: 1-5, 6-13, 14-18 with parallels between 1-5 and 14-18 (on Word)

Read the Prologue, Jn 1:1-18

Turn to Prologue Section 3, 1:14-18. Re-Read JUST v. 14.

- So what are we back to? [Word → parallel and expand on vv.1-5]
- However, key OT references for vv.1-5 were Genesis and Creation.
- **Q:** What are the key references implicit in v.14?
 - “Made his dwelling” is literally “pitched his tent” (skēnō, in Greek)→ Key reference: Tabernacle (and then Temple)
 - God's Glory – present in the Tabernacle and Temple.
- **Q:** Suggests what?

- [Answer: A theme we will see John expand upon quite soon: Jesus as the New and Fulfilled Temple!]
- Also, a connection to something earlier in Jn 1 – “to those who believe in his NAME” (v.12). The “Name” of God was also frequently said to DWELL in the Temple, making it synonymous with the presence and glory of God as such (see Dt 12:5,11; 14:23; 16:2,6,11; Jer 7:12, Neh 1:9).
 - “Believe in His NAME” thus begins to gather meaning as “believe in [this One Who is God’s Glory, present and dwelling in Jesus of Nazareth]”
 - Continue to watch for what else John will add to Jesus “Name”
- Glory. “We have seen his glory.” What exactly IS “glory”?
 - Greek – fame, renown, recognition (“doxa” – literally and most basically, “opinion”; here, implicitly, “high opinion”)
 - Hebrew – kabod; also has fame, renown, recognition; but ADDS
 - “Visible Manifestation”
 - “Weight” – verb, kabad, is “to be heavy” – a “weighty *presence*” that is not just visible but takes up space and affects things
 - Key Examples and Connections
 - Now we know, in the Tabernacle and Temple. But earlier: Ex 24:16-17
 “¹⁶The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.”
 - **Q:** So what did the “glory” look like? [devouring fire]
 - Note also the next verse, v.18: “¹⁸Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain.”
 - **Q:** Can you imagine that? Walking into a “devouring fire”? Can you imagine being the people seeing it? What do you think THEY thought?
 - **Q:** But also, what other event might this descent of a “devouring fire” recall for Moses?
 - The Burning Bush – Ex. 3
 - **Q:** And what did he know from the burning bush that the rest of the people had not yet seen and learned?

- God is devouring fire that yet does not consume (burn out, destroy)
- **Note:** again, this glory is the Presence of God DWELLING on Mt. Sinai
 - Note the parallels to the Johannine language of dwelling
 - Again, “Presence” especially captures kabod as “weight” – not just visible but “takes up space and affects things”
- Back to the Tabernacle and Temple
 - God continues to come down multiple times, especially in the tabernacle, to “SHOW his glory” to the people.
 - Draws lines of CONTINUITY from Sinai to Tabernacle and Temple
 - God CONTINUES to be present.
 - Also, frequently comes down in order to give Moses “further laws” – connects and extends specific purpose of Sinai.
 - Also attaches to “blessing the people” (e.g. Lev. 9:23).
 - But ALSO, a point I had not noticed before: frequently, when the glory “comes down” at the Tent of Meeting, it is in the midst of a conflict between the people and Moses and/or Aaron (Nu 14, 16, 20). Here, the glory descends to defend God’s true prophet and priest, the Word he speaks through them, and their authority. Glory→Word connection (also with promulgation of laws, extending “Torah”)
- Furthermore, in multiple passages, glory is associated with *beauty*, either of God or his people and their leaders
 - God
 - Ps 27:4 and 96:6-9 associate beauty with that Presence of the Lord in the Tabernacle & Temple, while Ps 19:1 says the heavens themselves declare the glory of the Lord
 - Further connection: Genesis uses words from the Temple to describe Creation, indicating Creation was originally made to BE a/the Temple; vice versa, the Temple is decorated with elements of creation (trees, pomegranates, etc), indicating it is the true restoration of creation as worship
 - The People
 - Ex 28:2 “And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.”

- God directly “upon” the people
 - Isaiah 28:5 says that the Lord IS a “crown of glory and a diadem of beauty” to his people
- Beauty - “Light” connection / light-side of glory
- **Q:** Put all that together - what does all this mean for JESUS, as John connects *Him* to God’s glory in v.14?
 - Fulfillment of the *presence* of God
 - A consuming fire – take all that you are, convict you when wrong (one side of law)
 - Is also light and beauty that gives warmth, blessing, and guidance (Gospel; other side, law)
 - He also “intervenes” against our enemies, vindicating God’s Word – and us, as long as we are aligned with it!
 - Remember, John’s Gospel has no singular transfiguration account. Look at everything that happens in the Gospel, esp. the Cross, to define GLORY.

V.15 – “¹⁵ (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he WAS before me.’”)

- **Q:** According to this verse, why does Jesus have the higher rank?
 - [Ans: He WAS before John – pre-existence of Son]
- Interesting sidebar:
 - “He who comes after me” – a standard way of referring to a disciple, one who “comes after,” that is, “follows” the master.
 - Some commentators: an indication that Jesus actually was a disciple of John for a time. **Q:** What do you think of that proposal?
 - Possible validity - during that time when he was fulfilling his human nature by “growing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). Nothing wrong with being fully and truly human.
 - At the same time, no other evidence, and mere suggestion of a phrase is not super strong. Should not take as DEFINITELY so, or put much weight on that idea as the basis for other claims.
- As we will see in a minute, vv.16-18 continue on with the theme of glory. So why not just jump to that? What is the BENEFIT of inserting this parenthetical on John?
 - V. 14 – “we have seen his glory”
 - V.15 – look, here is one who has: John! It’s evidence for v.14.

- Even more, it makes the point that what John the Baptist saw was not JUST Jesus's status as the Messiah and Savior (lamb of God); rather, he saw Jesus's divinity, his pre-existence and his divine glory.
- It also underscores that this witness was given already from the start of Jesus's ministry, and not just by the apostles after it. So those who were called to believe among Jesus's contemporaries, to fall on the right side of that dividing line, already had the evidence (witness) to do so

What summary points, then, do we take away for our lives in Christ this week?

- Across time, God's plan was for his glory to dwell HERE with us, his people. This happened in selective ways in the burning bush, on Sinai, and in the Tabernacle-Temple. But it's pre-eminent fulfillment has arrived for us in Jesus.
 - God's glory is renown and beauty but also a "weighty presence" in our lives and world. It is not ephemeral or merely conceptual or aesthetic. It is truly "down to earth." It takes up space and affects things.
 - To understand the true form and shape of glory we must look to Christ – and thus to things the world does not consider glorious – like the cross, humility, suffering and sacrifice, etc. But also, note that while this is culminating note for John, his point is that the WHOLE of Christ's life is a revelation of God's glory. So look at EVERYTHING Jesus is and does across this Gospel for all the FACETS of glory.
- Attend to the witnesses, especially the EYE-witnesses – from John the Baptist to the apostles, there are those who actually got to SEE this glory face to face. So listen to them.
- At the same time, remember that the Son is the culmination that outranks them all as the Eternal God who "was" before them all. As the Father says on the Mount of Transfiguration – listen *to Him!*