

“Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?”:

Understanding the Different Portraits of Jesus in the Gospels

Lecture 5:

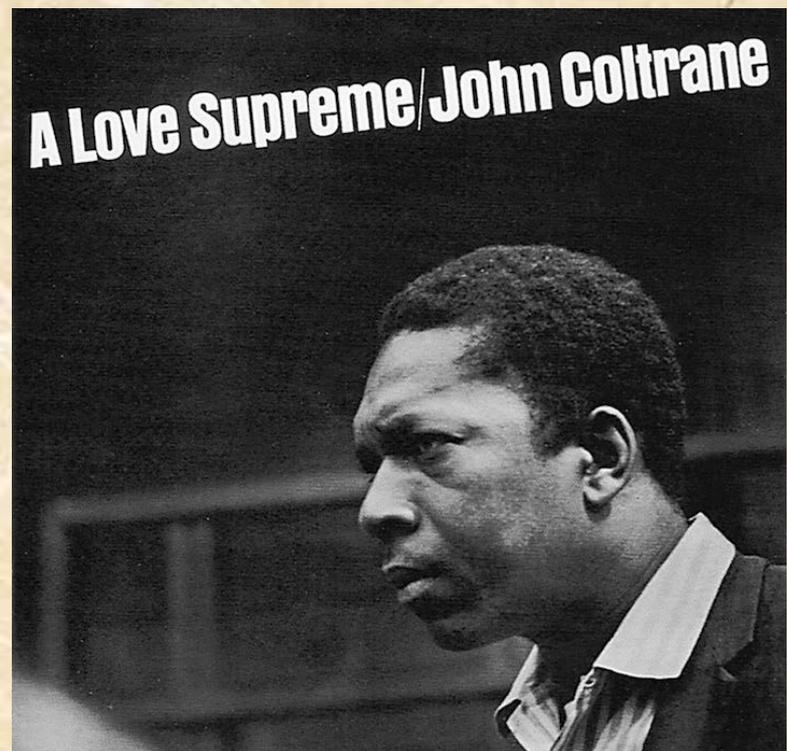
John’s Jesus: The Word Made Flesh

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Oblate School of Theology

Sept. 25, Oct 2, 9, 16, 23, 2017



John Coltrane saw the album-length suite **A Love Supreme** as his gift to God. The world has come to see it as a classic — not only Coltrane's best known work, but one of the most important and influential jazz records ever made.

- 1 > **Part 1 — Acknowledgement 7:43**
- 2 > **Part 2 — Resolution 7:20**
- 3 > **Part 3 — Pursuance / 4 > Part 4 — Psalm 10:42/7:05**

John Coltrane (tenor saxophone); **McCoy Tyner** (piano);
Jimmy Garrison (bass); **Elvin Jones** (drums).

Recorded December 1964 at Van Gelder Recording Studio, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Original recordings produced by **Bob Thiele**
Original recordings engineered by Rudy Van Gelder
Original-LP cover photograph by Bob Thiele

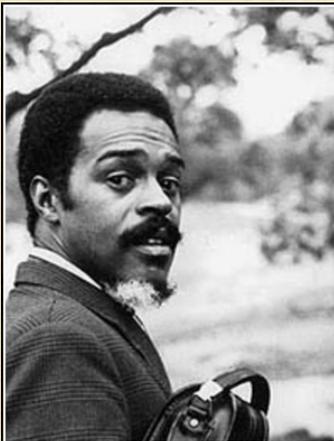
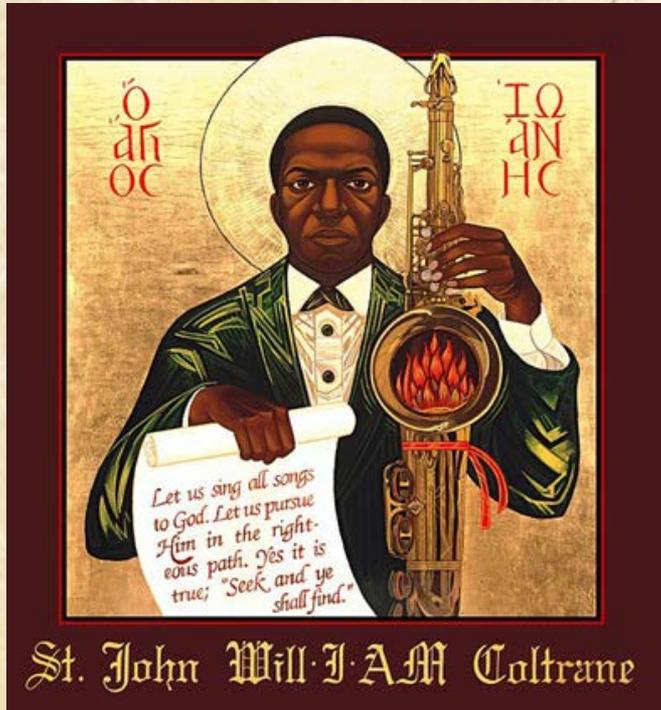
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John [Coltrane] was like a visitor to this planet. He came in peace and he left in peace; but during his time here, he kept trying to reach new levels of awareness, of peace, of spirituality. That's why I regard the music he played as spiritual music -- John's way of getting closer and closer to the Creator.

— Albert Ayler —

AZ QUOTES

Purpose of the Series

Series Description: Explore how the writers of the four canonical Gospels ‘tailor’ their portrait of Jesus in order to meet the **pastoral** needs of their particular **communities**. Gaining insight into how each of the Gospels tells the story of Jesus for a particular community not only assists us in becoming better readers of the Gospels but offers new opportunities for enhancing **our** faith in Jesus the Christ.”

The “So-What?”: Appreciating the True Nature of the Gospels’

(1) literary **wholeness** vs. proof-texting, “pericopizing,” harmonizing

(2) **pastoral** intent vs. **doctrinal** (who/what Jesus is?) and ethical focus (What does Jesus want us to do?)

(3) ability to address “our” **communal**-corporate vs. “my” **individual**

(4) focus on **this-worldly life** “political,” “On Earth as it is in Heaven” vs. **other-worldly**, “spiritualized,” “I came down from Heaven...everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him [on] the last day.” (Jn 6:38-40)

Exegetical Approach to the Gospels: Community-Contextual Reconstruction

Q: How does one account for the differences in the Gospels?

A: (hypothesis): They are written/“tailored” in order to meet the **pastoral** needs/issues for a particular **communities**.

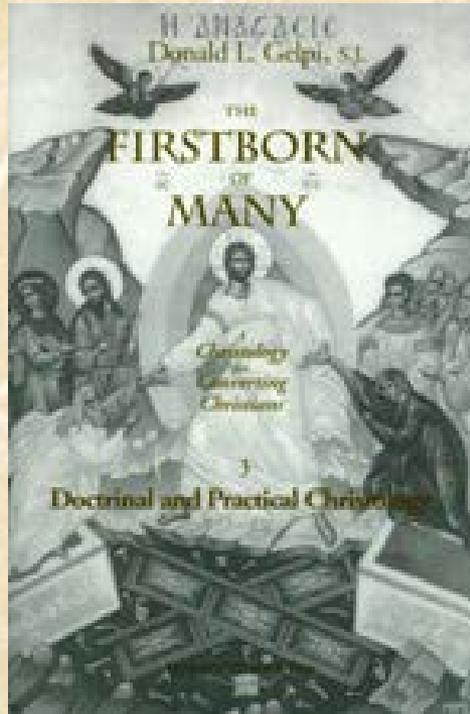
Interpretation Maxim: “A **text** w/out a **context** is pretext for a **proof text**”

Three “Worlds” of a Text (Paul Ricoeur via Sandra Schneiders):

1. World **Behind** the Text = Original Context (e.g. ancient historiography, archeology, 2nd Temple Judaism, **ancient Greek thought**, historical Jesus)
2. World **of** the Text = Literary devices (**symbolism**, foreshadowing, parables, **chiasms**, **irony**, diptychs, **inclusions**, metaphor, dramatic linkages)
3. World **in front of** the Text = Our Context (socio-political, historical, and cultural realities and issues, no so much autobiographical/individual)

Exegetical Source Materials for John

Gelpi, Donald L., *The Firstborn of Many: A Christology for Converting Christians*, vol 3: *Doctrinal and Practical Christology* (Marquette UP, 2000)

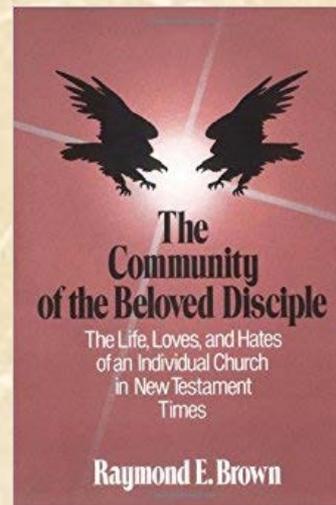
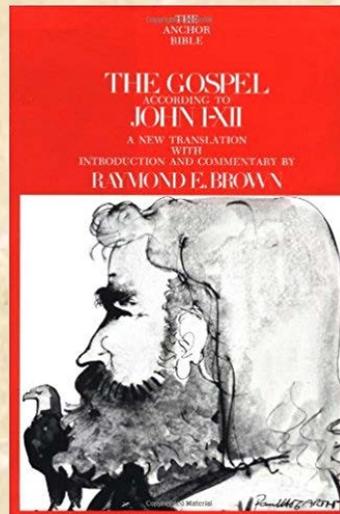
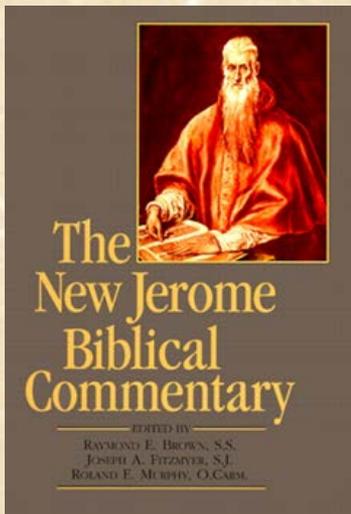


Exegetical Sources Materials for John

Brown, Raymond, et al, eds. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (1990)

-----*The Gospel According to John, 2 Vols.* (Anchor 1966, 1970)

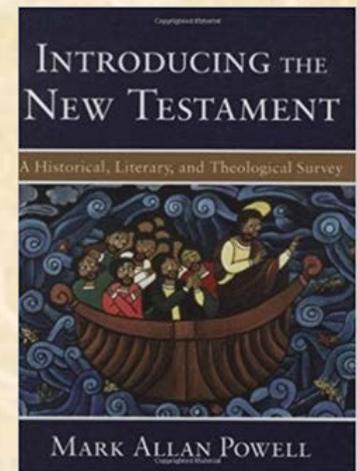
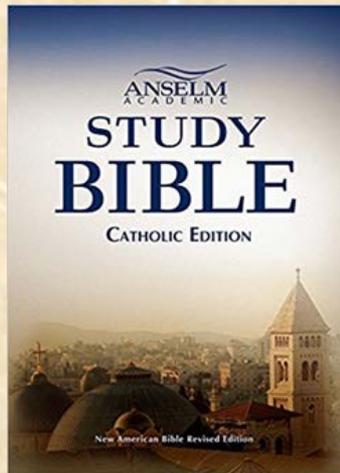
-----*The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (Paulist, 1978)



Exegetical Source Material for John

Osiek, Carolyn, ed. *Anselm Study Bible* [NAB, RE] (Anselm Academic, 2013)

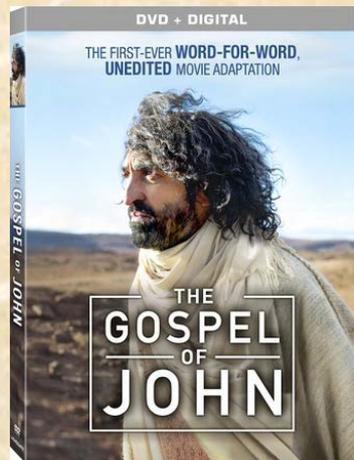
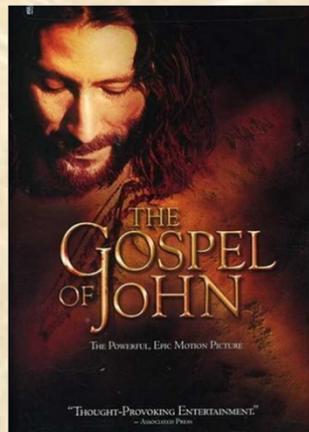
Powell, Mark Allan. *Introduction to the New Testament: Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* (Baker, 2009)



The Popularity of John



Main Building/Tower at UT-Austin (8:32)



Gospels Popularity Poll: John rank #1 behind Luke, Matthew, and (poor) Mark



Sporting Event w/out 3:16?

2 word-for-word movie version:
2013 and 2014

The Popularity of John: The Ubiquity of John 3:16



From Synoptics to John: Radical Changes

- **90%** no // w/Synoptics; 10% = told/ordered different
- Chronology: 1 yr → **3 yrs**; Geography: Galilee → **Judea**
- Jesus' teaching (style and content): KOG = parables, pronouncements, enactments → **Unity Discourses** = long, repetitive, **philosophical** discourses
- “miracles” / *dynamis* (“acts of power”) → **signs** / *semeion*
- metaphor and allegory → rich **symbolism** (x7 “I AM”, bread, water, wine/blood) & **irony** (blind “see” vs. see “blind”)
- faith: hearing & following → **seeing** and acknowledging
- miraculous birth → **pre-existent** Logos (x1 in all NT)
- love enemies/neighbor → **“love one another”**
- Cross: Suffering → **Exaltation** = The **Glory** of the Father (“lifted up”)

John's "No" to the Synoptics

- No stories of Jesus' birth
- No mention of Jesus' baptism
- Nothing about Jesus being tempted or tested by Satan
- No mention of Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners
- No transfiguration of Jesus
- No parables
- No exorcisms
- No condemnations of the rich or words about helping the poor
- Nothing about loving one's neighbor (or one's enemy)
- No call for people to repent (from either John the Baptist or Jesus)
- No call for disciples to deny themselves or renounce their possessions
- No predictions of Jerusalem's downfall (but cf. 2:19–22)
- No mention of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper (but cf. 6:53–56)
- Almost no mention of the kingdom of God (only in 3:3–5; but cf. 18:36)
- Almost no references to a second coming (x1: 21:22–23; John 14:3, 18, 28) are usually read as Jesus coming for individuals at the hour of their death)

Unique Themes & Elements in John

- Beloved Disciple = historical figure/model of ideal **believer**
- **forensic** or “trial”/courtroom drama : 3 +1 witnesses
- **misunderstanding** & incremental revelation (Nicodemus, Man Born Blind, Samaritan Woman)
- “the **Jews**” = (71x) (a) Jewish synagogue rejection (external) and (b) proto- **Gnostic** Gentile dissidents (internal)
- intellectual (unbelief) & moral (hostile) **dualism**: light v. dark
- HS = Paraclete = (a) advocate, (b) comforter, (c) **witness**
- hebdomatal patterns (**7** days = 1 week = fullness of Creation); 7 Signs, 7 feasts, 2 weeks (Galilee & Jerusalem)
- connection to the 3 Johannine **Epistles** (post dissidents?)
- salvation = “light and life” // “**Priestly**” Creation in Gen.

Unique Elements in John: The Beloved Disciple

- leans on Jesus' chest at the Last Supper (13:23)
- intermediary between Peter and Jesus (13:24–25)
- gains admittance for Peter to Pilate's court (18:15–16)
- entrusted with care of Jesus' mother (19:26–27)
- witness to blood & water from Jesus' side (19:34–35)
- outruns Peter to the tomb on Easter morning (20:4)
- first to believe in the resurrection (20:8)
- identifies the risen Jesus for Peter (21:7)
- fate should not be a matter of concern for Peter (21:21)
- wrote down these things; his testimony is true (21:24)

Unique Elements in John

- calling of Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael (1:35–51)
- changing of water into wine at Cana (2:1–12)
- conversation with Nicodemus (3:1–21)
- encounter with Samaritan woman at a well (4:1–42)
- healing of a crippled man at Pool of Bethesda (5:1–18)
- rescue of adulterous woman from stoning (7:53–8:11)
- healing of a man born blind (9:1–41)
- raising of Lazarus (11:1–44)
- washing of disciples' feet (13:1–20)
- prayer for believers to be united (17:1–26)
- resurrection appearance to Thomas (20:24–29)

Outline of the Gospel of John: Two Books in One

Prologue [Jn 1:1-18]; Witness of John the Baptist; Call of the First Disciples (7 days)

I. The Book of “Signs” [2 – 12] (7 Signs)

1st Sign: Water into Wine at Wedding in Cana

Meeting with Nicodemus (3:1-21)

Meeting with Samaritan Woman (4:1-42) ***longest***

2nd Sign: Cure from a Distance at Cana

3rd Sign: Cure on the Sabbath

1st Discourse: Sabbath Cure

4th Sign: Multiplication of Loaves/Walking on the Water

2nd Discourse: Bread of Life

3rd Discourse: Feast of Tabernacles

5th Sign: Cure of the Man Born Blind

4th Discourse: Feast of Dedication

6th Sign: Raising of Lazarus

II. The Book of Glory [13 –20] (7 Days)

5th Discourse: Last Discourse (13-17) *longest*****

Passion of Jesus (18 – 19:30) ***Crucifixion chiasmic***

7th Sign: Blood and Water

Resurrection of Jesus (20-21)

Epilogue [21]; Rehabilitation of Peter

John's Community: Call to Love/Unity in the Face of Factionalism

Historical Background:

Time: 90s – 110 CE (5th edition)

Place: origins in Palestine; final edition in Greco-Roman world

Community: diverse/"mixed" on the verge of **schism**:

- (1) former disciples of John the Baptist
- (2) Samaritans
- (3) Jews expelled from the synagogue
- (4) proto-**Gnostic** Gentiles

Major Themes in John (Powell)

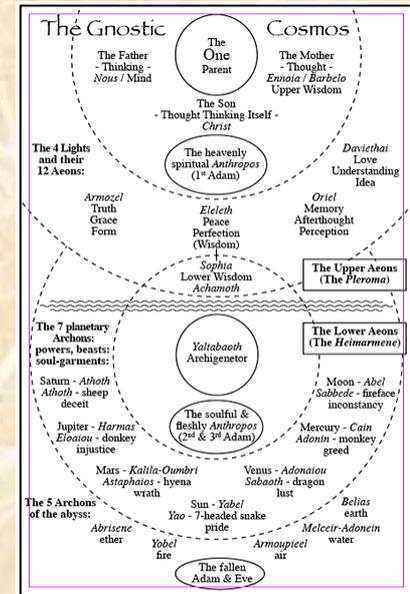
1. Jesus as the True Revelation of God
2. Jesus' Crucifixion as his Glorification
3. Salvation as Abundant Life
4. Loving Jesus and Abiding in Christ
5. The Paraclete
6. "The World" and "the Jews"
7. Loving One Another



The Make-up of John's Community: proto-Gnostic Gentile Dissidents

Q: What is Gnosticism?

- *gnōsis* = Gk. “knowledge” qua inner enlightenment = “see” the “world” as it truly is
- knowledge = not public (objective) but private/esoteric (subjective)
- the “mother” of Christian heresy = 1/x = 1
- later Hellenism = mystery/mystical cults rejection of Gk. philosophical rationalism
- complex and fanciful syncretic mythology/cosmology
- decadence/decline of Greco-Roman culture



The Make-up of John's Community: proto-Gnostic Gentile Dissidents

(1) disillusioned Platonism = spirit/matter dualism (>/<) → moral dualism (+/-)

(2) 2 “gods” = Transcendent God of **Spirit** (NT) vs. Demiurge God Creator (OT)

(3) humans =

(a) spirit = “spark of divinity” who “Fall” into the material/created bodies

(b) spirits imprisoned/trapped in bodies → escape the body

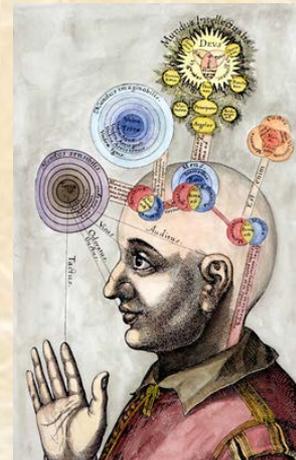
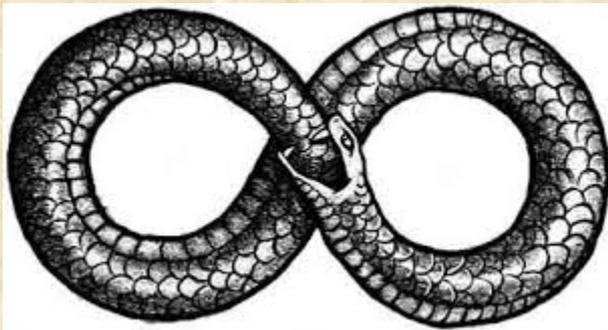
(c) two responses: extreme asceticism or hedonism

(4) salvation =

(a) having the correct ideas (**orthodoxy**) *alone* saves you (2nd person sing.)

(b) insiders/outside; **light/dark**; enlightened vs. unenlightened

(c) sectarian, “wanna-be”/frustrated elitists



The Temptations the Johannine Community: Threat of Factionalism and the “Docetic” Jesus

--Pretend you are a member of a highly diverse and mixed community of believers in Jesus the Christ:

- (1) former disciples of John the Baptist
- (2) Samaritans
- (3) Jews expelled from the synagogue
- (4) Gentiles who have gnostic tendencies

--Each group brings their particular understanding (*gnōsis*) of how to understand Jesus and salvation. And while each contingent clings fiercely to its own particular and often divergent and clashing POVs on Jesus, the growing Gentile group has become the most vocal, obstinate, and hostile toward the others in insisting that Jesus was not really a human but only “appeared” (*dokeo*) to be human.

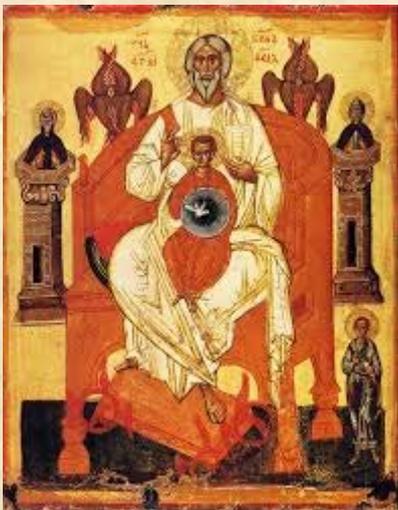
--The mounting contempt/mutual hatred is reaching a breaking point and the community verges on schism.

Q: What kind of Gospel do you write that both (a) counter the gnostic understanding of Jesus while (b) united the community in such a way that saves it from self-destruction?

John's Strategy: Jesus = The Logos Made Flesh

A1: Create a depiction of Jesus as that looks “attractive” to the gnostic Gentile dissidents’ sensibilities (the **Word/Logos**) while wholeheartedly rejecting their gnostic worldview/belief system that deny the true humanity of Jesus (**flesh**). In other words, **co-opt** their language/modes of thinking in order to **subvert** it.

A2: Create a depiction of Jesus stressing His ontological **unity** with the Father that becomes the central way to know (*gnōsis*) and belief in Jesus and consequently relate to Him and each other through the central idea of **love** or **mutual indwelling** (*perichoresis*)



John's Pro-Gnostic and Anti-Gnostic Jesus

4 Core Assertions in John:

- (1) Incarnation: pre-existent spiritual reality (Logos) become flesh and blood
- (2) Eucharist “Real Presence”: means of spiritual communion with the divine through a material reality
- (3) Crucifixion as Glorification and Salvation: ultimate insult to the human spirit as the splendor of God and spiritually salvific
- (4) Resurrection: a “spiritual body,” trans-physical

John's Pro-Gnostic and Anti-Gnostic Jesus: The Hymnic Prologue

In the **beginning** was the Word (**Logos**),
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.

All **things** came to be **through** him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him was **life**,
and this life was the **light** of the human race;
the light shines in the **darkness**,
and the darkness has not overcome it.

A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to **testify** to the light, so that all might **believe**
through him. He was **not** the light, but came to testify to the light.
The true light, which **enlightens** everyone, was coming into the **world**.
He was in the world, and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not **know** him.

John's Pro-Gnostic and Anti-Gnostic Jesus: The Hymnic Prologue

He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by **natural generation** nor by human **choice** nor by a man's decision but of God.

And the Word became **flesh**
and made his **dwelling** among us,
and we saw his **glory**,
the glory as of the Father's **only** Son,
full of grace and **truth**.

λόγος

John's Pro-Gnostic and Anti-Gnostic Jesus Symbolism: Spiritual yet Earthly

(1) "I AM" Statements: (7!)

"I am the bread of life" (6:35, 51)

"I am the light of the world" (8:12; 9:5)

"I am the door" (10:7, 9)

"I am the good shepherd" (10:11, 14)

"I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25)

"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6)

"I am the true vine" (15:1, 5)

(2) Other "Sacramental" Symbolism: Body and Blood

water (3:5; 4:10–15; 5:2–7; 7:37–39; 9:7; 13:3–10; 19:34)

bread (6:5–13, 28–58; 21:9–13)

wine (2:1–10; 6:53–56)

(3) Healings: Spiritually Symbolic But Actually Physical

Man Born Blind—saliva & clay

Lazarus—stench and bodily resuscitation

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John's Pro-Gnostic and Anti-Gnostic Jesus

“Seeing” = “Believing”

- Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we **have seen**; yet you do not receive our testimony. / If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? (3:11-12)
- “Unless you **see** signs and wonders you will not believe” (4:48)
- “You have **seen** me and yet do not believe” (6:36)
- Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will **see** greater things than these.” (1:50)
- Jesus said to her [Martha], “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would **see** the glory of God?” (11:40)
- “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have **seen** the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.” (20:18)
- So the other disciples told him [Thomas], “We have **seen** the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I **see** the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my **finger** in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” (20:25b)
- Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have **seen** me? Blessed are those who have not **seen** and yet have come to believe.” (20:29)

John's Strategy

Oneness/Unity in Love: Jesus and the Father

--In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **with** God, and the Word was God. (1:1)

--Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He **sees** the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also **does** in like manner. (5:19)

---"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the **will** of Him who sent Me." (6:38)

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. (6:44)

--"I and the Father are **one**." (10:30)

--"Even as the Father **knows** Me and I **know** the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. (10:15)

"If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." (14:28)

--"If you keep My commandments, you will **abide** in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and **abide** in His love. (15:10)

--"I came forth **from** the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and **going** to the Father." (16:28)

John's Strategy

Oneness/Unity in Love: Jesus and Believers

“I am the true **vine**, and my Father is the **vine grower**. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. **Remain** in me, as I **remain** in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the **branches**. Whoever **remains** in me and I in him will bear much **fruit**, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not **remain** in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you **remain** in me and my words **remain** in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also **love** you. **Remain in my love**. If you keep my commandments, you will **remain** in my **love**, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his **love**. “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: **love** one another as I **love** you. No one has greater **love** than this to lay down one's life for one's friends.” You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will **remain**, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you. This I command you: **love** one another (15: 1-17)

John's Strategy

Oneness/Unity in Love: Jesus and Believers

“I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be **one**, as you, Father, are **in** me and I **in** you, that they also may be **in** us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be **one**, as we are **one**, I in them and you **in** me, that they may be brought to perfection as **one**, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you **loved** them even as you **loved** me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be **with** me, that they may **see** my glory that you gave me, because you **loved** me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not **know** you, but I **know** you, and they **know** that you sent me. I made **known** to them your name and I will make it **known**, that the **love** with which you **loved** me may be **in** them and I **in** them.” (17:20-26)

**Q: Where (i.e. what contexts) might
the Gospel of John “speak” today?**