

John Overview

- a. **Author**
- b. **Audience**
- c. **Date**

The Portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of John**1. Images of Jesus in John** (Borchert, pp 129-60)**a. The _____****b. The “I _____”**

- 1) Bread of Life (6:35, 41, 48, 51)
- 2) Light of the World (8:12, 9:5)
- 3) Gate (10:7, 9)
- 4) Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
- 5) Resurrection and Life (11:25)
- 6) The Way and the Truth and the Life (14:6)
- 7) True Vine (15:1, 5)

c. The _____

- 1) Another Counselor / Spirit of Truth (14:15-18)
- 2) Teacher / Peace-giver (14:26-27)
- 3) Truth / Witness (15:26-27)
- 4) Judge (16:7-11)
- 5) Glorifier / Guide (16:14-15)

2. Questions for Reflection (Borchert, p 160)

- a. Since there seem to be a number of delineations, sketches, or poses in the portrait of Jesus presented by John, which ones are the most encompassing? Which ones appeal to your mindset the most? Why?
- b. How does the death and resurrection of Jesus fit into your primary sketches of Jesus? How does Jesus' relationship with the Father fit into these sketches? What about the Holy Spirit?
- c. Why do you think John goes back to the creation event to portray Jesus for his readers?
- d. What descriptors would you choose to describe the Christian's relationship with Jesus?
- e. How does Dr. Borchert's organization of this Gospel with two introductions, three cycles, and two story lines (death and resurrection) affect your developing an overall portrait of Jesus?
- f. Why do you think Borchert regards the Johannine Gospel as the climactic book in the New Testament? To what extent do you agree? Disagree?

Homework

1. Read the Book of Revelation at least once and in one-sitting, if possible.
2. Read Borchert chapter 6, pp 160-79.
3. Think about your response to the *Questions for Reflection* on p 179.
 - a. After reading the author's analysis of the Gospel of John and Revelation, do you think that the portraits of Jesus in both books might be related? Could one author have possibly written two such different books? Explain the reason(s) for your view.
 - b. What pictures of Jesus are the most captivating for you? Why?
 - c. What pictures of Jesus do you find the most unlikeable? the most encompassing?
 - d. How would you evaluate Dr. Borchert's organization of the book of Revelation? Is it helpful?
 - e. How did you react to the way he treated the Seven Churches of Revelation?
 - f. What is your opinion of the way he handled the issue of the millennium?
 - g. What did you think of this author's treatment of Revelation as a dramatic presentation? Have you been able to recognize its dramatic features?
 - h. Are you comfortable with the idea of using your imagination to interpret the various sections of Revelation? Does such a methodology help or detract from your understanding of Scripture? Explain.
 - i. As you now reflect on the book of Revelation, how has this treatment of the book enabled you to read it with more (or less) confidence?
 - j. How does the treatment presented here compare with what you have heard/studied previously? With what you have experienced in church?
 - k. Finally, are you prepared to meet this Jesus *today*?

Portraits of Jesus

A Portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of John

A. John Overview

1. Author

- a. There is no named author.
- b. Authorship by “the disciple whom Jesus loved” as recorded in John 21:20-24.
- c. This disciple is traditionally the Apostle John.

2. Audience

- a. John 20:30-31 gives the writer’s clear purpose statement: “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.”
- b. Borchert summarizes, “. . . the reason for his writing is that his readers might believe that Jesus is God’s Son, the unquestioned Messianic messenger who was sent to bring *life* to all who believe and are committed to him. I would only add that this purpose statement could easily serve as an excellent rationale for the entire New Testament” (Borchert, 132).

3. Date

In regard to the date of all of the Johannine writings (i.e., 1, 2, 3 John, the Gospel of John, and Revelation), Borchert states, “Probably written in the closing decade of the first century of the birth of Jesus, these works provide vivid insights into how Christians envisioned and employed their portraits of Jesus in their struggles to survive during a period marked by the intense persecution of Jesus’ followers” (Borchert, 129).

B. The Portrait of Jesus in the Gospel of John

1. Images of Jesus in John (Borchert, pp 129-60)

Since there seem to be a number of delineations, sketches, or poses in the portrait of Jesus presented by John, which ones are the most encompassing? Which ones appeal to your mindset the most? Why?

“**Word**” (Gk., *logos*) (1:1(2x),14); “**the lamb of God**” (1:29,36); “**one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit**” (1:33); “**God’s Chosen One**” (1:34); “**Rabbi**” (1:38, 3:2, 4:31, 9:2, 11:8); “**Son of Man**” (3:13,14, 5:27, 6:27, 6:53, 6:62, 8:28, 9:35, 12:23, 12:34(2x), 13:31); “**Son of God**” (5:25, 11:4,27; 19:7, 20:31); “**the Prophet**” (6:14, 7:40, 9:17); “**I am**” (see below); “**the Holy One of God**” (6:69); “**Messiah**” (7:41, 11:27, 20:31); “**Teacher**” (Gk., *didaskolos*) (13:13); “**Lord**” (Gk., *kurios*); “**King of the Jews**” (18:33,39, 19:3,19,21(2x)); “**Rabboni**” (20:16).

a. **The *logos***

1) **Read John 1:1-18.**

- 2) Why do you think John goes back to the creation event to portray Jesus for his readers?
- 3) “John’s starting point, like that of Genesis, is the creation of the phenomenal universe in which we live. The existence of both God and Jesus, this eternal Son (here designated as the “Word”), is presupposed, and both have been active from the beginning of all of creation (John 1:1-2 and Gen 1:1)” (Borchert, 134).
- 4) In his analysis of John’s prologue, Borchert says, “. . . as John seeks to paint his portrait of Jesus, he used the term *logos* (“Word”) for this divine reality. But *logos* here is not merely a Greek philosophical personification as in Philo. The “Word” is John’s way of referring to the divine *persona* that became embodied or truly incarnated as a human (John 1:1 and 14) and whose name was “Jesus.” This Jesus was fully human and at the same time was divine (in the ‘bosom of the Father’). This Jesus accordingly was able to reveal God’s self to mortals (1:18). Moreover, John is fully aware that God is able to transform people so that they can follow their Lord and embody as humans some of the divinely given qualities of their living Lord. What then becomes clear in John is that just as Jesus abides in the Father (God) and is one with the Father, so Christians are expected to abide in Jesus (15:4-5)—even though they *never* become one with Jesus or the Father (namely, they never become divine)” (Borchert, 133).

b. **The “I Am”**

- 1) What descriptors would you choose to describe the Christian’s relationship with Jesus?
- 2) Borchert notes that John 6 “. . . opens with the only two signs (miracles) that appear in all four Gospels—Jesus’ feeding of the five thousand and his walking on water. The linking of these two miraculous events with Passover was undoubtedly regarded by John and the early Christians as a symbolic reminder of the Jewish exodus when God saved the people as (a) the death angel passed over the homes of the Israelites and then delivered them from the Egyptians through the miraculous control of the sea, and (b) thereafter God saved the people from starvation in the wilderness through the miraculous supplying of manna. . . . As Jesus approaches the frightened disciples, he identifies himself as ‘I am’ (*ego eimi*; often poorly translated) in John 6:20 (cf. Mark 6:50)! The theological implications of this *ego eimi* (‘I am’) statement in connection with the miraculous signs of feeding and the control of the sea in the context of Passover must have been almost overwhelming for John. For him, the combined picture of the God of Passover (Exod 11-12), the exodus (Exod 14-15), manna (Exod 16), and the burning bush of Moses (Exod 2:13-14) must have jumped out at him and seared his memory as he pondered the person of Jesus who had been in their midst” (Borchert, 138-39).
- 3) The Seven “I am” statements of Jesus in John’s gospel
 - 1) **Bread of Life** (6:35, 41, 48, 51)
 - a) Context: Feast of Passover – manna from I am
 - b) **Read John 6:35-51.**
 - 2) **Light of the World** (8:12, 9:5)
 - a) Context: Feast of Passover
 - b) **Read John 8:12-20.**
 - c) Note Jesus’ provocative uses of “I am” in John 8:24, 28, 58.
 - d) **Read John 9:1-6.**

- 3) **Gate** (10:7, 9)
 - a) Context: Feast of Dedication (Hanukah – cf., John 10:22)
 - b) **Read John 10:7-10.**
- 4) **Good Shepherd** (10:11, 14)
 - a) Context: Feast of Dedication (Hanukah – cf., John 10:22)
 - b) **Read John 10:11-18.**
- 5) **Resurrection and Life** (11:25)
 - a) Context: Feast of Passover – completing festival cycle
 - b) **Read John 11:17-27.**
 - c) Lazarus’ resurrection is the last of Jesus’ seven miracles recorded in John’s gospel, and it sets the stage for his final conflict with Jewish authorities.
 - i. Water to wine (2:1-11)
 - ii. Healing the Official’s Son (4:43-54)
 - iii. Healing Cripple at Pool of Bethesda (5:1-9)
 - iv. Feeding the 5,000 (6:1-5)
 - v. Walking on Water (6:16-25)
 - vi. Healing Man Born Blind (9:1-41)
 - vii. Raising Lazarus from Dead (11:1-44)
 - d) **Read John 11:45-53.**
- 6) **The Way and the Truth and the Life** (14:6)
 - a) Context: Final Passover Meal with his disciples
 - b) **Read John 14:1-14.**
- 7) **True Vine** (15:1, 5)
 - a) Context: Final Passover Meal with his disciples
 - b) This *mashal*/parable lies at the heart of the Farewell cycle of John.
 - c) **Read John 15:1-17.**
 - d) Borchert concludes, “[this is]one of the most profound pictures in the Bible—the *mashal* of the Vine and the branches (15:1-17). It is crucial to understand the relationships in this extended parable correctly. Remember that the *mashal* is a picture, so focus on the main relational points. Jesus is the Vine—the ‘I’ of the parable. Humans are the ‘you’—the branches. God is the farmer/gardener—the one who prunes or makes sure the authentic branches are healthy, properly pruned, and productive and that the non-productive branches are removed (15:1-2). The purpose of God is to maintain healthy, productive human branches that are the result of Jesus’ word/action (15:3) and that are properly attached to (abide in) the Vine (15:4) and therefore bear fruit (15:5). . . . it is crucial to recognize that at the core of this *mashal* is the love of God. The Father loved Jesus who in turn loved humans and expected humans to love him and be obedient to him just as he has always been obedient to the Father. This interrelationship of love and obedience between the Father, Jesus, and the disciples of Jesus is the key to this parable and indeed to the proper understanding of the entire Gospel (15:9-10)! The result is that disciples should experience the wonderful gift of God’s *joy* (15:11)” (Borchert, 151).

c. The Paraclete

- 1) What descriptors would you choose to describe the Christian's relationship with Jesus?
- 2) The Five Paraclete Sayings in John 14-16:
 - 1) **Another Counselor / Spirit of Truth – Read John 14:15-18.**
 - 2) **Teacher / Peace-giver – Read John 14:26-27.**
 - 3) **Truth / Witness – Read John 15:26-27.**
 - 4) **Judge – Read John 16:7-11.**
 - 5) **Glorifier / Guide – Read – John 16:14-15.**
- 3) Why do you think Borchert regards the Johannine Gospel as the climactic book in the New Testament? To what extent do you agree? Disagree?
- 4) Borchert states, "John refuses throughout his Gospel to use the nouns for 'knowledge' (*gnosis*) and 'faith' (*pistis*). Instead, he uses only the verbs for 'knowing' (*ginosko* and *oida*) and for 'believing' (*pisteuo*). The reason undoubtedly is that John is making a correction to misunderstandings of Paul and others concerning 'salvation' that were creeping into the church. It is not mere 'knowledge' or mere 'belief' that is the foundation of Christianity—a problem that still haunts the church today! Indeed, it is not 'what you know' or 'what you believe' that is strategic for Christianity. The focus should *not* be primarily on supplying information to people or making mere faith affirmations . . . It is 'who you know' and 'in whom you believe/put your trust' that is essential for Christian life. The focus must be one of putting into practice a living relationship ('walking') with the one in whom you believe or the one you know. . . . John also knows the danger of shifting from the verb *halak* ('walk') to the noun *halakah* (which became a commitment to rules and creeds)" (Borchert, 132-33).

C. Homework

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