

The Gospel According to...*John*, part 2

- I. **Prologue:** doesn't sound like Greco-Roman biography til verse 19.
- II. **John 3:16 The Rest of the Story-** *in Greek, in context*
 - a. Floating on the Surface: *the immediate context of Nicodemus and John 3:14*
 - b. Diving Deeper: *the background of Moses lifting up the snake in Number 21:4-9*
 - c. Pushing off from the Bottom of the Pool: *reading John 3:16 through the lens of 2 Kings 18:4*
- III. **Baptism** (John 3:22; 4:13)
 - a. **Paul Bradshaw**, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*
 - b. no standard/normative pattern of early initiation practice in primitive Christianity
 - c. renunciation and acts of faith, anointing, immersion, etc. took different forms and (Sometimes different meanings in various local/regional traditions)
 - d. Crossan: "John had a monopoly but Jesus had a franchise"
 - e. "heal the sick, eat with those you heal and announce the kingdom's presence in that mutuality"
- IV. **Jesus and other religions** (John 10:16; 14:6): Intra-community discussion, love language
 - a. Paul Knitter: Christianity contains *sufficient* truth for salvation, but not exclusive truth.
 - b. John Shelby Spong: I walk the Christ-path into the mystery of God, but God is not a Christian.
 - c. Huston Smith: Jesus defines who God is, but God is not confined to Jesus.
 - d. Marcus Borg: "Pre-Easter Jesus was not God, but God was the central reality of his life"
- V. **High/Low Christology in Translation** (John 12:41)
- VI. **Last words** (John 19)
- VII. **Priority of Beloved disciple** (John 20:4)

Johannine Epistles: 1-3 John

- Similar theology to the Gospel of John, but different writing styles
- 2-3 John two shortest books in NT
- All three to same community. But 1 John: open letter; 2 Jn: personal letter to community; 3 Jn: personal letter to an individual

The Historical Jesus

I. Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) - “how it actually was”

II. Pagan Sources: none in first century

- A. 112 CE - Letter from Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan
- B. c. 115 CE – Roman historian Suetonius write about riots started by “Chrestus”
- C. 115 CE – Roman historian Tacitus, *Annals*, “Chistus”

III. Jewish Sources

A. Josephus

1. *The Jewish War* – insider’s perspective on the Jewish War against Rome in 66-70 CE.
2. *Antiquities of the Jews* – 20-volume history of the Jews
 - a) “[James] the brother of Jesus who is called the messiah” (Ant. 20.9.1)
 - b) Ant. Book 18: Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man IF IT BE LAWFUL TO CALL HIM A MAN, for he was a doer of wonders, A TEACHER OF SUCH MEN AS RECEIVE THE TRUTH WITH PLEASURE. He drew many after him BOTH OF THE JEWS AND THE GENTILES. HE WAS THE CHRIST. When Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, FOR HE APPEARED TO THEM ALIVE AGAIN THE THIRD DAY, AS THE DIVINE PROPHETS HAD FORETOLD THESE AND THEN THOUSAND OTHER WONDERFUL THINGS ABOUT HIM, and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day (*Antiquities* 18:63-64).

IV. Christian Sources (1 Cor 11:23; 7:10, 9:14)

V. Evaluating Sources: Earlier = better; sophisticated = later; dissimilarity

VI. Jesus Seminar - Bob Funk (1985)

- A. 50% voted black; 30% gray; 20% pink or red; red vote for nothing in John

V. The Problem of Miracles

VI. Jesus in Context - most Jews belongs to “e” none of the above

- A. Pharisees – 6,000
- B. Essenes – 4,000
- C. Sadducees – fewer than other two, but influential beyond their numbers

--> Total Jewish Population ~ 3.5 million

D. Zealots –

VII. Contemporary Variance

- A. Catherine Keller, On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process: A man died. The people who knew him gathered to share memories. Finally, a portrait was commissioned. But as generations passed, the painting did not seem fine enough. The heirs of the portrait, who had become wealthy, created a new golden frame, immense, carved with motifs from the portrait and encrusted with jewels. People began to feel that the old portrait of that dark fellow with the haunting eyes pulled the effect down. As it began to peel from age, they extended the frame inward. One day the frame covered the whole canvas.
- B. Crossan: “historical Jesus research is becoming something of a scholarly bad joke...[b/c of] the number of competent and even eminent scholars producing pictures of Jesus at wide variance with one another”
- C. Twitter: “Somewhere between [Mel Gibson’s] ‘The Passion of the Christ’ and [Monty Python’s] ‘Life of Brian’ is the truth” of who Jesus actually was.
- D. Vampire Christianity: only wanting Jesus for his blood.
- E. **Violent death of God’s son**: “divine child abuse”
- F. “Death Tradition” Example: Nicene Creed (three centuries after Jesus’ life), “came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again.....” [What’s missing? Jesus’ life and teachings are a comma]
- G. Notice what is missing from that creed:! It skips straight from his birth to his crucifixion. In essence, as I’ve heard it sometimes said, the entire Life Tradition is squeezed into a **comma** in the Nicene Creed!
- H. John Mabry: “Rosa Parks is an imitator of Christ, not because she suffered for taking her stand (or keeping her seat, in her case), but because she had the courage to believe in her own dignity and fought for it in spite of the conflict that resulted. Nelson Mandela is an imitator of Christ, not because he suffered in prison, but because he held out for peace and justice, and led a nation to resurrection. In each case it is not the suffering that is redemptive, but the courage to pursue justice in the face of pain and evil.”