

“The Eagle’s Eye”: Class 1

Background to John’s Gospel

Introduction

“John, oh John,
Thou honourable bird,
Sun-peering eagle.
Taking a bird’s-eye view,
Even of Calvary and Resurrection.”
D H Laurance - “St John”

"In the other gospels, Jesus’ story takes place in the horizontal dimensions of the geography and history of Israel; John brings in the vertical – Jesus is above and beyond all that.....John’s Jesus is nothing less than God himself, coming down like an eagle from the heights of the world above to save the reader from darkness and evil, if only we allow ourselves in faith to be found by him.” “Four Gospels, One Jesus? A symbolic reading”, Richard Burridge

1. John’s gospel is biographic

“In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets...” C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

2. John’s gospel is “Spiritual”

“...John, last of all, conscious that the outward facts had been set forth in the Gospels, was urged on by his disciples, and, divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel.” Clement of Alexandria (ca. 155-220 CE)

3. John’s gospel has different areas of focus

The synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke)	John’s Gospel
Story parables (prodigal son, man building bigger barns etc.)	Stories using symbolism (such as the vine and branches in chapter 15 etc.)
Teaching on the Kingdom of God	Teaching on eternal life
Short, catchy sayings (e.g. ‘For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost’ – Lk 13).	Long teaching sections (e.g. Jn 5, 6, 13-18)
Teaching on the last days still to come (eschatology).	Teaching on the last days that are already here.
Sermon on the Mount and the Lord’s Prayer.	Farewell address (chapters 13-17)
Jesus’ own baptism by John.	Jesus’ interactions with John the Baptist.
Jesus’ temptation by Satan and demon exorcisms.	Satan as Jesus’ main enemy working through Judas.

4. Jesus (John 1.1-14)

- a. His Identity
 - a. “What can you see in the first 14 verses that tells us about the identity of Jesus the Christ?”
- b. His Capacity
 - a. “What can you see in the first 14 verses that tells us about the capacities of Jesus the Christ? What he can do?”

Summary

- “What has stood out to you from tonight?”
- a. Read/skim the whole gospel between now and next Friday.
- b. Discuss what you’re learning and your questions with your spouse/friends.
- c. Ask God to reveal what aspect of Jesus he would like you to focus on through this series.