

Johannine Studies

Lecture 4 Study Notes – February 19, 2008

According to John, Jesus provides the solution to the human condition; therefore, how one understands that condition determines in large measure how Jesus' role will be understood. We will begin with John's depiction of the human condition apart from God.

1. One of the distinctive characteristics of John's thinking and writing is dualism (see Culpepper p. 89). John is making things very explicit in his Gospel and, in doing so, takes out a lot of gray areas. To him everything is black or white, good or evil, resulting in dualism. As Culpepper says, every category is accentuated by its opposite: good—evil (3:20), Christ—the devil, light—darkness (8:12), love—hate (15:18ff) , and above—below. The world is very much under the influence of the “ruler of the world” so the dualism is between earth and heaven—this world and that. (see 12:31;14:30; 16:11) (8:44; 13:2; 13:27) John's use of the Greek word, kosmos, world. (See Culpepper p. 89)
2. Sin (separation from God) in John is a matter of unbelief; unbelief that is characterized by rejection of Jesus. (9: 35-41;16: 8-9; 8: 21,24, 34;15: 22, 24) It is so closely related to the rejection of revelation of God in Jesus that Jesus says: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin...(15: 22, 24) In John, Jesus has a similar function to the Law in Paul's writings—to bring sin to our awareness. Hence, the dualism of seeing and not seeing (9:39 “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see (or think they see) will become blind.” How hard is it to people who are blind, to see? And the more we think we can see, the harder it is to really see the truth. Church folks that have been indoctrinated in the wrong way for a long time are really hard to get to see the truth. (Pew-sitters are hard to change. Why? Because they sit under the gospel preaching for a long time, and have been comfortable doing nothing. People who are comfortable in doing nothing are really hard to budge.)
3. Closely related to spiritual blindness in the Gospel is the use of darkness as a symbol for the human condition apart from God. Apart from God, the world and the people in it lay in darkness. (1:5) Sin, therefore, involves the love of darkness. (see 3:19) Why do they reject the revelation of Jesus? Their love is false—they love darkness.
4. Culpepper gives us two false loves that characterize people who reject Jesus' revelation.
 - a. Their false love is a love of the glory and praise of others rather than the glory of God (5:41). Belief in Jesus is blocked when we seek the approval and the glory of one another rather than God (5:44). They cannot believe because belief is not an intellectual assent to certain theological principles, but an opening of oneself to the knowledge and glory of God revealed in Jesus.
 - b. Their false love is characterized by loving one's own life rather than seeking eternal life (11: 25-26;12:25) Therefore, sin is associated with darkness and characterized by false love and death.
5. Next is the revelation in Christ. The revelation of Christ is John's Christology. Culpepper gives us four facets of His Christology. The following are the four:
 - a. **The Word.** See sermon on John 1:1-14 for history of the term Logos. Nowhere in the Gospels or the New Testament is “The Word” referred to as in John 1. It contains the highest claims (Christology) that Christians have made for Christ (reference high and low Christology). The thrust of the passage is that the Divine Logos has somehow become a person. He is a person who was the agent of divine creation. *John begins by saying that the*

Word was with God and was God. He introduces us to a divine paradox: How can there be individuality and oneness at the same time? (see Kysar page 43)

According to Kysar, the divine Logos is the expressing dimension of God's personality. It is God's revealing, outward directing activity in His creation. According to Kysar, a person might be able to have two sides or more to their person. One side is a person's being that expresses who she or he is. In actions and words to friends and loved ones, one reveals who he or she is. But there may be another side to us that is secretive or hidden, that no one may know except ourselves and sometimes we are ignorant of that part of ourselves. Well, God knows himself clearly and perfectly, but the Logos is that facet of God that He has chosen to express Himself for the comprehension of human beings. The other side of God's personality is a mystery. The danger in most preaching I hear today is that we tend to make God too small. For example, I really don't like to hear people refer to God as being the "Man upstairs." To me God is "not the man upstairs." He is much more than that—He is God!!