

UPPER ROOM ADULT BIBLE STUDY
“The Gospel of John”
Pastor Jim Otte
Spring – Fall, 2019

Lesson 2: Introduction (Continued)
John 1:1-18. The Word Made Flesh

A. The rise of heresies was threatening the people’s confidence in the truth.

1. **John the Baptist sect** – Baptized by John, but never evolving beyond; appealed to his prophetic voice (***Acts 19:1-7***).
2. **Judaizers sect** – believed that, in order to be a Christian, one must become Jewish first, i.e. be circumcised; follow the Jewish traditions; etc.
3. **Gnosticism** – dualism: matter is evil; spirit is good.
 - a. A perfect God cannot touch matter (evil); therefore God did not create the world/universe.
 - b. A ‘creator god’ did create the world, but it is not the “real” God.
 - c. Cerinthus quote: *“the world was created, not by god, but by a power separate from him, and far distant from that Power who is over the universe, and is ignorant of the God who is over all.”* (Barclay, p.12)
 - d. Gnostic beliefs about Jesus:
 - i. Since divinity could only exist in the Unseen World, Jesus was not divine in the Seen World.
 - ii. Jesus could not be flesh and blood (matter).
 - iii. Jesus, therefore, was not the God-Man Savior of the world.
4. **Modern day references to God, which echo Gnostic influences:**
 - a. “Higher Power”
 - b. gods of reincarnation
 - c. “immortality” (no beginning/no ending) of the soul
 - d. New age references to God as a primary energy source
 - e. Jesus as “teacher,” but not as divine Savior
5. **Problem with Gnosticism:**
 - a. God is disinterested in mankind, because He cannot touch matter (essentially evil)
 - b. God has no love for mankind.
 - c. God does not seek closeness with man; man must seek closeness with God via secret knowledge, codes, etc., which are hidden in the scriptures and other books of wisdom
 - d. Jesus is not the Savior of the world; God is not interested in saving mankind.

A. John's use of the stories of Jesus' ministry, His teachings, and His miracles directly address the Gnostic heresies.

- a. "All things were made through Him..." John 1:3
- b. "For God so loved the world..." John 3:16
- c. "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us." John 1:14

B. John spells out the purpose, for which he is publishing this gospel:

- a. **John 20:30-31.** "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

C. Outreach Applications (to a post-Christian culture):

1. Strive to meet people where they _____ (as a starting point).
2. Keep your faith _____ (identity as a baptized & beloved child of God) strong through the Word & Sacraments.
3. Your core will be _____.

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not a thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- a. **"was the Word...with God...Word was God." – "Logos"** – The Holy Spirit moved John to write the word "Logos" in order to introduce Greeks to Jesus! He shifted their understanding from "logos" as a thing – to "logos" as a person.
 - a. the Jewish understanding of the "logos" was:
 - i. the power of the spoken word
 1. **Genesis 1** – "And God said..."
 2. **Isaiah 55:11.** – "so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."
 - ii. The power of godly wisdom; i.e. the Book of Proverbs.
 - b. **"Logos" to the Greek mind was:**
 - i. The power of the reason of God, bringing order out of chaos, i.e. "the Mind of God."
 - ii. Man's ability to reason resulted from the "Mind of God" being in mankind.
 - iii. Heraclitus: "all things happen according to the Logos"
- b. **"He"** – The Christ was present "in the beginning" before time existed.

- c. **“All things were made”** – the Christ was present and active in the creation of the material (Seen) world.
- d. **“In him was life...the light”** – “life” and “light” are among the central themes in the gospel of John, as is “death” and “darkness.” The benefits of light contrast the drawbacks of darkness:
 - a. **Light brings order; darkness brings fear of what you can’t see.**
 - b. **Light reveals; darkness hides.**
 - c. **Light guides with clarity; darkness blinds.**
 - d. **Light overcomes darkness; darkness is hostile to the light.**

D. Outreach Applications to a Post-Christian Culture

- a. Trust in the power of _____ Word.
- b. Remember that people in darkness can be blinded if the light is _____ bright too suddenly.
- c. When you live the “light,” some people in the darkness may be drawn to you.

E. Implications of the Post-Christian Culture

- a. God did not create (make out of nothing) the universe and us.
- b. God can make no legitimate claim on us, either as our Creator, our Redeemer, or our Sanctifier.
- c. Therefore, God’s Word has no bearing on how we live our lives and is no source of security (faith, hope, or love).
- d. Problem:
 - i. We were created in God’s image desiring a deep connection with our Creator.
 - ii. The hole in our souls can only be satisfied by that connection.
 - iii. Absent that connection with God, we will seek security in externals.
 - iv. Externals (fig leaves) ultimately fail and can offer no enduring security (hopelessness/helplessness).
 - v. Escape from the hole in our souls becomes attractive: suicide, depression/anxiety; addictions; etc.