

JOHN: JESUS, WORD OF GOD, AS CREATOR AND LORD

For Mark: Jesus is the Son of Man

For Matthew, Jesus is Messiah, King of the True Israel

For Luke, Jesus is the Redeemer of All Mankind

For John, Jesus is Creative Word &
Supreme Lord of the Universe

Development from relatively “low” to a relatively “high”

Christology

What does the term “Christology” mean?

What do the terms “low” and “high” signify?

What are the signs of a high Christology in John?

1. The identification of the Son (Jesus) with the Creative Word (Logos) of God:

In the beginning was the Word, and **the Word was with God**, and **the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. . . . The **true light**, which enlightens everyone, was **coming into the world**. . . .
(John 1:1-4)

Genesis

In the beginning,
God said
Let there be light.

John

In the beginning,
The Word was/with God
light, coming into the world

2. The identification of Jesus as incarnate God.

What does the word “incarnate” mean? What is the Incarnation?

The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. (1:14)

3. Jesus's repeated self-identification with the Father, especially in his I AM discourses. (Recall Exodus 3:14, where the LORD tells Moses "I AM WHO I AM.")

"The father and I are one" (10:41).

In general, as Harris observes, John's Gospel presents Jesus "not as a vulnerable man of sorrows [suffering on our behalf] but as a divine being who projects his heavenly radiance, [enlightening our darkness,] even while walking the earth" (411).

Enlightenment comes from belief in the Word. The central message of John is summed up in its most famous verse: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

4. Jesus's lofty self-possession when he is crucified.

Compare, for example, Mark 15:34, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", with John 19:30: "When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.'"

Luke represents Jesus's terrible struggle to accept his destiny; in his agony, Jesus cries out:

"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. (Luke 23:42-44)

In John, by contrast, Jesus is fully self aware and entirely self-controlled: "when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), 'I am thirsty.'" (John 19:28) Jesus says these words, not because he suffers any deprivation, but simply **in order to fulfill the scripture.**

The same impression of lofty divinity is communicated by some of the material John leaves out.

For example:

No temptation in the Wilderness. Why not?

No exorcisms. Why not?

Only two healing miracles.

Cure of the man born blind (9:1-12)

Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-12:11)

What function do these miracles perform?

They are SIGNS, telling **those who can see** WHO JESUS IS.

In the first instance, the disciples asked whose sin caused the man's blindness. Jesus answered: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (9:3-5)

The SIGN of Lazarus immediately foreshadows Jesus's resurrection.

One final omission/substitution: The Last Supper, in which Jesus breaks bread and offers wine, essentially in these terms:

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

(Mark 14:22-25)

In John, there is no symbolic breaking of bread or drinking of wine. What happens instead?

Suggests a paradox: for most Christians, Communion (or the Mass, or the Eucharist) is the ritual that celebrates the Mystery of the Incarnation. John’s Gospel is primarily the source of that doctrine: the Word was made flesh and lived among us.

So why does John’s Gospel lack any reference to that memorial celebration?

The whole Gospel is pervaded by symbolic language identifying Jesus as the bread/water/blood of life.

See, for example, John 6:35-59, especially 52-54:

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.