Lecture on the four gospels (based on Mark Strauss, FOR PORTRAITS, ONE JESUS)

The Synoptic Question and why John is not included

Our questions:
1-Why are there three accounts and not just one?
2-Why do Matthew and Luke include most if not all of Mark?
3-Why then do Matthew and Luke contain material not in Mark?
4-Why do Matthew and Luke contain unique material, not in the other?

A Solution:
1-Mark was the first gospel that was circulated, then used by Matthew and Luke.
2-Matthew and Luke had a source for sayings (Quelle-source).
3-Matthew and Luke had sources not available to the other.
4-Matthew and Luke (and Mark) shaped their gospel for their particular audience.

Mark:

This is the gospel of the ministry of Jesus. It stresses (10:45) that Jesus came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. The basic outline includes three sections: preparation of the son of man/messiah (1:1-13); authoritative ministry (1:14-8:26); and suffering of the son of man/messiah as servant of the Lord (8:27-16:8). Note that “Messiah” is redefined in this gospel and beyond to the other gospels in reference to the kingdom of God theme.

Theological themes: the kingdom of God (present and future); Jesus the servant Messiah (hushes people about this until Peter’s confession, then redefined); discipleship (disciples are poor examples, Jesus is the exemplar or model for he gives (serves) his life for others.

• What we have is a fast moving narrative. “Immediately” used 42 times and many verbs present tense even to describe past actions (historical present)
• Emphasis on Jesus’s authority in teaching and miracles and people amazed at his authority
• Emphasis on challenges to Jesus by Satan and his defeat of them
• Jesus as a different Messiah, the son of man who will die for others (“he saved others, himself he cannot save”)
• Outsiders become insiders through faith (hint of Gentile role)--many small and insignificant characters reveal the right response to Jesus, the “outsiders”—tax collector, woman with blood issue, Jairus, father of a demon possessed son, blind Bartimaeus, etc.
• Emphasis on his death and affirmation of him by Roman centurion testifying to Jesus (another outsider who is an insider).
• Brief and enigmatic resurrection narrative (women fear)
Other way to see Mark:
Gospel of urgency
Gospel of faithless and "dumb" disciples
Gospel of Messianic secret
Gospel of the ministry of Jesus
Gospel of the faithful hearer/reader

Other features:

- Triads (e.g. three boat scenes, three predictions of his death, three times calls his disciples to the alert during sermon on Mt. of Olives, and three times sleeping in the Garden of Gethsemane)
- Note that three times Jesus predicts his death, three times the disciples respond with pride and misunderstanding, and three times Jesus responds with teaching about servanthood and cross bearing discipleship-8:31-38; 9:31-37; and 10:32-45)
- Irony (e.g. leaders accuse him of being in league with Satan when they are really opposing God's kingdom-3:22, blind Bartimaeus “sees” that Jesus is the Son of David, but Jesus’ religious opponents are spiritually blind- 10:46-52)
- For Jesus the kingdom will established through compassionate suffering not by conquest or violence (which is the mode of Rome)
- For its length, Mark contains more miracles than the other gospels but the purpose of these miracles is not to gain popularity; they are to demonstrate that he is acting and speaking with the authority of God (the kingdom is here)
- Jesus tells parables to conceal and reveal (reveal to those responding and conceal to those rejecting message with the exception of the parable of the wicked tenants which sets the stage for his arrest and death)
- Of course, the key turning point in Mark’s Gospel is Peter’s confession after which the Gospel portrays Jesus as the Messiah of suffering and sacrifice
- Jesus’ death is not a defeat but a sacrifice of atonement and victory over sin.

Mark presents the most human and down-to-earth portrait of Jesus. He also possesses power and authority in his teachings, healings, exorcisms, and nature miracles.

MATTHEW

- Jesus is the new Moses, an authentic expansion of Judaism; therefore, the authentic people of God are defined no longer by ancestry or ethnic identity
but by allegiance to Jesus the Messiah. Note the similarity to the early life of Moses with traveling magi bringing regal gifts with them. He will bring a new law in five parcels (like the five books of the law)

- He is keen to show Jesus’s connection to "prophecies and texts from the law and the prophets. Matthew uses fulfillment formulas, e.g., virgin birth fulfills Isaiah 7:14; Jesus’ Bethlehem birth fulfills Micah 5:2; escape and return from Egypt fulfills Hosea 11:1; the murder of the infants fulfills Jeremiah 31:15; John the Baptist fulfills Isaiah 40:3; Jesus fulfills the role of the Servant in Isaiah 42:2; during his triumphal entry, he rides on a colt (Zechariah 9:9 a messianic prophecy) and is praised as the “son of David,” a messianic title and so on.

- Jesus presents five major discourses (the most recognized is the Sermon on the Mount) just as there are five books of the law. They are in chapters 5-7; 10; 13; 18; and 23-25.
- The birth narrative like that in Luke is not comprehensive but a set-up for what follows. Note the genealogy which goes back to Abraham (where does the one in Luke go back to?)
- Matthew centers on Joseph (why?), his dreams and actions (Luke on Mary)
- Topical arrangement—collections of teaching (5-7), miracle stories (8-9), mission instructions (10), parables (13) teachings about the church (18), denunciations against the religious leaders (23) and eschatological teaching (24-25)
- He structures his narrative around five major discourses, all of which end with the signal “And it came about when Jesus finished these words…”
- Another structural signal begins “From that time Jesus began to…” This appears twice, once to mark the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry (4:17) and the beginning of his journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die (16:21)

The plot:

- Birth Narrative (1-2)
- Appearance of the Messiah (3:1-4:11)
- Ministry of the messiah to Israel (4:12-11:1)
- Responses to the Messiah (rejection by Israel; acceptance by disciples 11:2-20:34)
- Messiah confronts Jerusalem (21:1-26:1)
- Messiah is rejected but victorious/Passion and Resurrection (26-28)

His forty days in the wilderness is analogous to Israel’s forty years wandering in the wilderness. Whereas Israel was unfaithful several times and grumbling, Jesus is obedient. He quotes Old Testament passages from Deuteronomy in response to the temptations.

- 8:3-not by bread alone but every word from God
- 6:16-do not put the Lord to the test
- 6:13-serve God only
• Kingdom (of heaven rather than “God”) Authority in Preaching and Healing:
  • Chapters 5-7—Kingdom authority in Teaching and preaching (4:23)
  • Chapters 8-9—Kingdom authority in Healing (9:35)
  • Chapter 10—Kingdom authority delegated to Disciples (11:1)
  • This is an inclusio (“bookends”)
  • All these are the account of Jesus’ public ministry
  • The Sermon on the mount (5-7) provides the example *par excellence* of Jesus’ teaching: his inaugural kingdom address. In it Jesus identifies himself as the true interpreter of the OT law and the one who fulfills its purpose. Jesus is on a mountain like Moses; he has come not to abolish the law but to fulfill it. The new law is written on the heart; he raises the standards. ("Fence")

Jesus will be training the disciples to become the new “Pharisees” without the rigidity. At first the mission is to the lost sheep of Israel, but at the “Great Commissioning,” the whole world is targeted.

• Why does he speak in parables? He quotes Isaiah 6:9-10—people who hear his message and understand it will understand his parables, but those who reject him will not understand. To tell parables is a way he speaks to those who are good soil.

• Matthew’s disciples are still a bit dull, lacking in faith, showing pride, but they are better than Mark’s for they show some awareness of Jesus’ identity. Note how Jesus commends Peter after his confession whereas in Mark, he didn’t but pointed toward his coming death.

• And the disciples being given the commission by Jesus, especially at the end of the book, places them in a more positive light. They will still fail during Jesus’s arrest and crucifixion, to be sure, but they will rebound.

• Three parables allegorically depict the religious leaders and they support Matthew’s narrative purpose.
  • How? The first as a son who claims he will work for the father but then fails to show up (21:28-32); the second as tenant farmers who reject the vineyard owner and murder his son (21:33-45); and the third as guests who reject the king’s invitation to the wedding banquet (22:1-14). All three have the same central theme: Israel’s leaders, though spiritual insiders, are rejecting God’s purpose revealed through Jesus and so will suffer judgment. Meanwhile, outsiders will receive God’s salvation blessings.

• At the trial, the religious authorities produce false evidence and false witnesses (story of Ahab and Nabal). Here the parable of the wicked tenants comes to mind.
• Pilate is portrayed as influenced by the leaders; he believes Jesus to be innocent and offers the people the choice. They choose a criminal, Barabbas, and cry out “Let his blood be on us and on our children” (not to be used in anti-semitic ways). Has more to do with the judgment that the destruction of Jerusalem was the result of her rejection of God’s messenger and as vindication that God’s plan of salvation is moving forward through the church of the risen Messiah.

• Now the disciples during this time display amazing unfaithfulness (though the women remain faithful—remember Mark)

• The crucifixion scene is full of irony, that is, all the mocking thrown at Jesus actually true—king (messiah) of Israel, Son of God, savior.

• Four events happen that signal the beginning of a new age: curtain is rent, earthquake, tombs open up and resurrection of holy ones, and the testimony of the centurion. Jesus’s claims are underscored.

• The resurrection is countered by his opponents who claim his body was stolen.

• Matthew’s account is not as ambiguous or mysterious as Mark’s. There are two accounts.
  • He appears to the two Marys. They receive the angelic announcement and then they meet Jesus. He tells them to report his resurrection to the disciples and that he will meet them in Galilee.
  • He then appears to the eleven disciples in Galilee and gives the Great Commission. His message underscores his authority and provides a universal element (“all the world”). He delegates authority to the disciples to make disciples, baptize, and teach all he has commanded. And, as noted, the mission of Jesus concerns the whole world and his presence will sustain them. “The Gospel which began with the announcement that Jesus is Immanuel, “God with us” (1:23), ends with the promise that he will be with his disciples till the end of the age (28:20).

• So who is Jesus. He is Messiah, Immanuel, Son of God. Ultimately, this last title identifies Jesus as the obedient Son, who reveals the Father’s will, inaugurates the kingdom, and accomplishes God’s salvation through his sacrificial death of the cross.

• Narrative and theological purpose
  • To demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfillment of Jewish hopes for the Messiah
  • Call the church to greater faith and trust in their risen and ever-present Lord
  • Jesus is both the promised Messiah from the line of David and he is also “God with us,” the very presence of God among his people.
  • His audience probably is predominantly Jewish or a mixed group that knows the Jewish laws and practice in conflict with the larger Jewish community.
Luke

- The author wrote Luke-Acts, and he has a similar plan for both, e.g., Stephens words while being stoned resembles Jesus' words on the cross, when Paul turns toward Jerusalem, he runs into trouble like Jesus.
- In this gospel, the separation between Jew and Gentile is overcome so this gospel, along with the second book (Acts—the early church and missionary work of Paul), details the spread of the message of Jesus.
- Note the genealogy—goes back to Adam, does include Abraham and David, of course (comes after his baptism)
- Where as Matthew used nearly all of Mark, Luke uses about half.

- A unique feature of Luke's Gospel is the extended journey to Jerusalem (the travel narrative 9:51-19:27) where he takes ten chapters to treat a period which in Mark occupies a single chapter. Here this becomes a part of Jesus’ ministry and contains many of the most famous parables and narratives (the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, Zacchaeus, Mary and Martha).

- Note the focus on women and the OT (Hebrew) technique of underscoring the importance of those born (women barren)
- John will be a “prophet of the most high” whereas Jesus will be the “Son of the most high.”
- Jesus’ visit to the temple provides a transition to his ministry; he is exceptional in his understanding of tradition and can bring a new understanding, a new message—his relation to God and this growth in wisdom is underscored.
- In the early part of this gospel, the context is set in the Roman Empire which covers the world, so that Jesus’ message has universal appeal.

- Matthew's Sermon on the Mount is Luke’s sermon on the plain (6:17-49). Note that here it is not “poor in spirit” but the “poor.”

- The first section of the Gospel covers the Galilean ministry of Jesus (4:14-9:50)
- The first act of this ministry is his sermon at Nazareth where the author summarizes the ministry (moved forward from where Mark had it)
- He reads Isaiah 61 and applies it to himself (The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lords favor)

- The response, his rejection foreshadows his eventual rejection by his people(as seen in the religious leaders)
- After the sermon, the writer recounts stories showing how Jesus fulfills this ministry. As predicted in Isaiah 61, Jesus preaches the good news to the poor
(4:31-32, 43-44), frees prisoners oppressed by Satan (4:31-37, 41), and heals the sick (4:38-39, 40; 5:12-14, 17-26)

- In his sermon on the plain, he speaks of the radical values of the Kingdom of God for his disciples. His shift, particularly in regard to the poor, does not mean he discounts the spiritual value for in this gospel, social and economic realities go hand in hand with spiritual values.

- Again, as in the other gospels, his preaching of his ethic of love draws in the outsiders and angers the insiders. Note that a Roman centurion, upon Jesus’ healing of his servant, says: “I have not found such great faith even in Israel.”

- After Peter’s recognition, as in Mark and Matthew, Jesus points to his suffering and rising plus the need for disciples to follow him in cross-bearing discipleship.

- The next section (9:51-19:27) finds Jesus weaving around from place to place, teaching and healing, as he travels toward Jerusalem.

- His intention to go to Jerusalem becomes clearer and clearer, that is, to go to where the prophets are killed and God will accomplish his salvation.

- Some call this section the Gospel for the Outcast for it features parables that carry the theme of reversal.

- Parables: the good Samaritan; the rich fool; the great banquet; things lost (sheep, coin, sons); the rich man and Lazarus; the persistent widow; the Pharisee and the tax collector [which will be made clear in the story of Zacchaeus at the climax of this journey]

- Whereas in Matthew the crowds recognized Jesus, in Luke it is the disciples who declare: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord,” more blatantly recognizing Jesus as Messiah (reveals an additional heightening of the role of the disciples).

- Jerusalem represents where God’s salvation lies but Israel’s rejection

- Eventually Jesus is pitted against the religious leaders.

- A key element throughout this struggle and his trial, is his innocence as the one described in Isaiah 53, the innocent suffering Servant.

- The disciples, though heightened somewhat, still have their failings—argue about who is the greatest (he teaches about servanthood); declares their leadership role in his coming kingdom; predicts Simon’s betrayal and his subsequent restoration, and prepares them for their mission.

- One element in Peter’s betrayal—at the moment he denies the last time, Jesus turns and looks at him; Peter flees and weeps because of his failure.

- Jesus, to the end, dispenses forgiveness and love (the second thief—different from the other Gospels). Again, he saved others not himself is thrown up to him.

- The centurion here rather than saying as in Mark: “Son of God,” rather says: Jesus is “innocent.” Again, this accords with the suffering servant of Isaiah.
• Three resurrection appearances: women at the tomb; on the road to Emmaus, to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem.
• The account of the Emmaus disciples is Luke’s most important contribution to the Gospel resurrection narratives, confirming that the death and resurrection of the Christ is the fulfillment of God’s purpose in salvation. They were disappointed in what happened but Jesus points out it all fit within God’s plan.
• With the disciples, the true bodily resurrection is confirmed for the disciples touch him and eat with him.
• In Luke, Jesus is the savior of all people, who fulfilled God’s purpose.

• The disciples in Mark were failures, dull; in Mathew they had little faith many times (uneven) but later commissioned to carry forth the teachings, in Luke they are apostles in training so that in Acts they will be decisive leaders.
• The religious leaders in Luke are not like those in Matthew where they seemed evil to the core; they are guilty of self-righteousness which leads them to reject God’s invitation to salvation. In Matthew the religious leaders are completely lost whereas in Luke there is still hope since their failure comes from foolishness and ignorance. In Acts, Peter says as much about their ignorance and invites them to repent. Paul, too, will go to synagogues to call out the faithful.

• Finally, the themes in Luke(-Acts): the dawn of salvation (Luke) and the coming of the Spirit (Acts); God’s plan is worked out in Jesus; salvation for the outsiders—the age of reversals; Jerusalem, where God’s presence is said to dwell so salvation will be achieved there though it also serves as symbol of God’s stubborn and rebellious people (where the prophets were killed); and celebration for what has come through Jesus (many banquet and meal stories in Luke); importance of prayer to Jesus (nine prayers recorded—he is in intimate contact with God and advises others to do the same)

JOHN

• “The reader approaching John’s gospel immediately notices a picture strikingly different from the Synoptic Gospels. While the Synoptics share many common features, about 90 percent of John is unique. Key features of Jesus’ ministry are absent. There are no exorcisms or parables . . . , no table fellowship with sinners. The key Synoptic phrase “kingdom of God” occurs only twice. Most of Jesus’ teaching is unique, and five of John’s eight miracles do not occur in the Synoptics. Many key Synoptic events are absent, including Jesus’ baptism, his temptation, the transfiguration, and the institution of the Lord’s supper. John also includes many stories not found in the Synoptics: the miracle of changing the water to wine, Jesus’ conversations with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, the raising of Lazarus, Jesus’ washing of the disciple’s feet, Jesus’ high priestly prayer, the account of
doubting Thomas, and many others. Only John reports Jesus’ extensive Judean ministry, as he travels back and forth between Galilee and Judea. The synoptics are more linear, with a single movement from Galilee to Jerusalem. They provide little information concerning the length of Jesus’ ministry, mentioning only the Passover associated with Jesus’ crucifixion. John refers to three Passovers (2:13, 6:4, 11:55) and possible a fourth (5:1) suggesting a ministry between 2 ½ and 3 ½ years long. Jesus also speaks more openly about himself in John that in the other Gospels. In the Synoptic gospels, Jesus’ teaching focuses on the kingdom of God and his role as it inaugurator. In John, he speaks much more about himself and his unique relationship to the Father. Jesus makes seven “I AM” statements—metaphorical descriptions of himself and his role as the Son who reveals the Father. There is no “messianic secret” in John.

- Sacramental Gospel—uses images from the world, e.g., bread, to express spiritual truth.
- No account of the virgin birth and on two occasions (1:45, 6:42) he is referred to as “the son of Joseph
- John the Baptist never baptizes Jesus; he bears witness to Jesus
- No short provocative sayings of Jesus, no parables and no version of the Sermon on the Mount, but there are long, sometimes convoluted theological dialogues or monologues
- The cleansing of the Temple is not associated with the final week of Jesus’ life; it is in chapter 2, near the beginning of this public ministry
- In John, the setting is mostly Jerusalem with Jesus retreating to Galilee only to escape the hostile presence of the Judean authorities. In the Synoptic gospels, he goes to Jerusalem only once, for Passover, at which time he is crucified. As we know there are three Passovers in John.
- No description of the Last Supper but his gospel tells us of the foot washing ceremony and attaches all the Jesus’ teaching about the Eucharist to the story of the feeding of the five thousand in chap. 6
- In John, miracles are transformed into signs which describe a dramatic truth that is breaking into human consciousness in Jesus
- In John, there is no anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane and no prayer in which Jesus asks to be spared his fate, Instead Jesus says he was born for the purpose of being crucified (12:27)
- It is not a suffering Christ who is seen on the cross, but a glorified Christ whose whole work is somehow completed in his death.
- In John, a host of memorable characters are introduced who are mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament. This parade of characters begins in chapter 1 with a man named Nathaniel and concludes with a character known as the “beloved disciple,” who is introduced in the Farewell
Discourses and who then plays a major role in the story of the passion and resurrection of Jesus.

• In John, we get content and even personality to several other people who have appeared previously in the tradition, but without any of the defining characteristics which John attaches to them. Among them are Andrew, the mother of Jesus, the brother of Jesus, Philip and Thomas.

• Spong sees this gospel as the product of a Jewish mystic, familiar with Jewish practices and traditions, (who produces a work that is mostly ahistorical and supremely Christological or theological—me)

• The “I AM” statements:
  • The bread of life (6:35)
  • The Light of the world (8:2, 9:5)
  • The Door (10:7)
  • The Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
  • The Resurrection of the Life (11:25)
  • The Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
  • The True Vine (15:1)
  • Remember that this was a way God referred to himself when Moses asked who sent him.

• The Seven Signs of John’s Gospel
  • Changing water into wine (2:1-11)
  • Official’s son healed (4:43-54)
  • Healing of the disabled man at Bethesda pool (5:1-15)
  • Feeding of the five thousand (6:1-14)
  • Walking on the water (6:16-21)
  • Healing the man born blind (9:1-12)
  • Lazarus raised (11:1-44)

• The gospel begins with a prologue (1:1-18) identifying Jesus as the preexistent “Word” (Logos)—God’s self-revelation—who became a human being to bring grace and truth to humankind. It ends with an epilogue (21) describing a post resurrection appearance to the disciples, Jesus’ commissioning of Peter to “feed my sheep,” and the identification of the Beloved Disciple as the author. The first part of the gospel is sometimes called the Book of Signs (1:19-12:50) and the latter, the Book of Glory (13:1-20:31). The former contains the “signs” which reveal Jesus’ identity and call people to faith in him. The latter is so called because Jesus’ passion is repeatedly described as his glorification.

• Case study—Nicodemus
  • Jewish authority, Pharisee, who comes by night (what does darkness represent?)
  • Nicodemus makes statement about Jesus being from God, doing signs
• Jesus speaks of being born anew
• Nicodemus responds with questions, thinking literally
• Jesus responds with an explanation
• Nicodemus again questions Jesus
• Jesus points to the failure of a teacher of Israel to understand about heavenly things and goes on to point ahead to his crucifixion in the context of an Old Testament story. All this is followed by more assertion about Jesus.

• Case study—The Samaritan woman
  • Jesus is at “Jacob’s well” and he is weary (his disciples have gone to the city to buy food); this is the sixth hour (noon?)
  • He asks for a drink
  • She responds with a question—how is it you ask me for a drink?
  • He tells her of living water
  • She responds literally
  • Jesus elaborates on “living water.”
  • She asks for the water so she doesn’t have to come to the well
  • Jesus redirects the discussion and asks for her husband
  • She responds that she has no husband
  • Jesus responds with knowledge of her situation
  • Woman perceives that he is a prophet, then asks where to worship
  • Jesus presents a short response on true worship that is not tied to place
  • She responds with a reference to the coming of the Messiah
  • Jesus states that he is Messiah
  • Disciples return and are amazed he is speaking with the woman, but say nothing
  • She returns to the city and invites them to see Jesus, perhaps the Christ
  • Disciples offer food to Jesus who declines for he has other food
  • They are confounded
  • Many Samaritans believe and they invite Jesus to stay. While Jesus is with them many more believe
  • They said to the woman: “It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.” (reminds me of Thomas)

• Case study--The man born blind (MBB 9:1-40)
  • Jesus sees a man blind from birth and his disciples ask whose sin caused this?
  • None, this is for the works of God to be made manifest/I am the light of the world
  • Jesus puts clay in his eyes and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam
  • The man gains sight
• Neighbors argue if this is the man born blind or not, then ask him how his eyes were opened
• The man recounts the healing but when they ask him where Jesus is, he doesn’t know
• The man is brought by the neighbors to the Pharisees
• Told that it was the Sabbath when Jesus healed him (made the clay, etc.)
• Pharisees ask him how he had received his sight.
• Man says: “He put clay on my eyes and I washed and I see.”
• Pharisees say: “This man is not from God for he does not keep the Sabbath.
• Others say that a man who is a sinner could not do such signs (a division among them)
• They ask the man what he thinks of his healer
• He says: “He is a prophet.”
• There is disbelief (if this is your son born blind, how does he now see?) that he was blind until his parents verify it
• They say: “We know hat this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. As him; he is of age and can speak for himself—they say this because they feared the Jews who could put them out of the synagogue if they appeared to think Jesus was the Christ
• We are told again that they said to ask him
• The MBB was called again by the Pharisees ("they")
• They tell him to give God the praise for we know “this man” is a sinner
• The MBB says: “Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see.”
• They ask how he did this and he tells them he has already told them; he asks if they want to become his disciples
• They become angry and claim that though they are disciples of Moses, but they don’t know his (Jesus’) origin
• The MBB mocks them—here is a person who can heal blindness and they don’t know his origin. Then he firmly places Jesus in the realm of God. “If this man were not from God, he could do nothing (9:30-33).
• They answer: “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” (resembles the original question of the disciples) They cast him out
• Jesus finds the MBB and asks: “Do you believe in the Son of man?”
• MBB says: “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him.”
• Jesus identifies himself as the Son of man.
• The MBB believes and worships Jesus.
• Jesus comments: “For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind.”
• Some of the Pharisees nearby ask if they are blind.
• Jesus replies: “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.
• This story reveals both the process that one goes through on the way to faith and points out that the Pharisees are blind to God’s (continuing) revelation. As the man gains in spiritual insight, the leaders decline into blindness.

• Spong believes that many of the characters in this Gospel are created to illustrate truths about Jesus’ role and impact. E.G., Nathaniel is suspect at first about Jesus, but when Jesus affects him profoundly, he goes and tells others (and others do the same)—a model disciple.

• Changing water into wine shows the old way giving way to the new just as the cleansing of the temple signifies the end of its sacrificial system.

• The raising of Lazarus is the last of the signs and points toward Jesus’ resurrection and also sets the stage for the leaders to become more and more hostile.

• Throughout John, Jesus is in charge of his destiny, so much so that the crucifixion is not a scene where his agony is detailed, as in the other Gospels, but his destiny is fulfilled; he is lifted up like the serpent in the Wilderness (under the leadership of Moses) so that all can be saved.

• Resurrection
  • Mary comes and finds tomb empty, reports to Peter and “the other disciple”
  • Jesus appears to Mary
  • Jesus appears to disciples sans Thomas
  • Jesus appears again with Thomas

Jesus appears to the disciples again in the epilogue (ch. 21)

• The Gospel proper (through chapter 20) concludes with its statement of purpose: “That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ” (20:31) so the whole gospel is a call to decision.

• "While the Gospel speaks of Jesus as equal with God (ontological equality) there is also a strong functional subordination. By this we mean that while Jesus is fully divine, he lives in complete dependence on the father. The Son does nothing by himself but only what the Father directs him to do. He has come to do the will of the Father who sent him . . . And to bring glory to him."