

Initial Encounters

In the Gospel of Signs

Some review

- Logos and the Divine Word
 - "And God said, 'Let there be light'..."
- Translation issues, e.g., 1:17: "Grace instead of grace" or "grace upon grace" or "grace responding to grace"
- Textual and Translation issues: e.g., 1:18: μονογενῆς θεός/υἰός
 - "Unique (only begotten) one who is God" – 1:1; 20:28
 - "Unique (only begotten) Son" – 3:16

The Ministry (and “Book of”) of Signs Begins

- 1:19-51: Four days in Galilee
 - John the Baptist and First Disciples
 - Titles of Jesus
- 2:1-11: Wedding Feast, 1st Sign, of what?
- 2:12-25: Incident at the Temple
 - Is it a “sign”??

An Organizing Principle: Diptychs

- 1:19-34: The Baptist – 1:35-51: The First Disciples
 - Each with two *internal* diptychs
- 2:1-12: Cana – 2:13-22 The Temple
 - Celebratory Sign vs Punishment and Prophecy??
- 3:1-21: Nicodemus (M) – 4:1-26: Samaritan Woman (F)
 - Each with two *appended* diptychs: 3:22-30/3:31-36.– 4:27-38/4:39-45
 - Followed by an epilogue, Sign 2: 4:46-54
- 5:1-46: Healing – 6:1-71: Feeding
 - A new overarching principle of order: Jewish feasts
 - Internal dyad: Act and Discourse

Jesus and John: An Internal Diptych

- Day 1: 1:19-28: Citation of Isa 40:3 (Mk 1:2-3 adds Mal 3:1)
 - John denies being Christ, Elijah or a prophet
 - “Another is coming; I’m not worthy to untie his sandal” (Mk 1:7+ parr)
 - I baptize with water. = Mk 1:8a.
- Day 2: 1:29-34: “Behold the Lamb who takes away sin”
 - Testimony: “I saw the Spirit descending”
 - Mk 1:10: Jesus saw; Mt 3:16: heavens opened; Lk 3:21-22: “bodily form, like dove”
 - He will baptize with holy spirit. = Mk 1:8b.
- Affirms and Entices
 - John definitely inferior; Jesus endowed with the Spirit
 - What kind of “lamb” is Jesus? Paschal? Sin offering?

Disciples: Another Diptych

- Day 3: 1:35-42: First disciples: "Lamb" repeated
 - Two disciples, Andrew, bro of Peter + Anonymous
 - Peter gets a name, "Cephas (Rock, Rocky), translated Peter"
 - 1:38 A dialogue: "Where are you staying (Gk. *meno*)?" "Come and see."
 - Curiosity can be productive. 39: They saw where he stayed and they stayed.
- Day 4: 1:43-51: Philip tells Nathanael, "Come and see."
 - 1:46: Flash of irony: What good comes from Nazareth?
 - 1:48: Jesus shows special knowledge of "guileless" Nathanael.
 - Cf. 2:25: Jesus knew what was in people.
 - 1:49: Nathanael responds with a confession.
 - 1:51: Jesus says, Just you wait and you'll see angels on the Son of Man.

A Roster of Titles

- 1:34, 36: John, “Son of God,” “Lamb of God”
- 1:38: Two disciples: “Rabbi,” “translated Teacher”
- 1:41: Peter: “Messiah” “translated Christ”
 - 1:42: Jesus: “You are Kephas,” “translated Peter”
- 1:45: Philip: “Of whom Moses, in the Law, and the Prophets wrote”
- 1:49: Nathanael: “Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel”
- 1:51: Jesus: “Son of Man”
 - Can be a way of saying “human being” (opp. To “son of beasts”)
 - So Dan 7:13, a symbol of Israel, contrasted with “beastly” empires

1:51: The Son of Man: Synoptics

- A riddle, based on Dan 7:13 understood as prophecy not symbol
 - (Mt 16:13): Who do people say he is?
 - Mk: Who do people say I am? (Does SoM simply = “I”?)
- Present:
 - Mk 2:28 + parr. “Lord of Sabbath”;
 - Mt 8:20//Lk 9:58 “No place to lay his head”
- Suffering: Passion predictions
 - Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33 + parr.
- Coming (Dan 7:13):
 - Mk 13:26: Eschatological prophecy: “coming on the clouds”
 - Mk 14:62: Climax of trial scene: prediction of “clouds of heaven”
 - Mt 25:31-46: The Son of Man in his Glory, w angels, judges sheep & goats.

In John

- Coming: 1:51: Jacob's Ladder (Gen 28:12)
 - But when will the "heavens be opened". Language of revelation: Rev 4:1; 11:19
- Suffering = Lifted up: 3:13-14: Moses' serpent (Num 21:8-9);
 - But descended from heaven (v. 13)
 - Lifted up = "glorified" (Isa 52:13 LXX)
 - Twice echoed 8:28; 12:23, like Mark's 3 passion predictions
- Present:
 - 5:27: Has life + Power to judge. But does he use it? See 3:17 (no) vs 9:39 (yes)!
 - 9:35: object of belief. Believe what you "see", now.
 - 13:31: "Glorification" is happening Now! Walk in his light.
- A Riddle: 12:34: Crowd, "Who is the Son of Man anyhow?"
 - Does Pilate answer?: 19:5: "Ecce homo": "Behold, the Man."
- What happened to the Coming Judge?

A Wedding at Cana, A Sign

What's a "Sign"

- Miraculous Deeds, as in "Signs and Wonders"
 - Mk 8:11-12; Acts 2:9; 1 Cor 1:22; Heb 2:4
- Do they *authorize* or *signify* something
 - "Evidence," 2:11; 2:23; 3:2; 6:2; 7:31; 9:16; 11:47; 20:30
 - But the FG resists: 4:48; 6:26, Simply "seeing" not enough.
 - How does one "see" a sign, by observing it or probing its meaning?

How Do Actions Signify? In Many Ways

- Pointers to significance of Jesus
 - As the one “sent from God”
 - Active signs combine with verbal “signs” (light, shepherd, vine, etc.)
- Pointers to the past that Jesus embodies
 - Sacred space (Temple); Time (Festivals)
- Pointers to the reality that his coming creates
 - Baptism, Eucharist, Faith (How much Christian ritual is involved?)

What about Cana? Evidence or Symbol?

- Authorizing Jesus? Note the question at 2:18 at the Temple incident.
 - People seek authorization. Is that what Jesus provides?
- Of old become new?
 - An echo of Mt 9:17//Lk 5:37: “New wine old skins”
 - The new = ??? Knowledge? Relationship? Ritual action?
- Of the sanctity of marriage?
 - Contrast the saying on “eunuchs” (Mt19:12)
 - Or of its transformation? See Paul wrestling with marriage, 1 Cor 7.
- Of relationship to Jesus?
 - Focus on his Mother
- Many possibilities; no definite answer

The Role of the Mother

- Jesus' time "not yet"
 - A story of youthful petulance?
- Calling her "Woman"? (= Madam)
- Are "Family" ties important?
 - Is a new family created at the cross: Jn 19:26
- Jesus answers prayer as he answered her?
 - Assurances given at 14:13; 15:16; 16:23-26

Giotto

- Florence
- 1267-1337



Hieronimus Bosch

- Dutch
- 1450-1516



Paolo Veronese

- Venice
- 1528-1588



Konstantin Makovsky

- Russian
- 1839-1915



Miracle at Cana by Vladimir Makovsky

“Cleansing” the Temple

Familiar but distinctive

- Synoptic accounts
 - Action: Matt 21:12-13 – Mark 11:15-17 – Luke 19:45-46
 - Saying 1: Isa 56:7+Jer 7:11: “house of prayer – den of thieves”
 - Saying 2: Destroy/rebuild: Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; Acts 6:14
 - The saying is always attributed to Jesus by others
- Johannine Diptych: 2:14-17 Action, Saying 1 – 2:18-22 Saying 2.
 - V 15: Action enhanced: the whip, more animals
 - V 17: Saying 1: “house of business” + Ps 69:10 “zeal consumes me”
 - V 20: Saying 2: Jesus said it, but “about his body”; Interpretation counts

Tradition and Interpretation

- Historical Jesus (and Synoptics)
 - Pointed Critique of establishment, “den of thieves”
 - Scripture justifies the action
 - A prophecy about destruction and replacement of Temple
- John
 - Critique muted, “place of business.”
 - Placement disconnects from trial and execution.
 - Scripture (2x) refocuses: the action is about Jesus, not about the Temple
 - It’s an unnumbered “sign”.

El Greco

- 1531-1604

