

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

Commentary Resources: The Gospel of John – William Barclay

Lesson 1: Understanding John’s Environment and Approach

A. Introduction to the Gospel of John

1. John the son of Zebedee

- a. Ambitious, seeking power over (Matthew 20:20)
- b. Sons of Thunder (Luke 9:54)
- c. One of Jesus inner circle with Peter and James
- d. The “*disciple whom Jesus loved.*”
- e. Wrote epistles of John and Revelation

2. The circumstances under which John wrote.

- a. Written in Ephesus around 100 A.D.
- b. Christianity was now part of the Gentile experience, especially Greeks.
 - i. **John’s operating principle: Was there a way to relate the gospel to Greeks, meeting them where they are, without having to think like a Jewish/Hebrew perspective?**
 - ii. How do you reach Greeks, whose orientation is primarily rationalistic (mind-centered)?
 1. Mind/Heart compartmentalized in Greek thought
 - a. Reflected Greek thought about the two worlds
 - i. The Seen World in which we live: shadows, imitations of reality, and imperfect copies of the Unseen World. The Seen World cannot be trusted or redeemed.
 - ii. The Unseen World: the originals, purity, perfect and eternal patterns (Utopian). The Unseen World is reality to pursue.
 - b. **Plato’s quest:** How does one escape the Seen World and reach the Unseen World?
 - c. **Question:** In what way(s) do we see people today joining the same pursuit?
 2. Mind/Heart holistically integrated in Jewish thought.
 - a. **Matthew 22:37-38.** *And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the great and first commandment.*

b. Heart-soul-mind integrated; separate, yet connected

- iii. John's approach made sense to the Greek mind: Jesus is the very "mind of God," coming from the Unseen Word to redeem those of the Seen World. He is "reality" come to earth.
1. Greek word to "real" is "alethinos" (often translated as "true"); Jesus is the "real" one to trust!
 2. Jesus' miracles presented as "signs" – which allowed Greeks to see into the reality of the "mind of God"
 3. Jesus' compassion is not presented as the primary motive for miracles; rather to demonstrate the "glory of God" to break into and redeem the Seen World.