

Sent: 9/24/2014 6:01:10 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time  
Subj: Last Nite's MOB Session

Men--It was great to get together last nite as MOBsters for Lesson #2 in our study of the Gospel of John. Lesson #2 was the second "overview" of this great book. Last week we looked at its historical setting and context--and last nite at its "literary framework." Next week, we'll have yet another overview--of its "theology!"

No question--the Gospel of John is a great piece of "literary art"--and some readers would like to keep it at that! But we know it's so much more! In fact, it's pretty hard to think that any serious reader could actually limit it to that! Andreas Kostenberger, in His book, "Encountering John" (which we're using as a supplement to our study), writes: "Scripture is not only world literature, a classic document of Western civilization; it is divine revelation that confronts readers with their sin and need for salvation and forgiveness: to receive Christ's free gift of salvation or to reject it. Readers are not merely dispassionate literary critics--they are existentially addressed and engaged by the biblical message and must act in response to it!"

Well, when you take a look at John from a literary point of view--as we did last nite--you certainly have to agree with Kostenberger!

So, how did John, the son of Zebedee, and "beloved disciple" of Christ, "map out" the book which carries his name? What is the "literary framework"? As we discussed last nite, everything he wrote about is connected with the central purpose he had in mind for writing it--which he gives near the end of his book, in John 20:30-31. John says that there are "many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of His disciples, which are not in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

In the "prologue" to his book (John 1:1-18), John begins with his claim that Jesus was "with" God "at the beginning (when the world was created!) and "was" God and that "all things came into being through Him." He further nails down His identity by saying that He was "made flesh" (the Incarnation!) and "dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father..." That's kind of the summary or bottom line claim upon which John builds his case--through all those "signs" which follow!

So what are the "signs" that John selected--out of so many that apparently were available--and included, to make his case? Turns out that they consist basically of seven "miracles" (beginning with Jesus "turning water into wine" at a wedding in Cana of Galilee), along with seven Jesus "I am" statements, and seven "witnesses." We traced them briefly last nite when we "walked through" the study outline included in your "white binder"--and we'll be checking them out further in the weeks--and months--ahead!

Jesus Himself said that "...the very works that I do testify that the Father has sent Me" (John 5:36). But He also made direct statements about who He was, and is, particularly in referring to Himself as "I am"--going back to the name God gave for Himself (in Exod. 3:12) when Moses

asked who he should say sent him when he went before Pharaoh (a direct inference quickly picked up by the Jewish leaders--to their great horror and dismay)!

And so, the reader is left with the question about who Jesus is! As C.S. Lewis said: "Jesus was either a lunatic, a liar, or the Lord!" One has to respond!

Well, we move on to an overview of the "theological" themes in next week's lesson! Your assignment is to finish reading through the book of John (chapters 13-21), if you haven't already done so--as well as chapter 3 of Rostenberger's book. I'll be sending out some questions for you to consider in preparing for our lesson. And don't forget the new memory verse, John 14:6: "And John said to him (that would be Thomas--Doubting Thomas!), I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, except by Me." Now there's a "theological" statement worth considering!

It was great to have Marty Heath join our group--also to see Paul Rutkowski back with us! Let continue to uphold each other in prayer, and particularly for Al's recovery! It really neat to begin getting to know each other!

May God bless your week!

Lowell Mininger