



Adult Class, Fall Quarter 2011
Folsom Church of Christ

The John Rylands Fragment

Circa AD 100-150

The Rylands Library Papyrus P52, also known as the St John's fragment, is a fragment measuring only 3.5 by 2.5 inches at its widest; and conserved with the Rylands Papyri at the John Rylands University Library (Gr. P. 457) in Manchester, UK. The front (recto) contains parts of seven lines from the John 18:31–33, in Greek, and the back (verso) contains parts of seven lines from verses 37–38.



Notes from Ferrell Jenkins Website

(<http://ferrelljenkins.wordpress.com>)

In 1844, the *Tübinger Jahrbuch* published an essay by F. C. Baur to the effect that John's Gospel should be dated no earlier than AD 160, and probably closer to 170. Everyone who has studied New Testament introduction knows that this view was dominant for nearly a century. Wallace tells what rocked Baur's view:

Ninety years after Baur first published his thesis on John, a young doctoral student studying at Manchester University came across a scrap of papyrus in the John Rylands Library. Colin H. Roberts was intrigued by the papyrus fragment, which had been excavated decades earlier from rubbish heaps in Egypt. It was only 2½ inches by 3½ inches, but its importance far outweighed its size. Roberts immediately recognized it as a fragment of John's Gospel—chapter 18, verses 31 to 33 on one side, and chapter 18, verses 37 and 38 on the other, to be exact. He sent the photographs of the fragment to three of the leading papyrologists in Europe. Each one reported independently that this fragment should be dated, on paleographical grounds, between AD 100 and AD 150. A fourth scholar disagreed, arguing that the fragment should be dated in the 90s of the first century!

This tiny fragment of John's Gospel rocked the scholarly near-consensus on the date of John, for it is impossible for a copy to be written before the original text is produced. It effectively sent two tons of German scholarship to the flames. As one wag put it, "This manuscript must have been written when the ink on the original text was barely dry."

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Jesus in John: Introduction

Introduction

Only God can “declare the end from the beginning” (Isa. 46:10) but the gospel of John helps us see the “beginning from the end.” John said he wrote this book for one primary purpose: “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:31). So, each time John dipped his pen in the ink, he breathed a silent prayer: “Lord, help these people to believe by what I write.”

This is truly an amazing and wonderful book. It has been likened to a body of water shallow enough for children to wade in and yet deep enough for elephants to swim. It is simple and profound and the same time. The simplest person can read it and gain from the reading and yet one scholar, after years of deep study, said, “it remains strange, restless and profound.” For anyone, each reading of the book will uncover some new jewel of spiritual insight, whether at a basic level or at the deeper level. Our goal in this study is to help you to explore the gospel at both levels, to some degree.

Overview

John’s gospel is decidedly different from the other gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke are called “synoptic,” because they are essentially similar in content). John takes a fresh approach, presenting the life of Christ by means of various themes, such as light and darkness, good and evil, love and hate, falsehood and truth, life and death. Some of these are presented through seven “signs” that the Holy Spirit, through John, has selected to present and develop these themes. Some are developed through discourses of Jesus, including seven “I am” statements scattered throughout the book. Whether sign or discourse, John’s purpose is clear — to produce faith in Christ.

Ironically, this goal — to produce faith in Jesus — is presented in an atmosphere of opposition. It is truly the “gospel of rejection.” As Jesus speaks and performs miracles, people begin to either draw closer to Him or turn away from Him. There’s a turning point in chapter 6. When Jesus speaks and performs signs, the people try to force Him to become a king (v. 15). By the end of chapter 6, however, most of those “disciples” are leaving Him behind (v. 66). Instead of riding the wave of popularity, Jesus says things that are “hard to listen to” (v. 60). Jesus is sifting, separating false disciples from the true. His teaching becomes a turning point in the life of each person who hears it.

The gospel of John is an engaging study of choice and conflict. If that’s true, then we can profit most from the study if we constantly check our spiritual pulse as we read. Ask these questions: “What is Jesus doing here and why is He doing it?” “Why are people acting like this toward Him — why are they following Him or why are they rejecting Him?” “What would I do?” “What *am* I doing?” “What choices does this reading impose upon me?” “What conflict does it bring to my life, if I really practice what I’m reading?”

Author

There is little doubt among scholars that the beloved apostle John, the son of Zebedee and brother of James (see Mk 9:38; 10:35-37; Lk. 9:54ff.) wrote this gospel. There is substantial “external” evidence that he penned it. Iranaeus, a contemporary of John, wrote: “John, the disciple of the Lord who also leaned upon His breast, did himself write a gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.” The evidence is even stronger when the gospel is compared to John’s letters, where similarity in the use of terms is striking.

Date

The most generally accepted time frame for the writing of the gospel is the latter end of the first century. There are various reasons for assigning this date. The tone of the gospel seems to suggest an audience that was made up of people who had not been eyewitnesses of the events of Christ's life. John often translates a term for his readers (cf. Jn. 1:38), terms they probably would have known if they had been in closer proximity, time-wise, to the events mentioned.

It is also supposed that he is confronting a "Gnostic heresy," or at least the beginnings of such. Gnosticism, basically, denied the fleshly existence of the Messiah as it held that flesh was inherently sinful and vile. Therefore, in its various forms, it held that the Son of God in the "flesh" was a fiction. John says, in his second letter, that this doctrine is so important that we must not even give a greeting to those who deny the fleshly existence of Christ (2 Jn. 9-11; cf. 1:14; 6:51ff.).

Theological Outline

As mentioned above, the book – at least the first part – is structured around seven signs (not counting the resurrection of Christ) and seven "I Am" statements (see Ex. 3 for the significance of that statement). Remember that the significance of the signs is not in the signs themselves but in what they signify. John records them for us to believe, not only in the signs but also in the Christ who did them (cf. 10:35ff; 20:30-31).

The Seven Signs

1. Water to Wine (2:1-10)
2. Healing of Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)
3. Healing of Infirm Man (5:1-9)
4. Feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-14)
5. Walking on the Water (6:15-21)
6. Healing of the Blind Man (9:1-41)
7. Raising of Lazarus from the Dead (11:1-44)

The Seven "I Am's"

1. "Bread of Life" (6:35-48)
2. "Light of the World" (8:12; 9:5)
3. "Door" (10:7, 9)
4. "Good Shepherd" (10:11, 14)
5. "Resurrection & Life" (11:25)
6. "Way, Truth and Life" (14:6)
7. "True Vine" (15:1-5)

Assignment 1



What can you infer about Jesus from reading the outline?



Read John 1:1-18. The rest of the questions refer to these verses.

Questions

1. Who is the "Word"? Why is this term used to describe Him?
2. What is the main point of John 1:1-3? Why is this point crucial to the rest of the book? How does John prove it throughout the book?
3. What "life" did He bring to men (v. 4-5)? What is the "light"?
4. Explain v. 5b, "the darkness has not overcome it" (ESV); other versions, "the darkness did not comprehend it."
5. What John is John referring to in vv. 6-8? What was his function? (See 1:19-34).
6. How did the world "receive" the True Light? Why?
7. What was given to those who believed?
8. What major point is asserted in v. 14?
9. What was the difference between Jesus and Moses?
10. How does Jesus "make known" "the only God"?

Assignment 2



Read John 1:35-51

Questions

1. What is happening with Jesus here? What do we see Jesus doing/saying here?
2. Why is He doing/saying it?
3. Why are they reacting this way?
4. Why are they following Him?
5. What can we derive from Nathanael's comments after Philip tells him Jesus had arrived?
6. What would I do? What kind of student would I have been? What kind of student am I?
7. How are we studying and preparing our hearts for Christ's teachings? What are some things we can do to prepare?
8. What choices does this impose on me?

Assignment 3



Read John 2

Questions

1. Do a quick outline of this chapter and briefly indicate how, if at all, the paragraphs contribute to John's overall purpose (see John 1:14-18; 20:30-31):
 - 2:1-11 —
 - 2:12 —
 - 2:13-22 —
 - 2:23-25 —
2. John's gospel is full of details that teach important lessons, so you might want to get used to looking for them. There is an example, or two, in these texts; see if you can find it (or them).
3. What was the point of the water-to-wine sign? How do you know?
4. Why did John include the information in v. 12?
5. [Optional: look up some information about the kinds of things that occurred in and around the temple during feast days].
6. What were the money-changers doing that upset Jesus? Does he violate His own teaching from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:21ff)? If not, how would you differentiate "righteous anger" from the "anger of man" (James 1:20).
7. What "sign," if any, did Jesus show the Jews that validated his action? Read Mt. 21:12-27; what do the Jews ask Jesus after He cleanses the temple?
8. Explain 2:23-25, especially the phrase, "Jesus... did not entrust himself to them." What's going on here? Does 6:26 shed any light on it?

Assignment 4



Read John 3:1-15

Questions

1. What do we know about Nicodemus?
2. Consider the “details” of the gospel of John. What important details does he provide us in John 3:1-15?
3. How did Jesus respond to Nicodemus in vs. 3? Do you think he addressed Nicodemus’ initial statement or was he changing the subject?
4. Did Nicodemus understand what Jesus meant by “born again”? How do you know?
5. What did Jesus mean by being born of water and spirit?
6. What is the significance of verse 13?
7. What is the context of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness?
8. What do we learn about Jesus from these verses?

Assignment 5



Read John 3:16-21

Questions

1. John 3:16 — This famous verse begins with “for”; what’s the context? Why is this verse so famous?

2. Why did God send His Son into the world? (Review: what is the “world”?)

3. Is the entire plan of salvation explained in 3:16-17? Why or why not?

4. Jesus didn’t come into the world to condemn the world (v. 17) but His coming into the world condemns some in the world (v. 18-19a). Explain.

5. Describe the nature of light and the way John uses the concept in vv. 18-21.
 - What aspect of light does John emphasize in this paragraph?

 - Put “light” and “darkness” into 2011, American terms: what kinds of specific things would John put into each category?

 - Why do people “love” darkness? How do they show it?

 - Who loves the light and freely comes into the light? **Why** does that person come into the light?

Assignment 6



Read John 4:1-15

Questions

1. What compelled Jesus to make the 50-mile journey?
2. There were two major ways to travel from Judea to Galilee. Any idea why he decided to pass *through* Samaria?
3. Jesus and the woman at the well were very different people. List all the ways they were different.
4. What brought these two very different people together in a meaningful conversation?
5. "Water" is found 86 times in the New Testament. Compare that to 73 times for "hope," 51 times for "saved," and 10 times for "justification." What is the big deal about water?
6. What's special about Jesus' living water?
7. Does verse 15 reveal that the woman truly understands Jesus or not?

Assignment 7



Read John 4:16-26

Questions

1. What was the point of Jesus asking the woman to bring her husband? What wisdom can we gain from this for talking to people about their souls?
2. What did Jesus have to say about the Jews worship that was positive? Does that have some application to us today?
3. What is a true worshipper?
4. What do we need to do to worship God in spirit (or Spirit)? Can you find any passages that talk about worship and spirit together?
5. What do we need to do to worship God in truth? Can you find any passages that talk about worship and truth together?

Assignment 8



Read John 5:1-29

Questions

1. What miracle does Jesus perform, where, and why did it cause controversy (vs.1-9)?
2. What actions do the Jews condemn, and by what authority do they make the accusation (vs. 10, 16)?
3. What is Jesus' response to the accusation (vs. 17)?
4. What exactly does Jesus mean by His response in verse 17, and why was that statement so problematic from a Jewish perspective?
5. What is the key point Jesus makes in His discourse in verses 19-29?
6. What reward does Jesus promise in verse 24, and what is required in order to obtain the reward?
7. How does this passage (vs. 1-29) add value to John's overall thesis as stated in John 20:30-31?

Assignment 10



Read John 6:1-14

Questions

1. Where had Jesus been prior to this and why did he decide to go to the other side of Sea of Galilee?
2. Why were the people following Jesus?
3. Why do you think John mentions the proximity of the Passover in this event?
4. Why does Jesus identify hunger as the peoples' primary need?
5. Do his disciples believe that Jesus can feed all these people?
6. What do you think was going through the minds of the people as Jesus was performing this miracle?
7. Does this event trigger belief from the people?
8. Why do the people perceive him to be a prophet?
9. Why does Jesus withdraw from the people instead of simply telling them that he was not the king?

Assignment 11



Read John 6:22-68; 7:1-9; 40-52

Questions

1. [Context] Describe the events leading up to Jesus' statement in 6:35, "I am the bread of life."
 2. What did Jesus mean by the statement that He is the "bread of life"? In what sense were the people trying to make Him "the god of bread"? What was the main reason people followed Jesus? What does Jesus say about this?
 3. Describe the Jews' reaction to Jesus claim that He is the bread of life. Why were they upset? What were they arguing about among themselves?
 4. What does Jesus say in His sermon in 6:53-58 that made it hard for even His disciples to hear? What did He mean when He says that they must "eat His flesh" and "drink His blood"?
 5. Jesus says no can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him? How does the Father "draw" people? Cf. John 12:32.
 6. V. 66 says that "many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him." Why? What does this say about the definition of the term "disciple"? Why didn't the 12 go away too?
 7. Explain the exchange between Jesus and His brothers (7:1-9), especially their statement that He should go to Judea so His disciples can see the works even though, as John tells us, they didn't believe in Him (cf. 10:37-38).
 8. 7:40-52 — Explain the various reactions to Jesus (see also 7:25-27; 35-36). How does this support John's overall purpose as stated in 20:30-31.
- ["Supposin'"] This is conjecture, but think about it. Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night (3:1ff.) and was chastised by Jesus for not understanding things he should have understood, as a "teacher of Israel" (3:10), now appears and defends Jesus' right to a fair trial (7:50-52). Later, in John 19:39, he's present at the burial of Jesus and John describes him as the one who *earlier* had come to Jesus by night. It's interesting to imagine, as so many "disciples" are falling away from Jesus and rejecting Him, that John makes Nicodemus the poster child for one who is beginning to "get it" as the light begins to dawn on him (cf. II Peter 1:19).

Assignment 12



Read John 8:12-30

Questions

1. If Jesus is the light, what does that say about the world? Have we seen some discussion on this in the earlier chapters in John?
2. What characteristic(s) do we need to accept Jesus as the light of the world? What makes it hard for people to accept this saying? What is our condition without his light?
3. How far did Jesus intend his light to reach? Can you find any prophecies that foretold this? How did this idea challenge his audience? How are we challenged by this part of Jesus' statement today?
4. Jesus is the light, but what does he say that we have to do to escape the darkness?
5. How is Jesus the light of life (Acts 26:23)?
6. List the "I Am ..." phrases Jesus uses in John 8:12-30.

Assignment 13



Read John 8:31-59

Questions

1. In 8:31, Jesus stated that we are truly his disciples when we abide in his word. How do we abide in his word?
2. What is the truth that Jesus spoke of in 8:32?
3. In your opinion, how is a life of sin like a life of slavery?
4. In verses 38 and 41, Jesus states that the Pharisees are doing what they have heard from their father. What were they trying to do?
5. What two fathers did the Jews claim in verses 39 through 41? Who did Jesus state their father was?
6. There seems to be at least one connection between 8:51-57 and these passages: 3:3-5 and 4:10-14. What connection(s) do you see?

Assignment 14



Read John 9

Questions

1. Why would the Jews ask the question in v. 2? What is the attitude that fuels that kind of question?
2. Why do you suppose Jesus told the man to “go, wash...”? Why didn’t He just heal him on the spot, as He often did?
3. Describe the source of the division reported in v. 16.
4. Do the Pharisees ever try to disprove the miracle?
5. Why were Jews accusing Jesus of being a sinner (v. 16, 24-25)?
6. The exchange between the formerly blind man and the Jews is fascinating, even humorous at times. How does the blind man answer their questions?
7. Is v. 31 proof that God doesn’t hear the prayer of sinners? Why or why not?
8. What do the Jews do to the man who was born blind and healed?
9. What “reasoning” does the formerly blind man use to try to convince the Jews that Jesus must be “somebody”?
10. Jesus says he came into the world “for judgment” (9:39). Reconcile 3:17. What does He mean here?
11. Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees question “are we also blind?” is profound; explain it.