

Lesson Schedule and Reading

- ◆ I am posting the lesson schedule and associated reading at <http://www.diether.org>.

New Testament Manuscripts



Figure 1: Hebrews 1 from Codex Vaticanus

The first chapter of the book of Hebrews from one the best surviving New Testament manuscripts: Codex Vaticanus. The manuscript was probably transcribed sometime in the 4th century CE. Source: Ehrman, Bart D., 2004, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, Oxford University Press, 483.

- ◆ What do you notice about the nature of the manuscript?

- ◆ Well clearly it is written in Greek as is all of the New Testament. Another striking feature is that there are no spaces between the words. There is no punctuation or distinction between upper and lower case letters. One can easily see how this can make things difficult.

godisnowhere

Is the phrase “God is now here” or “God is nowhere?”

- ◆ Another difference is there are no chapter or verse divisions in the original manuscript. Chapter divisions arose as early as the 4th century. The motivation was to make reading (particularly public reading) easier. However, the chapter divisions we currently use only go back to the 13th century. Stephen Langdon, a lecturer at the University of Paris, introduced the chapter divisions into the Latin Vulgate. The NT was split into verses in 1551. Robert Stephanus published Greek and Latin editions with a verse structure and it is the same structure we use today. Stephanus’s son indicate that his father did the divisions while “on horseback” (i.e., while traveling) from Paris to Lyons. This has led to a joke that Stephanus literally did it “on horseback” because the divisions sometimes make little sense. For example, sometimes a verse ends in the middle of a sentence (Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, p 482).
- ◆ *Do you see the marginal note between the 1st and 2nd columns?*
- ◆ Bart Ehrman explains the marginal note: “A corrector to the text has erased a word in verse 3 and substituted another word in its place; some centuries later, a second corrector came along erased the correction, reinserted the original word, and wrote in the margin to castigate the first corrector. The note reads, ‘Fool and knave, leave the old reading, don’t change it.’”

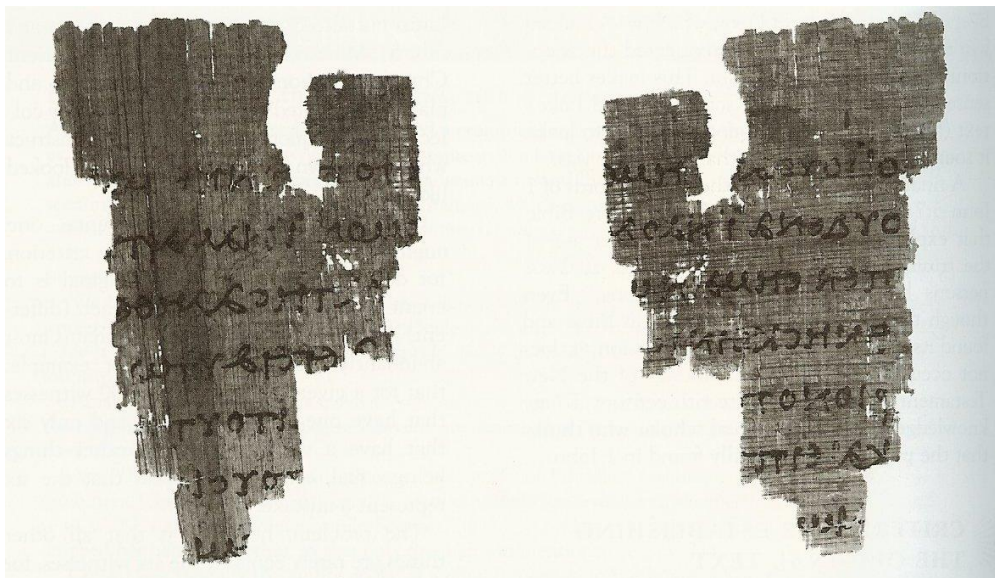


Figure 2: John 18:31-33, 37-38 from P52

P52 is a credit card sized fragment from the gospel of John. The fragment is the oldest surviving New Testament manuscript, and has been dated to around 100-125 CE. Both the front and back of the manuscript is pictured. Source: Ehrman, Bart D., 2004, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, Oxford University Press, 486.

The Gospel of John

- ◆ **Date:** Most scholars believe that the gospel of John was written between 80-110 CE (see Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*) . Some believe most of John was written in the 90s and may have seen later editing/redaction in 100-110. Most scholars as well as Christian tradition places the gospel of John as the last of the four gospels written.
- ◆ **Authorship:** This may seem obvious but it is a much debated question. It is important to keep in mind that none of the gospels themselves explicitly identify their authors and that the traditional authorship by Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John comes from second century Christian tradition. These second century sources tend to be second or third hand at best and also tend to be late remembrances. Thus the question of authorship is very much unanswered. The traditional identification is, of course, John the apostle. On the author hand many modern scholars would probably say we don't really know but that the author is probably a follower or a member of the Johannine school or congregation. So no matter what, the gospel has a close connection with John the apostle.
- ◆ *Does the authorship matter? Does it matter if John or some anonymous early Christian writer wrote it?*
- ◆ I suppose it does from the it is really nice to know things perspective, and it also may help us understand the gospel better and the context surrounding it. However, it is important to keep the following in mind:
 - ◆ The authority of the gospel of John does not depend on the whether John the apostle wrote it or not.
- ◆ **Where:** Where was the gospel written? At least four locations have been proposed: Ephesus, Alexandria, Antioch, and Palestine. The traditional location is Ephesus and comes from a statement by Irenaeus toward the end of the second century.

John: The Basic Structure

- ◆ Prologue: John 1:1-18
- ◆ Book of Signs: John 1:19-12:50 (The Word reveals himself but his own accepts him not)
- ◆ The Book of Glory: 13:1-20:31 (To those who accept Him, He shows his glory)
- ◆ Epilogue: 21:1-25

The Prologue

- ◆ The first 18 verses of John serve as a prologue. The prologue, of course, contains some of the most well known and beloved verses in all of the New Testament.
- ◆ The Inspired Version (what we usually call the JST) contains some variants relative to the King James text. I think the Inspired version is very interesting and looking at the variants is a very useful exercise but I am going to stick to the normal text (Authorized Version) in the interest of time.
- ◆ *What are your impressions of the style or literary structure of the prologue? How would you describe it?*
- ◆ There is a clearly a rhythmic quality to the prologue. Some commentators believe it is rhythmic prose, but I think most believe that it is poetry. Some commentators believe that parts of the prologue (basically remove the commentary about John the Baptist) are a hymn. Maybe one of the very first Christian hymns (there are a few other hymns in the Pauline epistles). Some commentators believe that the prologue is an extended chiasmus.

Logos

- ◆ Read John 1:1-5:

(1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life; and the life was the light of men. (5) And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

- ◆ *Tell me about your impressions of these verses?*
- ◆ *Why does John start off this way? Why start with “In the beginning?”*
- ◆ This actually would be a powerful connection for Jews of the time because they referred to the books of the Bible by their opening words (See WBC vol 34). So Genesis was known as “In the beginning.” John wants his readers to know the real beginning.
- ◆ *Why this beginning? Why not start with Jesus’s birth like the synoptic gospels? Does it tell us something about John’s approach or about how he understood Jesus?*
- ◆ *Why do you think that Jesus isn’t identified as “the Word” until towards the end of the prologue?*
- ◆ *John Identifies Jesus as the Word; the underlying Greek word is logos. In Hellenistic tradition the Logos is a very important concept. “Heraclitus said that the Logos is ‘the omnipresent wisdom by which all things are steered.’” (Word Bible Commentary, vol 36, p 6) Philo of Alexandria explained that the Logos is the medium of divine government of the World and that it is “the captain and pilot of the universe?” (Word Bible Commentary, vol 36, p 6) Why would John connect Jesus with a such a concept in Greek tradition?*

- ◆ *Is there anything in the prologue that suggests that John might not be reaching back to Greek tradition with his Word = Jesus identification?*
- ◆ “In the beginning” certainly puts us into a Hebrew frame of mind. It certainly reminds us of creation and connects the Word with creation. Of course, this is a natural association for Mormons since Jesus is clearly the creator of the world for us. But it is a natural association for Jews as well. Speaking has power; words have power. God created the earth by speaking. “The ‘Word of God’ was not so much an expression of thought as it was a powerful action.” (WBC vol 36, p 6). We see this reflected in some of Psalms. Read Psalms 33:6:

(6) By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

- ◆ *Is “the Word” title meaningful to us today? Does it give use insight into Jesus? Do would need to know the origins and context to appreciate this title?*
- ◆ To me maybe the most important thing is that it opens our eyes to later passages. Pay attention how the word “word” is used in the gospel of John. John uses the word “logos” like 39 times and often in very theologically significant ways.
- ◆ *The first few verses connect Jesus (the Word) with God and with creation. How do things shift in verse 4? Why is this an important reminder? Does it tell us anything about the nature of God? How is it connected with Jesus’ earthly ministry?*
- ◆ *What is verse 5 talking about? “comprehendeth” could be translated grasp or overcome.*

Reactions to the The Word

- ◆ Read 1:9-13:

(10) He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. (11) He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- ◆ *What does verse 11 mean? What does it mean that he came unto his own, but his own did not receive him? Who are Jesus’s own here? What is the context? Is there anything ironic about this?*
- ◆ *I am not sure whether it is either Israel or the world in general. What about verse 10? Does verse 10 help us understand verse 11? What about verse 12? Does it help us understand verse 11?*
- ◆ *What do these verses tell us about becoming sons of God? What does it mean? How does it happen? Why does John link it with “the Word?”*

- ◆ *The imagery of verse 13 is very interesting. What do you make of it? Why contrast the new birth with blood and flesh? Why contrast with the will of man?*

The Church Responds

- ◆ Read John 1:14-18:

(14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. **(15)** John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. **(16)** And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. **(17)** For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. **(18)** No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.