

And The Word Was God – John’s Christology and Jesus’s Discourse in Jewish Context
–by Adele Reinhartz

The following excerpts are from:

- Reading the Gospel of John’s Christology as Jewish Messianism: Royal, Prophetic, and Divine Messiahs <https://www.amazon.com/Reading-Christology-Messianism-Ancient-Christianity/dp/9004349758>
- Editors: Benjamin Reynolds and Gabriele Boccaccini
- Chapter 4: “And The Word Was God” – John’s Christology and Jesus’s Discourse in Jewish Context –by Adele Reinhartz https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004376045_005

Abstract:

“This essay examines the verbosity of John’s Jesus. It argues that the Johannine discourses underscore Jesus’ identity as God’s son by showing that he, like God, sets the cosmological processes of creation and salvation in motion through speech. The argument focuses on the selective use of Christological titles, the identification of Jesus with God, and the parallels between Jesus’ activity, as described in John, and the scriptures. Although Second Temple literature also reflects on God’s redemptive activity, it seems that John’s usage is not directly dependent on those sources. Rather, John’s author approaches the Jewish scriptures in the same way as the authors of Second Temple Jewish texts do: as a starting point for messianic and especially eschatological reflection. The role of the voice points to the importance of the words. Further, the intertwined concepts of Jesus’s signs, words, eternal life, and Jesus’s Christological identity as the Son of God, and the promise of eternal life suggests that the Gospel itself—as witness to and record of (some of) Jesus’s signs—is the means through which the Gospel’s audience—its hearers—hear the voice of the Son of God, and in so doing, attain eternal life.”

Begin Excerpt:

“In John 17:17, Jesus petitions God to “sanctify them [the disciples] in the truth; your word is truth.” The Greek formulation for the latter phrase—ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν—encapsulates what I see as the Gospel’s central message: in every way that truly matters, Jesus is God’s Word, and God’s truth. This is substantiated by 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” As God’s Word, Jesus embodies the divine essence and is empowered to act in the world not merely as God’s spokesman or representative, but, fundamentally, as God himself. This conclusion raises two questions, one theological and the other sociohistorical. The theological question concerns the Gospel’s privileging of Jesus’s own usage of kinship terms, and its careful portrayal of Jesus’s speech as divine speech. Does this mean that the Gospel is also, perhaps implicitly, engaging in a critique of the other messianic titles, which have their clear origins in Jewish eschatological thinking of the Second Temple

period? Is the evangelist attempting to show that these, while applicable to, and fulfilled by Jesus as far as they go, are inadequate for truly capturing Jesus's significance...?"

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“The Johannine connection between speech and eternal life echoes numerous aspects of early Jewish thought about the Bible and its relationship to the divine. Just as John 20:31 presumes the transformative potential of the written word, so does the prophetic literature, and, indeed, the Septuagint as a whole, presume the transformative power of the divine word. By extension, this applies also to the written record of the divine word, as noted in Isa. 55:11:

‘So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.’

The role of the voice points to the importance of the words. There is therefore a cluster of terms that are integrally related: signs, words, eternal life, and Jesus's Christological identity as the Son of God. This cluster suggests that the Gospel itself—as witness to and record of (some of) Jesus's signs—is the means through which the Gospel's audience—its hearers—hear the voice of the Son of God, and in so doing, attain eternal life.”

End Excerpt.

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End.