

The Gospel of John: Part 2, The Word

John 1:1–18 (ESV)

¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was in the beginning with God.* ³ *All things were made through 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 *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* ⁶ *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.* ⁷ *He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.* ⁸ *He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.* ⁹ *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.* ¹⁰ *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.* ¹¹ *He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* ¹² *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,* ¹³ *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.* ¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* ¹⁵ *(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’ ”)* ¹⁶ *And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.* ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* ¹⁸ *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.*

This is the beginning of John’s Gospel. It is usually referred to as the prologue. If this was a paper being written for a college class this would be called the thesis statement. John is telling us in a simple summed up way exactly what he is going to write in the rest of his gospel. To me this introduction is some of the most beautiful verses in the bible. It tells us that God came

and dwelt with us so that we could have life. These verses tell us who Jesus was and what exactly He did for us.

Many believe that this was a hymn that was written by John and added here. Songs were often used to teach, since the catchy rhythms will get stuck in your head. Either way this is the beginning of John's gospel and contains in a few verses the truth of Jesus.

As I prepared this it is kind of hard to figure out exactly how much I want to discuss here. So much information is given that it could be broken down in so many ways. James Montgomery Boice spends 15 chapters in his commentary on John breaking these verses down. When John Piper preached a series on John in 2008 it took 5 sermons to get through the prologue. John MacArthur spent 3 Sundays trying to get through the beginning of John. So there is a lot that is covered in a few verses here. If you try to outline these verses you come up with 7 points. So I want to try and move swiftly through this but I want you to realize there is a lot here for you to prayerfully study.

So let's dive in. In the beginning was the Word. We are going to start with the word Word. In Greek it is *Logos*. John writes in a very deep and theological way, where the more you study and understand the words used the more meaning you will find. We need to also notice that in verse 14 John helps us see that "the Word" is referring to Jesus. *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,*¹

¹ Jn 1:14.

The Greek

To the Greek reader the word was an impersonal creative force and source of wisdom and reasoning.² Heraclitus came up with this philosophy. He was A Greek philosopher whom lived between 535 B.C. and 475 B.C.³ He established this term Logos and also made the famous statement you cannot step into the same river twice. Plato, another Greek philosopher that you probably have heard of often quoted Heraclitus and also expounded on this idea behind Logos being the source of reasoning and creator of the universe. Plato went on to say that maybe someday God would send forth a word, Logos that would explain everything clearly.^{4,5} When a Greek reads these opening verses talking about the word, to them this is screaming out, “Yes, God sent Jesus to make everything clear!”

The Jew

To the Jewish reader The Word was very significant. To them the word would be the very voice of God. It could be spoken through a prophet or it could be in scripture. To understand how significant John’s use of the word to describe Jesus was we have to look at the Aramic Targums and Jewish tradition. In the Hebrew scriptures the proper name of God is the *tetragrammaton* YHVH. We pronounce it Yahweh, sometimes it is said Jehovah as in the English translation of the American Standard Version. If you ever notice as you read through your English translation sometimes LORD is in all capitals. If you were reading your bible in Hebrew the word there would be *Yahweh*, where if it was Just the L capitalized it would be

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary : John 1-11* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2006), 16.

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraclitus>

⁴ Boice, James Montgomery. *The Gospel of John : An Expository Commentary*. Pbk. ed., p 34, p 35. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005.

⁵ Ironside, H. A. *Addresses on the Gospel of John*, p 16. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1942.

Adonai. Adonai would also be the word used in Hebrew scripture readings. Rabbonic law allowed only the high priest to use the word *Yahweh* during certain services.

In the Targums, which was an Aramic paraphrase ““the Word of the Lord” is substituted for *Yahweh*. Remember a paraphrase is where someone takes the scripture and puts it in their own words. English examples of this are *The Message* translation and *The Living Bible*. So some examples from the targums would be, “The Lord protected Noah by his Word;” in Genesis 7:16. “The Word of the Lord was with Ishmael in the wilderness.” in Genesis 21:20 or Jacob made a covenant that “the Word of the Lord should be his God;” in Genesis 28:21.⁶ So to the Jewish reader John was saying Jesus is God just in the use of the word Logos.

Preexistence

So now we are back to “In the beginning was the Word” This harkens back to Genesis and the start of Scripture, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”⁷ The theological significance of this is that John is saying we are beginning anew. This is the new covenant. It is not based on the law. It is not based on circumcision. It is based on the love of Jesus and faith in his atoning sacrifice and resurrection from death.

It is also showing us that Jesus was there in the beginning. Remember John is writing his gospel to counter the heresies that have sprung up by the end of the first century. This is the preexistence of Jesus. He was not made. He was there. He is not less than God but equal to God.

⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary: St. John Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2004), 6.

⁷ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.*, Ge 1:1. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001.

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Just as Genesis 1:1 tells us that God has always been, John 1:1 tells us that Jesus has always been.

I hope that you will spend the next week prayerfully considering these first 5 verses we are going to study. Take one verse a day and spend a few minutes prayerfully reflecting on what they mean. Think about all the implications it has in your life. Think about what it truly means the The God that was in the beginning came and died for you. The God saved you. One verse a day and prayerfully ask God to reveal to you how much He loves you.

And the Word was with God. Remember our theology of the word. So basically this just said, And God was with God. This verse is showing us part of the trinity. There is one God and he exist in three persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The trinity is one of those doctrines that are taught in the bible but our human minds have a hard time being able to fully grasp how it works. The thing we must remember is that God's ways are higher than ours and His thoughts are higher than ours so we do the best we can to understand it,

John is countering heresies that have come up and these verses are going to tell us exactly who Jesus is so we have to look at all of the revelations John is giving us. The Word was with God. It's important that we look at this through the eyes of scripture. They shall have no other Gods before me. If Jesus was a separate God from God the Father, as Jehovah's Witnesses try to say in their New World Translation, then the same God that told us not to worship other Gods would be telling us to worship other Gods. The correct translation here is the Word was God. Jesus is God. That is what makes His death so amazing. The God that was in the beginning and created you and I chose to come down to Earth and fix the mistake we made in sin, even though it meant He had to step down from Heaven take on the form of man and suffer at our hands.

This is another one of those verses I want you to pray over this week. Jesus died for your sin and Jesus was God. This should be one of those truths that we can never get over. It should amaze us every time we think about it. It should drive us to our knees in worship when we think about it.

Jesus had to do this because only the sacrifice of God would be able to cover our sins. In Hebrews Paul tells us that “*it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*”⁸ Only the blood of God could take away the sin of man. Jesus freely shed His blood for you.

He was with God in the beginning. Again John is making sure we see Jesus preexistence and equality with God He is reminding us that Jesus and God are the same but also separate.

All things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. Look quickly at Colossians 1:16 “*For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*”⁹ Everything was made for and by Jesus. Heaven, Earth, Angels, You, and I, Everything. Think about that you were made by Jesus for Jesus.

We give a gift to someone and they like it but when they get to pick out the gift for their selves then you know it’s perfect because the one receiving it got to pick it out.

You are that gift! God put you together. David tells us in Psalm 139 that God knit us together in the womb. In verse 16 David tells us that every day of our life was known to God at the beginning.

⁸ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.*, Heb 10:4. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001.

⁹ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.*, Col 1:16. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001.

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Do you know what that means? That means that in Jesus' eyes, because you are forgiven, you are perfect. That guilt you feel for that sin you committed is because you haven't forgiven yourself. The creator of the universe took it upon Himself to erase that sin from your permanent record. Jesus because He was there in the beginning, because He was God, because He was with God He was able to come down and die so that your sin could be forgiven.

When you look in a mirror who do you see? Is it someone defeated by sin? Is it someone who knows the terrible things they have done and that they do not deserve God's forgiveness? Or is it someone that was saved by the Word. Because that Word, that Logos, that Jesus has cleansed you. That Jesus has allowed you to be forgiven and adopted by God. When you look in that mirror, if you have accepted Jesus as your savior, you should see the same thing that God sees. You should see a child of God created by God for God. And that should change you. That should move you.

Let's go on verse 4. In Him was Life and that life was the light of man. This verse followed the one telling all things were created through Jesus. If we go back to Genesis 2:7 we see that God or Yahweh Elohim or as we said earlier the word of God breathed life into the nostrils of man. Mankind came into existence because Jesus, the word of God breathed life into Adam's Nostrils. Jesus did this for Him. That thought should overwhelm you. Think about Adam. Originally before sin entered into the world, by Adam eating the forbidden fruit we were to have fellowship with God he would show His presence in the garden. God created us to be with us. Sin caused Adam to hide, just as sin should and does cause us to hide from a Holy God. But originally we were created to be in God's presence. .

The life you have today the fact that you awoke this morning is because Jesus breathed life into Adam. But as we mentioned sin caused a separation. Sin caused death. This thought should

overwhelm you. You are going to die and suffer God's wrath against sin. But Jesus because he wants to be with you, came down and gave the necessary sacrifice so that with faith you won't die. Jesus gave eternal life. Jesus gives us life again.

How many know someone that has died? Did they have faith in Jesus? Then they did not die! No they did not die. They went to be in His presence. Paul talked about this dilemma in Philippians 1:12, To live is Christ but to die is gain. Paul was saying that to die is when I actually get life. When I die I go to be with Jesus. I gain everything in death. I watched a movie a while back and in it a boy made a comment to his brother that had lived through the accident that killed him that, "You only hurt because you live."¹⁰

In death if you know Christ you gain everything. You gain life eternal. Paul's faith in this eternal life was so strong that he wished his persecutors would kill him except for the fact that then he couldn't tell others about Jesus. Did you get that? Paul's reason for living was to tell others about Jesus.

Jesus gives life eternal. And that life is the light of men. That life should be our hope it should be our reasoning behind everything we do. Are you living your life for Jesus? Is your every decision based on the fact that Jesus gave you life? Is that life Jesus gave you causing you to grow to be more like Jesus?

Verse 5 and we are done for the night. *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* Depending what translation you are using it could say the darkness has not overcome, or conquered or comprehended or understood. It is translated many ways. Jesus (the source of the light) has come into the sinful world (the darkness) and He shines. He is there and He gives hope. The devil nor anything in this world can hold him back.

¹⁰ Charlie St Cloud

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I worked nights for many years. It is hard to sleep during the daytime. Any light that makes it into the room will disturb you. I've hung dark curtains over the windows but if there is one seam that is open the light will make it through. I would finally get the curtains right and light would flood in under the door. The light would always find away to shine through the darkness. The darkness of this world of evil of sin it makes us sometimes despair. It makes us wonder if God is really there in all the suffering we see. But the darkness will never conquer the light.

If you have faith in Jesus that light is in you it shines through the darkness even when for whatever reason you try to stop it. When I went to day shift the first thing I did was to remove the dark curtains and open the blinds so when the sun rose I could see it. If you are trying to hide that light let it shine remove the blinds that sin are and let it freely penetrate the darkness.

Next week we are going to look at John the Baptist. We are going to start lookin at evangelism and our responsibility as holders of the light .