

The Beginning Word

John 1:1-3

Today we begin our verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of John. Last time I gave you a broad outline of this book and we saw John's purpose for writing his gospel which he clearly states for us in John 20:30-31:

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

John wants us to know who Jesus is and he wants us to believe in Him so that we may have life in His name. Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and have life in His name. That is why we open this inspired book today.

John begins his gospel with an 18 verse prologue. In these opening verses the apostle sets forth a summary of who Jesus really is (Stedman, [Hello Darkness - John 1:5-13](#)). Edward Klink says, "The prologue of John is the cornerstone for the entire Gospel, the lens through which the Gospel must be read." (Klink – Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, John p. 84). Some have compared the prologue of John to the overture of an opera or musical. In an overture you will hear hints of all the musical themes that will come throughout the production. One writer says John's prologue is like walking into a movie theatre and seeing posters of various scenes that will play out in the drama.

John skillfully presents these themes in the first 18 verses. Colin Kruse points out:

The Prologue ... introduces the main themes that are to appear throughout the Gospel: Jesus' pre-existence (1:1a/ 17:5), Jesus' union with God (1:1c/8:58; 10:30; 20:28), the coming of life in Jesus (1:4a/5:26; 6:33; 10:10; 11:25-26; 14:6), the coming of light in Jesus (1:4b, 9/3:19; 8:12; 12:46), the conflict between light and darkness (1:5/ 3:19; 8:12; 12:35, 46), the witness of John the Baptist (1:6, 1:19-34; 3:23-4:1), believing in Jesus (1:7, 12/2:11; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:69; 11:25; 14:1; 16:27; 17:21; 20:25), the rejection of Jesus (1:10c, 11/4:44; 7:1; 8:59; 10:31; 12:37-40; 15:18), divine regeneration (1:13/3:1-7), the glory of Jesus (1:14/12:41; 17:5, 22, 24), the grace and truth of God in Jesus (1:14, 17/4:24; 8:32; 14:6; 17:17; 18:38), Jesus and Moses/the law (1:17/1:45; 3:14; 5:46; 6:32; 7:19; 9:29), only Jesus has seen God (1:18/6:46), and Jesus' revelation of the Father (1:18/3:34; 8:19, 38; 12:49-50; 14:6-11; 17:8). (*John* [IVP Academic], pp. 59-60).

John begins by stunning us with his description of Jesus Christ. John gives Him the title of "the Word." Although he does not mention Jesus' name until verse 17, it becomes clear right away that he is talking about Jesus. John wants us to stand in awe of Jesus as God and as the One who reveals the unseen God to us, just as a word reveals an unseen thought (Cole – [Jesus, Revealer of God](#)).

Listen as I read the first 18 verses of John 1 and then we will focus on study on the first five verses:

- 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 nothing was made that was made.**
- 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.**
- 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.**
- 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.**
- 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.**
- 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.**
- 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.**
- 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.**
- 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.**
- 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**
- 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 beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**
- 15 John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.' "**
- 16 And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.**
- 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**
- 18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**

What John is doing in these first few verses is telling us the most ultimate things about Jesus that he can. It took John more than three years to figure out the fullness of who Jesus was. But he does not want his readers to take more than three verses to find out what took him so long to know. He wants us to have in

our minds, fixed and clear, from the beginning of his Gospel, the eternal majesty and deity and Creator rights of Jesus Christ. ... That's the point of these opening verses. He means for us to read this Gospel worshipfully, humbly, submissively, awestruck that the man we will see at the wedding and who talks with the woman at the well, the man who opened the eyes of the man born blind and who raised Lazarus from the dead, and the man who died on the cross is God, the Creator of the universe. (Piper – [In the Beginning Was the Word](#)).

It is foundational to the Christian faith and crucial to your personal faith that you understand and embrace the truth that Jesus Christ is fully God (Cole). John sets this forth in the simplest and most profound way in his opening statement:

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.

In verses 1-2 we see first of all:

I. The Word in His Person (John 1:1-2)

Verse one confronts us with this one who is “the Word.” What does John mean by giving Jesus this title? Ray Stedman asks “What is a word, anyway? A word is an audible or a visual expression of a thought. Thoughts are incommunicable until they are put into words. Several times the Scripture asks, “Who has known the mind of the Lord?” The answer is, “No one.” Nobody knows what God thinks until He tells us. ([Who is Jesus-John 1:1-4](#)).

Much as our words reveal to others our hearts and minds, so Jesus Christ is God’s “**Word**” to reveal His heart and mind to us. “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). A word is composed of letters, and Jesus Christ is “Alpha and Omega” (Rev. 1:8), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. According to Hebrews 1:1–3, Jesus Christ is God’s last Word to mankind, for He is the climax of divine revelation. (Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#)).

The word, in Greek, the *Logos*, was a familiar term in the minds of both Hebrew and Greek thinkers, and both groups to one degree or another had the idea of beginnings related to the word *Logos*. John's opening would remind the Hebrew thinker of Genesis 1:1 (In the beginning - Lxx = “en arche” just as in Jn 1:1) and Genesis 1:3 (“Then God said, “Let there be light.”) God spoke His Word and all creation came into existence (Heb 11:3-note). To the Greek mind *Logos* was essentially impersonal, signifying the rational principle of “divine reason,” “mind,” or even “wisdom.” (MacArthur).

The Lord Jesus is the Word, the conveyor to men not only of the thoughts of God and the wisdom of God, but the conveyor of what God is. He reveals God to men, so as verse 18 says " **No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.**"

What do we know about the person of Jesus, the Word? First we see:

A. Jesus Is Eternally God (1:1a)

“In the beginning was the Word.” These words tell us the relation of Jesus Christ to time. The words “in the beginning” are identical in Greek to the first two words in the Greek Old Testament: **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”** That’s not an accident, John takes us back to the beginning, even before God created the heavens and the earth. And who do we find there? The Word. The first thing John is going to tell us about what Jesus did is that He created the universe. That’s what He says in verse 3. So the words “in the beginning” mean: before there was any created matter, there was the Word, the Son of God. (Piper).

The verb “was” indicates that at the beginning of the universe, the Word already was in existence. Notice John does not say in the beginning CAME the Word or BEGAN the Word, but WAS the Word. John means that there never was a time when the Word was not. We refer to this as the pre-existence of Christ. Before the creation, before anything came into existence, He was already existing.

So this first phrase in verse 1 teaches that Jesus’s pre-existence from all eternity past. Jesus exists as the eternal God. The second phrase of verse 1 teaches that:

B. Jesus Is Equally God (1:1b)

“and the Word was with God” The Word not only existed as the eternal God but He existed eternally *with* God. *With* is a preposition which properly speaks of motion towards to “interface with.” The Word was continually “inclined toward” the God. This shows that the Word is not an impersonal idea or philosophy, but a Person. The Son was forever face to face with the Father. So along with the pre-existence of Christ, we have here the co-existence of Christ.

What this teaches us is that not only is the Word the eternal God, but He is also distinct from God. And this can only be understood by the biblical doctrine of the trinity. The Bible teaches that there is one God and yet there are three persons. Each person is fully God and yet He is not three Gods, but one God. And here we find two persons of the triune God, verse 18 tells us they are the Father and the Son. He is God, as we will see in verse 3 **“the Word was God,”** but the Word was also **“with God.”**

In verse 2, John repeats the first two phrases of verse 1, both for emphasis and to make sure that we understand what he is saying. **“He was in the beginning with God.”** The Word was in the beginning with God. While the Word is God (1:1c), the Word is distinct from God. He has a relationship with God. Spurgeon said, *“I know not how the Deity of Christ can be more plainly declared than in his eternal duration. He is from the beginning. In his glory he was “with God.” In his nature he “was God.””*

John is declaring the eternal existence of the Word with the Father, His relation and nearness to God, His equality with God, and particularly the distinction of the Word from the Father. He was always with Him, and is with Him, and ever will be with Him.

So Jesus is eternally God, equally with God, and thirdly,

C. Jesus Is Essentially God (1:1c-2)

“and the Word was God.” One of the marks of John’s Gospel is that the weightiest doctrines are often delivered in the simplest words. This could not get simpler — and it could not get weightier. The Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us, Jesus Christ, was and is God.

He always was God! This statement could not be any clearer! As Morris states (p. 76), *“Nothing higher could be said. All that may be said about God may fitly be said about the Word. ... John is not merely saying that there is something divine about Jesus. He is affirming that He is God, and doing so emphatically as we see from the word order in the Greek.”* (p. 77).

Let it be known here at New Covenant Baptist Church that we worship Jesus Christ as God. We fall down like Thomas before Jesus in John 20:28 and confess with joy and wonder, **“My Lord and my God!”**

The rest of the Gospel of John will give us infallible proof that these statements are true. Do you see what this means for our series on the Gospel of John? It means that we are going to spend week after week getting to know God, as we get to know Jesus. Do you want to know God? Come with us, and invite others, to come and meet God as we meet Jesus.

Verses 1-2 have given us who Jesus is in His person, He is eternally, equally, essentially God.

Verses 3-5 support those claims and give us their importance for us. So here we see,

II. The Word in His Power (John 1:3-5)

A. His Power of Creation (1:3)

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Here is the proof of His self-existence. Everything that exists came into being through Him. Everything that exists, He made. It all came from Him. He didn’t come from anyone, or anything. Everything came from Him. That’s a positive declaration, simple, clear, flawless evidence—not even arguable—that the Lord Jesus Christ is eternal God. If He made all things then He is God because the Bible is clear that God made all things.

The Bible teaches that all three members of the Trinity were involved in creation. God the Father created everything, but He did it through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:1-3). Also, the Spirit of God participated in creation (Gen. 1:2). God’s statement (Gen. 1:26), **“Let Us make man in Our image”** implies the involvement of the trinity in the creation of human beings.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says it this way,

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by [His] Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Jesus is the Word by which God created the worlds. **All things were made through Him.** And as if that wasn't a strong enough statement John adds at the end of verse 3, **"and without Him nothing was made that was made."**

Not one thing exists that He didn't make. The Creator of everything that exists must necessarily be uncreated. If He's not a part of the creation, then He's uncreated. Only the eternal God is uncreated. This reinforces John's statement that the Word is God. So we see His power in relation to the creation.

B. His Power of Communication (1:4-5)

Now this also leads to another obvious conclusion—stated at the beginning of verse 4, **"In Him was life."** He didn't get life from someone; nobody gave Him life. In Him was life. All life in creation and in re-creation comes from Him. He was alive and the source of life. And we will see from the Gospel that this life is not only physical life but also spiritual life, as the verse goes on to say, **"and the life was the light of men."**

The allusions to Genesis 1 are unavoidable here. In Genesis God creates light and life. Here the Word is life and light. John wants us to see that he is writing about a new creation that centers in the eternal Word, Jesus Christ the Son of God. He is the one who gives eternal life, true spiritual life, life with God. It cannot be found anywhere else or in anyone else. **In Him was life.** And it still is.

Verse 5 continues the thought here and shows us the result of His life and light, **"And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."**

The word translated "comprehend" can have two meanings, much like our word "grasp." It can mean to comprehend or grasp mentally, or it can mean to overcome or take hold of something in the sense of mastering it physically. You go into a pitch-dark, isolated place in a room and light is one candle, and the light will overpower the darkness. The life of God, the eternal one, the eternal life—Jesus—comes into the world as light and He lights the world and He's continuing to light the world. And notice this, the darkness can't overpower it. They crucified Him, but He arose and conquered the darkness. His salvation conquers the spiritual darkness in every heart that trusts in Him.

But the word may also be translated "comprehend," and this meaning also fits a theme in this Gospel. In 1:10b, those in the world **"did not know Him."** In 1:11b, even His own people **"did not receive Him."** Jesus points out (3:19-20) that those in the darkness love the darkness and hate the Light because their deeds are evil. Thus they didn't **"comprehend"** Jesus.

This opening of the gospel of John is such a powerful statement of the person of Christ and His impact on the world. The darkness cannot extinguish the Light,

and the Light is still shining in the world. It is available to any who will listen, who will hear, and who will receive Jesus Christ as Lord and God.

So John's point in this opening stunning description of Jesus Christ is to tell us that He is the eternal Word, the Creator of everything, and that He reveals the life and light of God to this dark world.

An old hymn by Joseph Condor expresses the truth of John 1 beautifully,

Thou art the everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son;
God manifestly seen and heard,
And Heav'n's belovèd one:

In Thee most perfectly expressed
The Father's glories shine;
Of the full deity possessed,
Eternally divine:

True image of the Infinite,
Whose essence is concealed;
Brightness of uncreated light;
The heart of God revealed:

But the high mysteries of Thy name
An angel's grasp transcend;
The Father only—glorious claim!—
The Son can comprehend:

Throughout the universe of bliss,
The center Thou, and sun;
Th'eternal theme of praise of this,
To Heav'n's belovèd one:

Refrain

*Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow.*

Bruce Milne wrote that if Jesus Christ really is God as John presents Him here, we are called:

to worship Him without cessation,
obey Him without hesitation,
love Him without reservation and
serve Him without interruption.

To Him be all glory for ever –

How will you respond today?