

GOSPEL OF JOHN: THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE

“In the Beginning”

John 1:1-5

Open your Bibles to the Gospel of John, Chapter 1. We are going to look at the first five verses of the book this time. Let’s read this wonderful passage and then take a look at it verse by verse. John writes:

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

In the beginning...

Those are words that should bring something important to mind. They are the first words that the Holy Spirit inspired to be written in the Bible. He had Moses pen this incredible verse (Genesis 1:1):

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

I believe that these are the most significant words ever written in the history of mankind.

Why?

Because if a person can believe this, it will go a long way toward how they shape their worldview. If they believe this, they will not have a problem believing what is written in the rest of the Bible. They will believe that God created not just the world, but them. And if God created them, they are subject to Him, and they will seek to know Him.

So it is very significant that John chose these same words to begin his Gospel. In fact, it probably shocked his readers (at least the Jewish ones) to their core. But to add to their angst, John added this:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

What John is telling us here is that God was not alone when the world was created. Someone else was there with Him, a Person called the **“Word.”** And he claims that this Person was, and is, equal with God. Then, in verse 14 of chapter 1, John gives us a little more information about this Person, the Word. He writes:

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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.

Heads must have exploded when people read this.

How was this possible?

The use of this word, “**word**,” was a well-known religious concept to both Jews and Gentiles. It is the Greek word *logos*, which in its simplest form means:

A. A word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea

Gentiles referred to the “**word**” as the impersonal power that created and controlled the universe. The *logos* is what kept the world from slipping into chaos. Jews thought of the word as the creative power of YHWH — literally God’s Word or the Word of God. In Psalm 33:9 the psalmist explains this concept. Listen carefully to what he “*said*” about God creating the heavens and earth:

**For He (God) spoke, and it was *done*;
He commanded, and it stood fast.**

But John is not claiming the “**Word**” is just a force, or the power of God. He is telling us He is a Person. And in Revelation 19:13 John tells us this “**Word of God**” is none other than Jesus Christ.

How can this be?

Automatically, a Jew would reject this because they are mono-theistic. They would point to Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which states:

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

One God, right?

Yes.

But in the original (and I am no Hebrew scholar), it would read YHWH ELOHIM *echad* YHWH.

The reason I bring this up is because the word *Elohim* is plural, and some scholars say it speaks of at least three or more. And the kicker is that *Elohim* is the word Moses used when he wrote that God (*Elohim*) created the heavens and the earth. So even the verse that the Jews use to claim there is only one God (and there is) speaks of a plurality of one.

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Also, the word Moses used for one, *echad* in Hebrew, is interesting. *Echad* speaks more literally of a compound unity, rather than the Hebrew word *yacheed*, which speaks of an absolute unity or singularity. For instance *echad* is used in Genesis 2:24 speaking of Adam and Eve (man and woman) becoming one flesh in marriage. And there are many other verses that speak of this same thing (Exodus 26:6, 11; Ezekiel 37:17).

We, as Christians, call this the Trinity.

Well you might ask, what is the Trinity?

After all, this word is not used in the Bible, some might say. The following is one definition (from Gene Pensiero):

The Bible teaches that there is one eternal God who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He is the only God that exists. However, within the nature of this one God are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are co-equal and co-eternal. They are also distinguishable or distinct from one another. These three distinct Persons are the one God. Everything that is true about God is true about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This in a nutshell is what Christians believe.

Is it difficult to understand?

Yes, it is.

But the Bible, beyond doubt, teaches that God is triune. In fact, even God identifies Himself as a plurality. Listen to what He says in Genesis 2:26 and ask yourselves who He was speaking to:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.

We humans are not something that crawled up out of some primordial goo. We are made in God's image and God is a trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (We are too — body, soul, spirit).

And all three persons in the Trinity were there in the beginning, not only when Adam and Eve were created. They were all there and had a part when *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth.

I ask you who was it that hovered over the waters on the day of creation?

The Holy Spirit.

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And as we will learn momentarily, it was created by and for Jesus.

One God.

Three Persons.

Are you all with me on this?

If not, speak up, because this is critical; and we have Pastor Glenn and Pastor V to help explain it to you.

So here is what we have established thus far:

The Word, as John calls Him (Jesus), was there in the beginning with God. In other words, He pre-existed. He was there before creation and is, therefore, eternal. But not only that.

John also says the Word was “**with**” God. Not only did He exist in the beginning with God. He existed in the closest possible connection with Him. He is, in fact, very God. John says the Word “**was God.**”

(By the way, the Jehovah’s Witnesses have their own version of the Bible. As a warning, I will tell you that it is called the *New World Translation*. Don’t buy one; it is a waste of money. I saw a guy who had one once in a service at Calvary Chapel Reno/Sparks. After the service, I took him to the church bookstore and bought him the real thing. Then I happily deposited the *New World Translation* where it belonged, in the garbage can. Anyway they translate this part of the verse, i.e., the Word was “*a*” god. Wrong. You don’t have to know Greek grammar (which trashes this translation) or see existing manuscripts to show this is false.)

The Word cannot be both created and Creator. More on this later.

But why does John call Jesus the “**Word**”?

In verse 18 of chapter 1, he gives us a hint. He writes:

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

Warren Wiersbe put it this way in the *Bible Exposition Commentary*:

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.

The Word (Jesus Christ) reveals the unseen God. Jesus told Philip, “**He who has seen Me has seen the Father**” (John 14:9).

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God literally gave us His Word (His Son) and then wrote a love letter to us in His blood. And just in case you don't believe what John said about the Word, he reinforces it in verse 2:

He was in the beginning with God.

This is where John makes it personal.

He (the Word) was in the beginning with God. He existed in eternity past and will exist in eternity future. He did not have a beginning as the cults teach. He is eternal. He was there during the creation with God, and He is God. Some say that Jesus never claimed to be God. That is not true. In John 10:33 the Jews accused Him of this:

You being a man, make yourself out to be God.

Why would they say that if they did not think Jesus was making that claim?

One of my favorite verses that show the deity of Christ is John 8:58-59. The Jews had just claimed Abraham as their father (and he is). Listen to what His reply was and their reaction to it:

⁵⁸Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

⁵⁹Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Why did they pick up the stones to throw at Jesus?

Because He was claiming to be the I AM (YHWH, or Jehovah) Moses spoke to at the burning bush. We learned last time that He is going to claim this name seven times in John's Gospel. Jesus claimed to be God because He is God. And just to seal the deal, John claims that Jesus was, in fact, God the Creator. Look at verse 3:

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

If this doesn't end the argument about Jesus being a created being, nothing will. Not only was Jesus there from the beginning, He was the point man in the creation account. Let's take another look at Psalm 33. Remember, we looked at verse 9 earlier in our study. I am going to back up a little bit and read from verse 6.

**⁶By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.**

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**⁷He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deep in storehouses.**

**⁸Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.**

**⁹For He spoke, and it was *done*;
He commanded, and it stood fast.**

In the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, guess what word they used when they translated the phrase, “**By the *Word* of the LORD**”?

Logos.

God created the world through His Word. In Genesis 1:3 He said, “**Let there be light.**”

Guess what happened?

There was light.

And, Jesus claimed to be the Light of the World. We will learn more about Jesus being the Light in a moment.

God created all things through Jesus Christ. Listen to how the Apostle Paul explained the creation of the world (Colossians 1:15-17). Speaking of Jesus he wrote:

¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

By saying Jesus was the “**firstborn over all creation,**” he meant that He was preeminent. It speaks of Him being superior in rank or priority.

The cults salivate and say, look, Jesus was the firstborn, thus, He was created. But if that was true, then He couldn't have been born of Mary. He would have had to be born in eternity past.

Why?

Because as Paul says, Jesus created all things that are in Heaven and Earth. No human being could have been there when God spoke the world into existence, let alone be the One who did so. But not only that.

Everything was created through Him and for Him. It is all about Jesus — everything!

And just to top it off, Paul says that in Him, “**all things consist.**”

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Have you ever heard of what scientists call the nuclear glue?

They know that there is a “*force*” that holds the nucleus of an atom together, and that is what they call it. But they are not sure what this “*force*” is. I am not a scientist, but I know.

How, you might ask?

Because the Bible tells me so. In Christ, all things consist (the ESV says, “**hold together**”). Jesus is the nuclear glue!

But there is another side to His holding the world together. One day He will say enough is enough. If you want to know what happens when He does let go one day, read 2 Peter Chapter 3. In verse 10 he tells us this:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Jesus Christ is the Creator, Sustainer and Maintainer of all things. And in this day of grace, He continues to not only hold atoms and the galaxies together. He also holds our lives together. That is why He has not let go yet.

Why do you exist today?

Because you were made by Jesus. And you were made for Him.

So if you don't give your life to Him, what happens?

It will fall apart. Life will not make sense. You will wonder what you are doing, where you are going, and why you are living.

Do you want to know the secret of life?

All things were made by Jesus and for Jesus.

He is the answer to all of life's difficult questions.

Don't believe me that He has control of your life?

Look what John wrote next (verse 4):

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Not only is Jesus the Creator of all things, He is also the Source of Life. Later in John He is going to tell us the He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. This is not just talking about biological life, but the very principle of life. In fact, that is what the Greek word *zoe* John

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used here means. So, not only did Jesus give you life. He wants you to have an abundant life, and that also is found in Him.

Life is a key theme in John's Gospel; the word is used 36 times. So we will be talking a lot about *zoe*.

Question: What are the four essentials for human life?

Water, air, food and light.

We will perish if we lack any of these things.

And guess what?

Jesus claimed to be all four. He is the Light and Life of the world (John 8:12). He is the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2). By the way, in the New Jerusalem, there won't be a sun or moon (Revelation 21:23):

The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Who is its light?

The Lamb.

But not only that...

By His Holy Spirit, He gives us the breath of life (John 3:8, 20:22).

And finally, He is the Living "**Bread of Life**" that came down from Heaven (John 6:35).

So Jesus not only has life and gives life. He is life.

Here is something to chew on (and kind of a rabbit trail):

In Genesis 1:27 it says that man was created in the image of God. We talked about this a little while ago. This means more than simply we were made in His likeness. It is saying we are supposed to be a reflection, or illumination, of Him to the world. Colossians 1:27 tells us that it is Christ in us that the world needs to see. John says here in verse 4 that the Word was life, and the life was the "**light of men.**" "**Was life**" means He gave life to creation, so He breathed life into Adam and created Eve from Adam's side.

Some believe that the light God gave our original parents caused them to be radiant. In 1 John 1:5 we learn this:

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

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Psalms 104:2 says that God “**covers Himself**” in light. Someone who has God’s “**life**” has His “**light.**”

We know that we will be raised from the dead, or raptured in a glorious body in the future. And if it is anything like Jesus’ resurrection body, we will shine! On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus shined in His glory.

And what happened when Moses went up the mountain to meet with God?

He came back down and covered his face because it shined with the glory of God.

So what happened when Adam and Eve sinned?

A commentator quoted by Gene Pensiero wrote this:

I believe, before the fall of man, that Adam and Eve also glowed with the glory of God through their mortal flesh, just like Moses. When they sinned, the glory was removed and, “they knew they were naked.” They could obviously see they were physically naked before; nothing changed there. There is the possibility that God’s glory was removed and they shone no more. They could see they were naked, i.e., without the glory of God encompassing them.

What did Jesus say about light to us?

Matthew 5:16:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

When God created, when He made us in His image, He said it was good. But it didn’t last.

Adam and Eve’s sin affected all life and light, plunging the world into darkness. So we lost our radiance. We could no longer be in the presence of God, so we did not display His glory.

Could it be that when we are born again, we get that ability to reflect God back?

My question to you is, “*How brightly does your light shine?*”

But don’t worry. Here comes the “**Light of the World**” to save the day. Look at verse 5:

And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

What exactly is darkness?

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It is the absence of light.

One time Julia, Sam and I took a trip to Penn Caverns near Penn State. They took us in a boat way down into the cavern and, for a moment, turned off all the lights. This was the highlight of the tour. But it was also frightening. It was so dark you could not see your hand in front of your face. Stay with me for a moment.

If God is light, then what is the darkness John is speaking of here?

The absence of God.

That is what Adam and Eve experienced when they sinned — spiritual darkness. They could no longer see God.

And every person born since then has faced the same predicament. The darkness of sin in their lives, the darkness of their hard heart, has kept them from comprehending the light and life of Jesus. The word John used for “**comprehend**” is hard to translate. It carries with it the idea of laying hold of something to make it one’s own. That is what is required here.

In the first creation, “**darkness was on the face of the deep**” (Genesis 1:2) until God called light into being. So it is with the new creation that we become in Christ. Only the Word can bring one into the light and banish the spiritual darkness in which he walks. And Jesus is the Word.

The only question is: Have you experienced your “**In the beginning**” moment?

Next time we are going to look at verses 6-18. Read ahead and meet another John.

Let’s pray.

SING THE REVELATION SONG