

The Word of God, His Identity, His characteristics and His purpose

John 1:1-18

- 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. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light,
- 7) 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 gives light to 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) For 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 (John 1:1-18 ESV).

Introduction

This passage is probably one of the most famous passages of the Bible and also one of the most important ones. This passage is also one of much controversy especially verse 1 and regarding the identity of the Word of God. The Jehovah Witnesses have changed the meaning of verse 1 in their Bible, and the Muslims have long debates over the meaning of verse 1 as well. They would say "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was a God", not God himself!!! I remember a long and heated debate I had over verse 1 once I did evangelism in Durban in the year 2000 with a Jehovah Witness about this issue. John, the apostle, wrote this passage at the end of his life after he contemplated long and hard over the identity of God. He was Jesus' beloved disciple and probably the closest to God of all the disciples. He was one of those who saw Jesus' transfiguration on the Mountain and heard the voice from heaven saying: "This is my beloved Son, hear Him." He was also immersed in the Roman Empire and immersed into knowing Greek culture which was the dominant culture at that time as Greek was the dominant language at that time. He knew exactly what he wrote as the Holy Spirit lead him.

In Greek philosophy, the word "Logos" is translated as "Word" and had a special and specific meaning relating to the first Mover or Causer of the Universe. The Greek Philosophers used the term "Logos" to refer to the Originator of all things. The apostle John came centuries after and knowing the significance of this word, used this word, "Logos" translated as "Word" in English and equates it with God, the Creator. We are going to look at four things today which I believe this portion makes clear: First the identity of the Word, secondly the characteristics of the Word, thirdly the purpose of the Word and then lastly the reactions to the Word. So let's dig into the text.

1. The identity of the Word

-- The Word is God. Verse 1 reads: "The word was with God, and the Word was God." The implication of this verse is that there is more than one person in the Godhead! The Word was God. The phrase "In the beginning was the Word" is repeated, meaning before everything else, before time and space and matter and energy were created the Word was there. He was in the beginning. In other words from eternity past, He was there. God doesn't have a beginning, and He doesn't have an end. He is beyond space and time and matter and energy (Psalms 90:1,2).

-- The Word is Jesus Christ (verse 14,17). The identity of the Word becomes clear in verse 14. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. In other words, the Word, which is God, became human and then we see in verse 17 the text reveals the Person who is the Word is Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth. This phrase "full of grace and truth" is also repeated. We get it also in verse 14. Jesus Christ is, therefore, God, the Word, who became flesh and is full of grace and truth.

-- The Word is the Creator. Verse 3 reads: "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing that was made was made." Verse 10 reiterates that truth, "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him.." The letter to the Colossians 1:15-20 reveals: "everything was made through Him (Christ) and for Him"; "In Him, all things consist." Hebrews 1:3 also says of Him, "He upholds all things according to the word of His power." Jesus Christ was the first "Causer", the first "Mover" the Originator of time, space, matter and energy! He is God! He is the Creator.

-- The Word is the only Begotten Son of the Father. Twice this word "begotten" is used in the Greek. The ESV translated it as the Only Son. I believe "Begotten" is a better translation. That doesn't mean Jesus was created. That is what the Jehovah Witnesses and the Arians centuries ago believed and attempted to teach. Jesus became a man in time. He became a human being; he became a baby, born of the

Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary, but before He was born as a human, He has always existed. That is what John testified in verse 15, "He who comes after me was preferred before me because He was before me.." (John 1:15, NKJV). Before Jesus was born, He existed. That is also what Jesus told the Jewish leaders later in the book of John, "So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:57-58 ESV).

We know that when God revealed Himself to Moses at Mount Sinai, He said His Name was: "I AM what I Am" (Exodus 3). Jesus told the Jewish leaders He is "I AM" equating Himself with God. Hebrews 1:3 says the following about Jesus: "He is the exact representation (replica) of the Father." The Word became a baby, but as Colossians 2:19 says "the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily." Jesus is not less God than the Father. Jesus Christ is fully God. The Holy Spirit is also fully God, and the Father is also fully God, yet we don't serve three Gods but One God, distinct in three Persons. Jesus is Almighty, the Father is Almighty, and the Spirit is Almighty, yet we don't worship three Almighty's but one Almighty! Jesus is omniscient, the Father is omniscient and the Holy Spirit is omniscient, yet we don't serve three Omniscient Ones, but One God, distinct in three Persons. That is the mystery of the Trinity!

2. The characteristics of the Word of God

-- He is Life. John 1:4 says, "In Him was life...". John 14:6 says that Jesus is the life. He is the Fountain of life and of being (Psalm 36:8). Acts 17 reads: "In Him, we live and move and have our being"; "He gives us life and breath and everything." Without the Word, there would be nothing, but God. The Word gives life, sustains life and takes life away. He is the reason we breathe and walk and think and reason and feel and enjoy and live! He is the Prince of Life as Luke said in the book of Acts.

-- He is Light (verse 4-9) 1 John 1:5 reads that He is without sin, without darkness. He is incorruptible, without blemish, without fault. He is perfect in every respect of being. We know that the sun that was created by God, emits light and heat and is responsible for physical life, plant life, etc. to occur on this planet. In the same way, does Jesus Christ give us life and existence. He is the reason human beings exist and live and breathe and have consciousness and self-awareness and have a sense of right and wrong (moral motions) and have personality.

-- He is glorious. He came to make known the glory of God (verse 14). Verse 14 says we beheld his glory, referring to the disciples. Hebrews 1:2,3 says that Jesus Christ is the brightness of the glory of God and 2 Corinthians 4:6 says that God has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ's life and death on earth, we see the peak and pinnacle and magnitude of God's glory!

-- Out of His fullness comes grace and truth (verse 14,17). The brightness of God's glory is to be found in the grace and truth of Jesus Christ. In Christ, we see the full panorama of God's glory. His power, His meekness, His mercy, His Justice, His humility and His exaltedness, His grace and truth and love. God is without falsity, falsehood, and evil. God cannot lie. John 14:6 says that Jesus is the truth. He is ultimate reality and life. We consist in Him. He is grace. He gives us things that we don't deserve. We deserve punishment, condemnation, damnation and contempt, because of our darkness and rebellion and sins, but God withheld His justice to be unleashed on us, because of Jesus Christ. As John 3:17 says, Jesus didn't come to condemn the world but that the world may be saved through Him! God came to overlook sin, and His glory lies in this, that He came to save sinners like you and me, but it cost Him the highest price. He came to satisfy the truth and justice of God. He did not come to abolish the law of God but to fulfill it so that we can receive His grace and Spirit of truth and His righteousness.

3. The purposes of the Word of God

-- He became flesh in Christ Jesus (verse 14). He tabernacled among us. The incarnation of God, the fact that God became a human being was planned by God before time began (Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:17-19). In the Old Testament, the Tabernacle was the place where God's presence was felt and experienced. The offerings of animals because of sin took place in the Tabernacle and the word used in Greek here "skenoo" has the meaning that God came to tabernacle among us. In other words, Jesus Christ came to bring us close to the presence of God. He came to manifest God's presence, as He is and was God. He came to offer His own life as a sacrifice to bring us close to God. In Jesus' humanity, He came to identify with us; He came to be our High Priest to identify with our weaknesses. Jesus wept. Jesus got tired. Jesus became dirty. Jesus became hungry and thirsty and experienced suffering and sorrow. He became one with us. He became a human to be our eternal sympathetic High Priest.

-- He came to shine in the darkness and to overcome the darkness (verse 5). He drove away the darkness. Jesus' miracles testified of that. Demons fled before His presence. Diseases were cured in his presence. He exposed men's sins and secrets. Darkness couldn't handle Him. And death could not hold Him! Through His perfect life, substitutionary death on the cross and resurrection he also overcame darkness and Satan (See Hebrews 2:12-14; Colossians 2:12-15). John the Baptist testified of Him, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus came to take away our sins, to destroy the darkness in us!

-- He came to enlighten every man. Verse 9 says: "The true light that enlightens every man came into the world." He came to show us our sin and give us real meaning and purpose. Psalm 18 reads: "He enlightens my darkness." God came to show us our depravity and wretchedness and sinfulness. He came to show that our hearts are desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). After we see our rebellion and

wretchedness God makes us new and we become children of light through faith, through the Holy Spirit. He comes to make us new creatures. He enlightens us! He unites us with Himself, with holiness and purity and joy through the Holy Spirit. Have you experienced that friend? Are you a child of the light? Jesus said in John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

-- He came to make God known (verse 18). Verse 18 says no one has ever seen God at any time, meaning no one has seen His face, no has lived in His glorious presence from eternity past, except He who have always been with Him, who is Jesus. But, Jesus said to Thomas: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:7-11). Jesus Christ came to reveal who God is, who the Father is. He came to reveal God's divine perfections. Jesus came to show us the full panorama of God's majesty. Jesus came to declare who God is. He came to reveal God's nature.

-- Jesus came that we may be born of God (verse 12), that we would receive Him. He came that we would trust in Him, that we would believe in Him. John 1:12 declares: "for as many as received Him, who believe in His Name (His Person) He has given the right to become children of God." We are not born into the kingdom of God by natural birth, by infant baptism, by going to church or reading the Bible or by doing good things, but by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, by the hearing of faith, by the preaching of the gospel, by the abiding word of God (1 Peter 1:23-25). Jesus came that we may have spiritual life in the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ came so that people can be united to the true Light and Life. He came that we may become His adopted children.

4. The reactions to the Word of God

-- John the Baptist came as a witness (verse 5,6). He was humble and pointed people to Jesus. He did not come to take the honor that was due to Jesus Christ. John the Baptist, who was the greatest prophet of all time, said: "He must become more, and I must become less" (John 3:30-36). Every significant person in history is dwarfed in significance in comparison to Jesus Christ. He must have the prominence! He must be preeminent. He is above all. John the Baptist knew that, the apostle John knew that, do you know that? Or do you want to make a name for yourself? We are here to point people to Jesus! He is the source of Light and Life and salvation; we are mere reflectors and mirrors of the true light. John the Baptist knew this, do you know that?

-- The world did not know Him (verse 10). People don't know God intimately by nature. They may know of God or things about God. This is amazing! In Jesus' time people knew Jesus but did not recognize Him for who He was. Some did like his disciples, but many did not know Him, and it is still the same today. Many know about Jesus, but they don't know Jesus personally. Do you know Him? Jesus said: "This is eternal life, that you may know the Father and Jesus Christ whom He sent" (John 17:3). Jesus also said: "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:14, 27-28 ESV).

These were shocking words of John: "He was in the world, the world was made through Him, but the world did not know Him." Is that so in your life? Is He among you, around you, but absent in you? Does He know you? Do you know Him? What a tragedy it would be if you don't know Him! You would miss out on the meaning and purpose of your life! You would miss out on life itself; you would be a living corpse, the walking dead on its way to eternal shame, death and destruction if you don't know Him!

-- His own (Israelites) did not receive Him (verse 11). The Jewish leaders and Jewish people rejected Him and eventually crucified him

by the Roman soldiers. What an irony. The people who should have identified him the easiest were blinded to His real identity! Yes, the people of God, the nation of Israel didn't receive Him. They all waited for the promised Messiah! There were hundreds of prophecies about Him in the Scriptures! They expected His coming for centuries. But when He came they didn't receive Him! Most didn't. They yelled when He was charged with blasphemy: "crucify Him, crucify Him!" Oh, the irony! They should have worshiped Him, yet they rejected Him and crucified Him! Have you rejected Him, my friend? Has God come and made His home within You? What would **your** reaction be?

-- Those who receive Him, those who believe in Him, are born again (Verse 12). Out of His fullness those who believe received grace upon grace!! Does that experience describe **you**, my friend? Have you come to receive the gift of God, the living waters from within, the blessed Holy Spirit and forgiveness of sins in Christ?

- The Word's identity is thus: He is God, His Name is Jesus Christ, He is the Creator of the Universe, and He is the only Begotten of the Father.
- The Word is Life. He is Light. He is infinitely glorious and full of grace and truth.
- The Word's Purpose is that He came to be one of us, a human being, to identify with us and become our sympathetic High Priest. He came to shine in the darkness and overcome the darkness through His perfect life, death, and resurrection, and He came to make God known unto us. He also came to give us new spiritual life and adopt us as His own children.
- John was a witness of Him to the people of God. He pointed people to Him. The world did not know Him. His own people rejected Him, but those who receive Him, those who believe in Him have eternal life in Him.

I close with John the apostle's statement: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this

book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30-31 ESV).