

**The Living Word: A Study of the Gospel of John**  
**Part One: The Word Made Flesh**  
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## **Introduction**

The Gospel according to John was written by the Apostle John in his later life prior to the destruction of the Temple in response to the Ebionite heresy. This heresy, which denied both the divinity and preexistence of Christ prior to human birth, served as the means whereby God spurred John to write. John wrote in defense of the precious Gospel of Christ, a Gospel which he witnessed with his eyes, believed in his heart, and knew with his mind to be nothing but the purest truth. John Gill writes of John that:

He was called very early by Christ, though young; and was with him throughout the whole of his ministry, and was an eye and ear witness of what he here relates, and his testimony is to be received; he was the beloved disciple, he leaned on the bosom of Jesus, and had great intimacy with him; and might be privy to some things, which others were not acquainted with; and though he was a Galilean, and an unlearned man, yet being endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, he was abundantly qualified to write this book:

John's Gospel is unlike the other three. While Matthew, Mark, and Luke primarily deal with the earthly aspect of Christ's ministry, John's Gospel opens the windows of heaven to give us a view from a deeper spiritual perspective. In fact, the ancient Church Fathers called John's Gospel "the spiritual gospel." Matthew Henry says of the work, "[John's Gospel] gives us more of the mystery of that of which the other evangelists gave us only the history." It is quite fitting, in light of content of John, for it to be given to the church lastly, as a capstone or seal to the life and ministry of Christ.

Lord, Bless our time together as we humbly prepare our hearts to receive from His most precious Gospel - Amen.

## **John 1:1-18**

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by 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 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men 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 lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which 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 was made 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 bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. 16 And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given

by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

### **Outline**

#### ***VV. 1,2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.***

- A. "In the beginning" - This phrase speaks to that time before anything existed in the created order, for the Word gives being to everything else.
- B. "was the Word" - The Word of God is His own manifestation or expression of who He is to those without Him.
- C. "the Word was God" - the Word is not simply a manifestation or expression of God. In fact, the word is of the same essence and being as God. Thus, the Word is not an intimation of God, but God Himself.
- D. The Word was "in the beginning" with God. The Word was a existed as a separate entity than the Father. Though different from the Father, the "Word" was of the same essence and being of God.

#### ***V.3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.***

- A. All things were made by the Word of God. Nothing exists prior to the creative act of the Word of God.
- B. This teaching provides clear refutation to those in the ancient world who, outside of Judaism, held to the non-creation and this eternity of matter.
- C. John testifies to the preeminence of the Word over all things. For, nothing exists except that which was made by and through the Word.

#### ***VV. 4,5 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.***

- A. "In him was life" - unlike the dead gods of the pagan world, whose tales live on while they are quite dead, the Word lives and gives life to men.
- B. 1 John 1:1-4 *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."*
- C. "the light shineth in darkness" - Against the pitch black backdrop of dead, man-centered

religion, false gods, and the great many other lies that sum up the total depravity of human existence, the living Word shines as a city on a Hill, illuminating the dark recesses of the sinful human soul.

D. "and the darkness comprehended it not" - The living Word shines bright even in our day. Still yet, the vast majority never heed the Gospel call. Only those who are called will respond. The rest will either think the Word to be foolish, or seek after some physical proof. The Apostle Paul explains the situation in I Corinthians chapter 1: 20-24:

*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

Darkness will never heed the call. Only those who are called have the Holy Spirit enabled power to become the children of God.

***VV. 6-8 there was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.***

- A. "there was a man sent from God, whose name was John" - It is here that John begins to approach the main point of his Gospel. He explains that John the Baptist was sent to bear witness of the Light.
- B. "that all men though him might believe" - John's testimony was of the light of Christ, the only way of Salvation, the only way to escape God's righteous fury. It is important to note that in no way is John preaching universalism, the notion that God will eventually save every single person on the planet. We know that few there be that walk the narrow path of righteousness. In fact, "hell has enlarged its borders" with the wicked.

We also know from the totality of Holy Scripture that John is not attempting to teach the possibility of salvation for every single man, woman, boy, and girl. This is clear from John's own writings, of which we will discuss in due time.

John the Baptist's ministry of preparing the way of the Lord was to faithfully preach repentance so that those who would be called unto eternal life would have sufficient means by which to apprehend the mercies of God. God justifies both the means as well as the ends. He ordains salvation for His elect children. He also ordains the means whereby those elect call unto His name.

***VV. 9-11 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.***

- A. "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" - or better translated, "which enlightens the world and those therein." The Living Word and His Gospel enlightens those who hear the message. It is a fiery message, one which causes both peace and wars to spring up in the hearts of men. The Word enlightens the world via the common grace of God toward all men. The blessings of Christian heritage and culture cannot be overlooked, for even atheists find temporal benefit from the hospitals, charities, schools, and social institutions wrought by the teachings of Jesus Christ.
- B. "and the world knew him not/ received him not" - Even though Christ was the creator of the World, moving by His power in the happenings of the universe from the beginning, the world, being dead in sin, could not know him. They did not recognize Christ as their creator. They did not recognize that all earthly and heavenly blessings flowed through Him. Ultimately, they did not recognize Christ for who He was and is: the Savior. This is literally the textbook definition of total depravity.

Total depravity is a Bible doctrine which has, by the modern church, been gutted of its implications. Dead sinners can come face to face with the Lord of Glory, and leave no better for the experience. It takes a working of God's sovereign grace and mercy to awaken the dead sinner, regenerating His spirit unto life in such a way as to compel him to repent and believe the Gospel. The Gospel is all of grace, sovereignly at work in the lives of those whom God has called before the foundation of the world.

***VV. 12,13 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.***

- A. "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" - In contrast to the vast multitudes who walk blinded by the offer of eternal life through Christ Jesus, there are some to receive the message.
- B. How can some hear and respond to this message when the Scripture clearly teaches that most will never so much as give it a glance?

Answer 1 - The Arminian / Man-Centered Response: Each person can choose to believe the Gospel if they want to believe it. God simply provides the way of escape and let's each man and woman decide for themselves whether or not they will choose Christ and live.

Answer 2 - The Bible Response: Only those who are born of the will of God shall become the sons of God through belief on Jesus' name. Otherwise, verse 13 makes no sense in the text. Why does John point out that men are not saved by their family line (Jews), or their human works (false religion, Arminianism, legalism) or their own will (corrupted and dead in original sin), but only by the express will of God? Why, because as Jonah proclaimed in Nineveh, "Salvation is of the Lord!" A lost sinner dead in his trespasses and sin will not choose to love and serve the living God because everything in his heart is set on pleasing only the fleshly appetites. But, by the will of God, Jesus "shall save His people from their sins." We do not partner with God in order to be saved,

He comes down as a rescuer of the perishing, a resurrector of dead men's souls, breathing life into us, regenerating us, justifying us, and glorifying us. Praise God for sovereign grace!

***VV. 14,15 And the Word was made 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 bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.***

- A. It is clear from verse 14 that the Word is none other than Jesus Christ the righteous!
- B. "was made flesh" - John here implies that when God the Son took on human form, He did so by assuming every other human faculty, physical, mental, and social. Christ, while remaining 100% God, became 100% man at the same time - the God-Man. Christ would be "tempted in like manner as are we, yet without sin."
- C. "and dwelt among us" - As the Old Testament tabernacle testified to the presence of God, so too did Jesus Christ testify to God's presence with them. His name shall be called Immanuel, meaning "God with us."
- D. "He was before me" - John the Baptist testified of Christ's preexistence in Glory. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God.

***V. 16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.***

- A. While Christ's deity is not distributed to those who believe on Him, the Scripture teaches us that grace and truth are showered abundantly on those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. "grace for grace" - the meaning is, grace is for the sake of grace; for there is no other cause of electing, justifying, pardoning, adopting, and regenerating grace, and even eternal life, but the grace, or free favour of God; and the one is the reason why the other is received (John Gill).

***V. 17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.***

- A. (John Gill) by grace and truth, is meant the Gospel, in opposition to the law; which is called grace, because it is a declaration of the love, and grace, of God to men; it ascribes salvation, in all the parts of it, to the free grace and favour of God; and is the means of implanting and increasing grace in the hearts of men.
- B. While the Law of Moses condemns men, the Gospel of God's free grace saves men for the glory of God, to the praise of His mercy.

***V. 18 No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.***

- A. "No man hath seen God at any time" - men have not laid eyes on the invisible God. Even

those in the Old Testament did not see God the Father, but rather, God the second Person, or God the Son - the Preincarnate Christ.

- B. "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" - The only truth about God the Father comes through God the Son, Jesus Christ. Because Christ is "in the bosom of the Father," or infinitely unified with the Father in nature, essence, and purpose, He alone can declare the truth about God, the way that leads to eternal life.

## **Conclusion**

The Word existed before anything else in the universe. The Word was with God as a distinct entity. The Word was God in being and essence just as the Father is God. The Word brings life and light. The Word is not recognized by dead sinners. The Word is recognized only by those who are spiritually regenerated by the sovereign will of God the Father. The Word was made flesh. The Word is Jesus Christ. Through Christ, God has made a way of escape that is wholly of His grace and mercy, not of human effort.

May the Lord add blessings to His Word today - Amen.

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