

“The Word Was God”

December 2, 2012

Text: John 1:1

Today we are going to begin a study of the Gospel of John.

I decided for a number of reasons, we should study this book next, one of which is that it’s a narrative of X’s life/ministry.

We never want to get too far from Jesus in our studies, because He is the center-point of our faith.

We don’t lean on our own understanding, even of the truth, but on our relationship w/ the living Son of God.

I also feel that this church is ready for a study of John, and that I’m ready to teach it.

It is a theologically rich book, & there is a level of Xn maturity among many of you that has prepared you for this book—which looks simple, but is profound.

My own growth theologically has finally given me the confidence that I can do justice by this Gospel.

John’s Gospel is different from the other 3 Gospels (called synoptic—taking the same view) because it is so unique in its approach.

John had prob. read those earlier Gospels, and he decided to take a different approach himself that would both complement/supplement what they had written.

John waited for over 50 years after X’s resurrection/ascension, before writing this book, prob. around 85 A.D.

Having spent those 50 years thinking at length about his time following Jesus around Galilee, he now decided to add a 4th account of X's life, & to include in it the profound insights/understandings about our Lord, that he had gradually come to, over those many decades, stressing the spiritual meaning/meanings of it all.

When you read Matthew/Mark/Luke, you get the life of X in stereo; but when you add John, it turns into quadraphonic sound, w/ a deep/full range of tones.

Matthew had portrayed X as the Messianic King, Mark as a Servant, & Luke as a Man, like us.

Now John carefully crafted a picture of X's life, which demonstrated Him to be God in a human body, having both divine/human natures—perfectly united.

Then having done so, John would state his purpose in Jn

*20:31=> "These [things] have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the **Son of God**; & that believing you may have life in His name."*

"Son of God" essentially means "God, the Son."

John wrote his Gospel to persuade us to believe that Jesus is God the Son, the 2nd Person of the Godhead, so that we may receive eternal life, thru our faith in Him.

It's possible that you have never given much thought to Jesus' actually being God in a human body.

Maybe you've thought of Him as a very special, very holy Person, but not actually as God in the fullest sense. That is the most profound truth any human being can contemplate and comprehend.

It's also an essential/nonnegotiable tenet of Xn faith, separating those who believe it, from everyone else in the world.

Belief in Jesus' deity is a core doctrine of true Xn theology.

He's either God, or He's a liar, because Jesus Himself claimed to be God.

That, in fact, was the main principle which He came to teach His disciples, & which we too must glean from Scripture.

In Mt 16, He asked the disciples, "*Who do you say that I am?*"

Peter answered w/o hesitation=> "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Mt 16:15-16).

Jesus responded=> "*Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven*" (Mt 16:17).

Jews like Peter venerated God so highly, they avoided using God's name at all, for fear of profaning it, & would never have called any mere man, by a divine title, such as "Son of God."

Jesus was also a good Jew, but instead of rebuking Peter for calling Him the Son of God, He commended him, because that fact is exactly what He had been trying to get His disciples to realize, & embrace by faith.

In Jn 10, Jesus said=> *“I and the Father are one”* (10:30).

The Jews who heard that, took up stones to stone Him to death.

Jesus asked why they wanted to kill Him, in view of the fact that He had done nothing but good works.

They answered=> *“For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God”* (10:33).

They knew good/well, Jesus was claiming to be God.

X could have said, “No, you misunderstand what I meant!

I wasn’t actually claiming to be God.”

But He didn’t.

Instead, He said=> *“If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; / but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works”* (Jn 10:37-38).

Jesus did the works of the Father because the Father/Son were united in the Godhead.

Jesus did indeed, do the works of God=>

- * He raised the dead back to life, including Lazarus (Jn 11:43), the synagogue ruler’s daughter (Mk 5:41), & a widow’s son at Nain (Lk 7:14).
- * He healed hundreds of people from a variety of diseases.
- * He exercised power/authority over nature itself, instantly calming a large storm-tossed lake, by simply saying *“Hush, be still”* (Mk 4:39).
- * He did so many other wondrous works that John wrote=>

“If they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written” (Jn 21:25).

So it really all comes down to this=> The Man whose name we take when we call ourselves “Christians” was unlike any other man—He was/is God, in every sense of the word.

* The Baby whose birth we’ll celebrate this month was God in that manger.

* The Infant, Mary carried in her womb for 9 months, then cradled in her arms as she nursed Him, was God.

* That Child to whom Magi gave gold/frankincense/myrrh, was really no one less than God, & they knew it, which is why they worshiped Him.

* That little One Simeon took into his arms & blessed, was Simeon’s own Creator/God.

Someone: “I have a hard time really believing any man could actually be God.”

In Jesus’ case, you should believe it, because it’s true, He is.

In fact, even demons believe it.

Lk 4=> *“Demons also were coming out of many, crying out and saying, ‘You are the Son of God!’” (4:41).*

Someone: OK, I’ll go along w/ the idea, that Jesus is God.

A: No, mere assent to this truth will not save your soul.

You must believe it wholeheartedly, and surrender your heart/life to Jesus X, as the Lord God, in view of that fact.

James 2:19 says the demons know intellectually that the Father/Son/H.S. are one God, but instead of allowing that to govern how they relate to Jesus, they just shudder, as they refuse to submit to their own Creator.

Mere agreement that it's true, doesn't save anyone.

So how do I come to really believe in Jesus' deity?

A: Study what the Bible says about Him—not only w/ us, each Sunday morning, but on your own as well.

And then pray like that father whose son Jesus healed=>

“I do believe; help my unbelief” (Mk 9:24).

You may have a desire to develop a deeper knowledge of God, that will impact your life for good, & for God's glory.

That's what Col 1:10 tells us to desire=> *“so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”*

To walk in a manner worthy of our Lord, so we please Him & bear fruit, our knowledge of Him must keep on increasing. I hope that, beginning this morning, & continuing throughout the months ahead, your knowledge of Jesus X will indeed increase, as we study John's Gospel together, and that your love for Him will grow in proportion w/ that increasing understanding.

Today we will consider the 1st 3 verses in the Prologue of John's Gospel (1:1-18), where Jesus' divine nature is defined in terms of time/devotion/essence/power...

I hope that, as John breaks it down like this, your faith in Jesus as the Lord God of the universe, will blossom.

*** Jesus' Deity Described in Terms of Time**

[John 1:1a]=> "*In the beginning* [What "beginning"? The Genesis 1:1 beginning=> "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" That beginning!] *was the Word,*"

With regard to time, Jesus was timeless/eternal.

At the beginning of all creation, He already "*was,*" and had eternally existed.

We are not timeless, even though we will live eternally, either in the presence of God, or away from Him, in outer darkness.

But we are not truly timeless, because we had a beginning.

Jesus didn't.

There are certain facts you need to understand about the word "*was.*"

1st, its tense indicates an ongoing state in the past, not a point in time past.

The Word continuously was, in the beginning & before the beginning.

2nd, it could be the translation of a word that means to be/exist.

Or it could translate another word that means to become (i.e., to be in transition from 1 state/condition to another).

The word John uses here, is the 1st of these—to exist.

In eternity past, Jesus never changed/became different—He always/immutably “*was*” the Word of God.

Putting this together=> Jesus already/continually was the Word of God, even in “*the beginning*” at the time of creation, because that was part of His eternal nature.

Everything else in the universe began to be at that moment—including time itself—but He was timelessly/eternally what He always is—the Word (the Logos) of God.

X could say: “*Before Abraham was born, I am*” (Jn 8:58). Not “I was”—“I am” (My existence extends beyond the limitations/boundaries of time).

This is incomprehensible to us, because we cannot imagine what could have been before there was time, in which it could exist.

The creation, no matter how you look at it (biblically, or as a “big bang”) has to include the creation of time itself.

It’s not as if time/space already existed, and matter simply exploded and filled it all up, by newly-created energy.

Before creation, there was no space for matter to fill, and no time in which matter could continually exist—there was nothing, but God.

But somehow, outside/independent of the constraints of both time/space, God the Son already existed as “*the Word.*”

That brings us to an important question=>

What exactly does it mean, that God existed as “*the Word*”?

It means that God, by His very nature, is a communicator, and the most important truth He communicates, is Himself.

Words are the objective mental tools by which we think logically, and formulate ideas.

And once we put our thoughts together w/ words, we can use those words to communicate our ideas to others.

We do that because we are created in God’s image, and He too uses words to express Himself to us.

He used the words He revealed to the prophets to communicate His own thoughts/will/purposes, to His people.

As you seek to learn about God, so You can pray to Him and worship Him knowledgeably, you must start w/ what His words in Scripture reveal/teach you about Him.

But God’s ultimate expression of Himself, wasn’t just verbiage, but His personally coming to earth as a man—Jesus the Christ.

X is “*the Word*”—the ultimate Self-expression of God, sent from heaven to earth.

Heb 1=> “*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, / in these last days has spoken to us in His Son*” (1:1-2).

What did God communicate to us thru His Son? Himself.

X came as “*the radiance of His [God’s] glory & the exact representation of His nature*” (1:3).

When Jesus came to earth, man learned about God firsthand—His thoughts/nature/character.

Jesus could say to Philip=> “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14:9).

Jesus is God’s Word—God expressing Himself, so man can know about Him; & far more importantly, know Him personally.

Why? Because to know God, forming a personal relationship w/ Him through Jesus X, is eternal life.

Jn 17:3—“*This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, & Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*”

It’s not just that knowing God leads to life, but that knowing God is life itself—eternal life.

Eternal life is not something we receive when we die.

It is living life here/now in ongoing communication and communion w/ the living/eternal God—Jesus X.

I.e., knowing Him.

*** Jesus’ Deity Described in Terms of His Devotion**

[Verse 1b]=> “*and the Word was with God,*”

**Before the Word emptied Himself and came to earth as the
God-man, He was “with God.”**

The word “*with*” lit. means “toward”/“unto”—so it describes the Word’s perpetual tendency to draw towards God the Father/H.S.

The whole orientation of the Word was/is toward
relationship/companionship among the 3 Persons of
the Godhead.

This expressed the inter-Personal love/devotion w/i the
Godhead, and the joy of Their ongoing communion
w/ One Another.

Theirs is the loving relationship Jesus spoke of in His High
Priestly prayer in the Upper Room on the last night of
His life, saying=> “*Thou [the Father] didst love Me
before the foundation of the world*” (Jn 17:24).

Jn 1:18 says X is “*in the bosom of the Father.*”

Believers too have the privilege of entering into this joyous,
loving union w/ God, thru faith in Jesus, just as He
prayed=>

“*I in them, & Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in
unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, &
didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me*” (Jn 17:23).

X also told the Father=> “*Now I come to Thee;*

*and these things I speak in the world, that they may
have My joy made full in themselves*” (Jn 17:13).

Ours is the joy of drawing near to God, by drawing near to X, & experiencing His love, as we come to know Him personally/intimately through Scripture, and to commune with Him in prayer.

We too enter into that devoted/loving fellowship Jesus has w/ the Father, through our faith in Him.

There is something else about X we learn in this part of vs 1.

The fact that Jesus (the Word) was “*with God*” in the beginning, means that the Second Person of the Godhead is not identical w/ the First/Third-Persons of the Godhead (the Father/H.S.).

You can’t be “*with*” a person if you are that person, yourself.

Recently, the belief called “Modalism” has reared up again w/i the Church—the belief that the Father/Son/H.S. are all the same Person, just appearing/operating in different modes at different times.

The truth is that the Father/Son/H.S. are all 3 of the same essence (the same “Godness,” if you will), but they are 3 separate/distinct Beings.

Not 3 Gods, but the 3 Persons of the 1 true God.

*** Jesus’ Deity Described in Terms of His Essence**

[Verse 1c]=> “*and the Word was God.*”

It's difficult to understand how any church/religion could claim to believe Jn 1:1, & argue that Jesus was anything less than God in the full/supreme/extreme sense of that word.

In the original language, John even changes the word order to place emphasis on the deity of X, the Word.

I won't drag you thru all the grammar of it, except to say that John's words don't mean "The Word was a god," "The Word was god-like," nor "God was the Word." They mean the Word was as much God as a being could be. And not some sort of Junior/scaled-down version of God, either.

But as the great doctrinal statements of the Church have always put it=> He is "God of very God."

Arthur Pink wrote=> "A more emphatic and unequivocal affirmation of the absolute Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ it is impossible to conceive."

The whole NT repeatedly insists that Jesus X is God.

- * Phil 2:6 says that Jesus X "*existed in the form [morphe— shape and nature] of God.*"
- * Col 2:9— "*In Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form.*"
- * Rom 9:5=> "*[Christ is] God blessed forever. Amen.*"
- * Titus 2:13=> Believers are "*looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.*"
- * II Pet 1:1=> Jesus X is "*our God and Savior.*"
- * I Jn 5:20=> The Son of God, Jesus Christ is=> "*the true God and eternal life.*"

X came in the humbled form of our humanity, & so instead of really studying Him to discover that He was actually/truly God, men wrote Him off, as merely a good teacher, or even as a fraud.

When His words astounded the rabbis in the Temple at the age of 12, they considered Him simply a prodigy.

But what they all failed to realize is what Simeon, and the Magi, and finally Peter/the-disciples did realize=> Jesus was God, the Word, the logos, 2nd Person of the Godhead, now come to earth, in human flesh.

I hope you really do believe that truth, & have submitted your heart to Him as your Lord/Savior, forming a personal relationship w/ Him, in which you have received God's gift of eternal life.

[Verse 2]-- "*He was in the beginning with God.*"

This repeats for emphasis, 1 of the truths John stated in vs 1.

It tells us emphatically that a key part of the Word's very essence & identity, is oneness/loving-communion w/ the Godhead.

In Prov 8, Solomon depicted the Son of God metaphorically as "wisdom," just as John depicts Him as the "Word" in our own text.

Using that metaphor, Prov 8:30 gives us a glimpse of the Father/Son's delight in one another, at creation=>

"I was beside Him, as a master workman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, / Rejoicing in the world, His earth, And having my

delight in the sons of men” (8:30-31).

This love/joy among the Persons of the Godhead explain Jesus’ night-long prayers, satisfying His desire to be “*with God,*” as in the beginning, even though emptied of His glory, here on earth.

They also explain what a sacrifice the Son made, in leaving His Father heaven, & coming to earth, to redeem us from sin.

And they explain the horror in His voice, as He cried out on the cross=> “*MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?*” (Mt 27:46).

* **Jesus’ Deity Described in Terms of His Power** (in creation).

[Verse 3]=> “*All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*”

Do you realize the enormous significance of this statement?

It is saying that Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God come to earth in human flesh, had been the Creator—of everything!

And just in case anyone might protest that there were certain things Jesus couldn’t possibly have created, John slams the door on

That, by adding=> “*Apart from Him **nothing** came into being that has come into being.*”

No matter how infinitely large, or infinitesimally small, Jesus created them all, & the laws by which they operate, are His, as well.

That includes galaxies, & the mysterious realms of outer space, that astronomers are now discovering such as quasars and black holes.

The Logos actually invented quasars/black-holes.

It also includes microscopic life and whole worlds that are so tiny we can't see them w/ the naked eye.

It includes things as small as molecules, atoms, subatomic particles, & whatever else there is below that, which man hasn't even guessed at yet.

And He created an entire-spirit world that science knows nothing about, made up of angels categorized as

“thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.”

There is nothing you can think of, that X didn't create, a/w/a many other things man hasn't yet even thought of.

God the Father is the ultimate Source/End of every created thing, but He created it all through God the Son, who later came into His own creation, as Jesus X.

Paul put it like this in I Cor 8=> *“There is but one God, the Father, **from** whom are all things, and we exist **for** Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, **by** whom are all things, and we exist **through** Him”* (8:6).

Col 1:16-17 says that not only did the Son create it all;

In Him all things continually hold together, as well.

He created everything and He keeps it all created.

Someone: You don't mean that Jesus, as a Baby in a manger,
was actually sustaining the natural laws of physics;
Or that, as He hung on the cross dying, He was sustaining
the whole order of things which kept that wood to
which He was nailed, in tact.

I mean just what Scripture means=> somehow, in the Son,
all things hold together, and always have, ever since
that first moment of creation.

How that works, I cannot explain, but my faith holds firm
to that truth, assuming X can/will explain it to me
someday.

I believe that Jesus X is the uncreated First Cause of everything.

My believing that about Him doesn't make it true, nor is it
simply my personal opinion, because the truth is
totally true, apart from me, or you.

But it is simply my coming into agreement w/ the reality of
the case, having surrendered to the Spirit's testimony
to my heart, that Jesus X is God.

I hope you can say the same, because according to Paul's
words in Rom 10, therein lies our salvation=>

*“THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH
AND IN YOUR HEART”—that is, the word of **faith**
which we are preaching, / that if you confess with
your mouth Jesus as **Lord** [i.e., God], and believe in
your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you
shall be **saved**; / for with the heart man **believes**,
resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he*

confesses, resulting in salvation” (10:8-10).

This then is the Magnificence of the Word of God.

* This is the One who existed before time, and displayed His limitless power by creating everything that exists, except God Himself.

* This is the One who emptied Himself, & came to us, as a humble man, but who was, in His essence, God of very God.

And someday He will return to earth w/ fire in His eyes, crowns to wear on His head, & a mouth speaking forth words like a sword, that will judge/destroy the wicked.

* This is the One who, in spite of His love-for/devotion-to the fellowship of the Godhead, loved so fervently the souls of men/women God had given to Him, that He left heaven, came to earth, & died on a cross, to pay the penalty for their sins.

“The Word Was God”

December 2, 2012

Text: John 1:1

1. John’s Gospel is different from the other three Gospels because it is so [14 unique].
Jn 20:31
2. Belief in Jesus’ deity is a core doctrine of [10 true] Christian theology.
Mt 16:15-17; Jn 10:30, 33, 37-38; Jn 11:43; Mk 5:41; Lk 7:14; Mk 4:39; Jn 21:25
3. The Man whose name we take when we call ourselves “Christians” is [8 God] in every sense of the word.
Lk 4:41; Jms 2:19
4. How do I come to really believe in Jesus’ deity? Study what the [12 Bible] says about Him; and then pray like the father whose son Jesus healed.
Mk 9:24; Col 1:10

Today we will consider the first three verses of John’s Gospel where Jesus’ divine nature is defined in terms of time, devotion, essence, and power...

*** Jesus’ Deity Described in Terms of Time**

[John 1:1a]

5. With regard to time, Jesus was timeless and eternal; at the beginning of all creation, He already [8 was].
Jn 8:58
6. The “*Word*” means that God, by His very nature, is a communicator, and the most important truth He communicates is [16 Himself].
Heb 1:1-2, 3
7. Jesus is God’s Word—God expressing Himself so man can know about Him; and far more importantly [10 know] Him personally.
Jn 17:3

*** Jesus’ Deity Described in Terms of His Devotion**

[Verse 1b]

8. “*With*” describes the Word’s perpetual tendency to draw [16 towards] God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.
Jn 17:24; 1:18; 17:23, 13
9. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all three of the same essence, but They are three separate and [18 distinct] Persons.

*** Jesus' Deity Described in Terms of His Essence**

[Verse 1c]

10. The whole NT repeatedly insists that Jesus Christ [6 is] God.

Phil 2:6; Col 2:9; Rom 9:5; Titus 2:13; II Pet 1:1; I Jn 5:20

[Verse 2]

11. This tells us emphatically that a key part of the Word's very essence and identity is oneness and loving [20 communion] with the Godhead.

Prov 8:30-31; Mt 27:46

*** Jesus' Deity Described in Terms of His Power**

[Verse 3]

12. Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God come to earth in human flesh, had been the [16 Creator]—of everything!

I Cor 8:6

13. Jesus Christ is the uncreated First [12 Cause] of everything.

Rom 10:8-10

14. This One, in spite of His love for and devotion to the fellowship of the Godhead, loved so fervently the souls God had given to Him, that He [10 died] on a cross to pay for their sins.