

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Introductory outline of John

1. Prologue (1:1-18)
2. Jesus' public ministry (1:19-12:50)
3. Jesus' private ministry (13:1-17:26)
4. Jesus' passion ministry (18:1-20:31)
5. Epilogue (21:1-25)

#### B. Comments

1. Thomas Constable, *Each of the four Gospels begins with an introduction to Jesus that places Him in the historical setting of His earthly ministry. Matthew connected Him with David and Abraham. Mark associated Him directly with John the Baptist. Luke recorded the predictions of His birth. John, however, declared Him to be the eternal Son of God.*
2. John Walvoord, ... *John begins with a theological prologue. It is almost as if John had said, "I want you to consider Jesus in His teaching and deeds. But you will not understand the good news of Jesus in its fullest sense unless you view Him from this point of view. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, and His words and deeds are those of the God-Man."*
3. Rodney Whitacre, *We are at the outset of a story that will reveal to us the most profound mysteries of life. This story is simply about God, the glory of his character, the nature of his life and his desire to share that life with his creatures. It is about God come amongst us and the mixed response he received to his offer of divine life.*
4. Bruce Milne, *John is especially conscious of the "big picture;" Jesus' life and mission represent the critical central moment of all existence and all history, so he begins his account by setting Jesus against the widest possible horizon; he relates him to God and his eternal purposes, and to the entire life of the universe.*
5. R. Kent Hughes, *This hymn gives us a sense of the matchless greatness of Christ (vv. 1–3), the greatness of his love (vv. 4–13), and the greatness of his grace (vv. 14–18).*

### PROLOGUE, JOHN 1:1-18

#### A. The Word and God (1-2)

1. Introductory notes
  - a. Leon Morris, ... *John takes us back in his opening to the eternal purpose of God.*
  - b. Thomas Constable, *John began his Gospel by locating Jesus before the beginning of His ministry, before His virgin birth, and even before Creation. He identified Jesus as co-existent with God the Father and the Father's agent in providing creation and salvation.*
  - c. Warren Wiersbe, ... *it was given to John, the beloved disciple, to write a book for both Jews and Gentiles, presenting Jesus as the Son of God. We know that John had Gentiles in mind as well as Jews, because he often "interpreted" Jewish words or customs for his readers (John 1:38, 41–42; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13, 17; 20:16).*
2. The eternity of the Word (1a), ***In the beginning was the Word,***
  - a. *In the beginning*
    - 1) Thomas Constable, *The beginning that John spoke of here was not really the beginning of something new at a particular time ... Time is the way that God and people measure events in relationship to one another. Even before God created the universe (Gen. 1:1) there was succession of events. We often refer to this pre-creation time as eternity past. This is the "time" ("beginning") that John referred to here.*
    - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *He existed in the beginning, not because He had a beginning as a creature, but because He is eternal.*
    - 3) Leon Morris, [William] Temple *is probably right in thinking that the phrase here combines two meanings, "in the beginning of history" and "at the root of the universe." John is fond of using expressions with more than one meaning.*
    - 4) Charles Swindoll, *In eternity past, before the beginning of anything—space, time, matter—in the indefinite expanse of timeless existence, in a beginning that had no beginning, "the Word" was existing in an eternal, infinite "present" ... The literal rendering of John's first sentence is, "In beginning was existing the Word." ... "The Word," therefore, has no beginning. "The Word" has always existed.*
    - 5) James Montgomery Boice, ... *John says that when you begin to talk about Jesus Christ you can do so properly only when you go back beyond his earthly life—back beyond the beginnings of creation—into eternity. That is where Jesus Christ was.*

- b. *the Word*
- 1) The Greek for word is *logos*. The context suggests that *logos* already existed in the beginning.
  - 2) William Arndt, *It is the distinctive teaching of the Fourth Gospel that this divine 'Word' took on human form in a historical person, that is, in Jesus.*
  - 3) Douglas Mangum, *In John 1:1, the logos is identified with God; later in that chapter, the logos takes on flesh (John 1:14). The Gospel shows that Jesus is this logos, and is, therefore, the ultimate divine revelation.*
  - 4) F. F. Bruce, *The true background to John's thought and language is found not in Greek philosophy but in Hebrew revelation. The "word of God" in the Old Testament denotes God in action, especially in creation, revelation and deliverance.*
  - 5) Leon Morris, *John is affirming that the Word existed before creation, which makes it clear that the Word was not created. It is of the utmost importance to grasp this ... For him [Apostle John] the Word is not a principle but a living Being and the source of life; not a personification but a Person, and that Person divine.*
  - 6) Donald Guthrie, *He is seen as greater than all things, greater than time, changeless as eternity.*
  - 7) John's theology clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is God, cf. 5:23; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28.
  - 8) The construction John chose was the most precise way to describe the Word as God yet distinct from the Father. That leads to the Trinity: one essence (nature) in three persons.

3. The eternal communion of the Word with God (1b), ***and the Word was with God,***

- a. Thomas Constable, *John's description of the Word as with God shows that Jesus was in one sense distinct from God. He was (and is) the second Person of the Trinity, who is distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of His existence.*
- b. Edwin Blum, *The Word was with God in a special relationship of eternal fellowship in the Trinity. The word "with" translates the Greek pros, which here suggests "in company with" (cf. the same use of pros in 1:2; 1 Thes. 3:4; 1 John 1:2).*
- c. Leon Morris, *John thinks of no opposition between the Word and the Father. The whole existence of the Word was oriented toward the Father ... The Word and God are not identical. But they are one.*
- d. R. Kent Hughes, *... there has always existed the deepest equality and intimacy in the Holy Trinity.*
- e. Charles Swindoll, *The Word" and God the Father were existing close together, sharing place, intimacy, and purpose. In fact, the intimacy and familiarity was such that "the Word was God." The Word and God share the same essence; therefore, all that is true of God is true of the Word.*

4. The Word was God (1c), ***and the Word was God.***

- a. Thomas Constable, *... John was also careful to note that Jesus was in another sense fully God. He was not less of God than the Father was, or the Spirit, in His intrinsic being. Thus John made one of the great Trinitarian statements in the Bible in this verse. In His essence, Jesus is equal with the Father, but He exists as a separate person within the Godhead.*
- b. C. K. Barrett, *John intends that the whole of his gospel shall be read in the light of this verse. The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true the book is blasphemous.*
- c. Edwin Blum, *John then added that the Word was God. Jehovah's Witnesses translate this clause, "The Word was a god." This is incorrect and logically is polytheism. Others have translated it "the Word was divine," but this is ambiguous and could lead to a faulty view of Jesus. If this verse is correctly understood, it helps clarify the doctrine of the Trinity. The Word is eternal; the Word is in relationship to God (the Father); and the Word is God.*
- d. Leon Morris, *The high point is reached in the third affirmation: "the Word was God." Nothing higher could be said: all that may be said about God may fitly be said about the Word. This statement should not be watered down ... John is not merely saying that there is something divine about Jesus. He is affirming that he is God ... He lays it down unequivocally that nothing less than "God" will do for our understanding of the Word.*
- e. R. Kent Hughes, *... the Word was God in essence and character. He was God in every way, though he was a separate person from God the Father. The phrase perfectly preserves Jesus' separate identity, while also stating that he is God. This was his continuing identity from all eternity. He was God constantly.*
- f. James Montgomery Boice, *... everything that can be said about God the Father can be said about God the Son. In Jesus dwells all the wisdom, glory, power, love, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth of the Father. In him, God the Father is known.*
- g. F. F. Bruce, *No matter how far back we may try to push our imagination, we can never reach a point at which we could say of the Divine Word, as Arius did, "There was once when he was not."*

5. The eternal existence of the Word with God (2), ***He was in the beginning with God.***

- a. Thomas Constable, *The Word* “was in the beginning with God.” This statement clarifies further that Jesus was with God before the creation of the universe. It is a further assertion of Jesus’ deity. He did not come into existence. He always existed. Further, Jesus did not become deity. He always was deity.
- b. Leon Morris, *Nothing new is added in this verse, but two points are repeated from verse 1 and thereby given emphasis. The Word was “in the beginning” and the Word was “with God.” The eternity of the Word is not to be overlooked or minimized. The other point concerns the close relationship between the Father and the Word. These two are not the same, but they belong together.*
- c. Charles Swindoll, *While the Father and Son are distinct “persons,” sharing the same nature and attributes, they also share the same essence. And by “essence,” Father and Son exist as one Supreme Being.*
- d. F. F. Bruce, *This might appear to be little more than a repetition of the second clause of verse 1, but it is more than that. This divine Word of whom I speak, the Evangelist implies, is the one who, according to the earlier scriptures, was with God in the beginning ... The Evangelist makes it plain that the Word of which he speaks is also the Wisdom described by psalmist and sage in Old Testament times, and he goes on to declare that Word and Wisdom alike became incarnate in Jesus Christ.*

B. The Word and Creation (3-5)

1. The Word created all things (3), ***All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.***

a. Related verses

- 1) Psalm 33:6, *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.*
- 2) 1 Corinthians 8:6, *yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*
- 3) Colossians 1:16, *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*
- 4) Hebrews 1:2-3, *but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Jesus was God’s agent in creating everything that has come into existence ... It was the second person of the Trinity who created the universe and all it contains. However, John described the Word as God’s agent. The Word did not act independently from the Father. Thus John presented Jesus as under God the Father’s authority but over every created thing in authority.*
- 2) Edwin Blum, *Why is there something rather than nothing? That is a great question in philosophy. The Christian answer is God. He is eternal, and He is the Creator of all things. And the Word was the agent of Creation ... All Creation was made by the Word in relation with the Father and the Spirit. John stressed the work of the Word.*
- 3) Warren Wiersbe, *The verb “was made” means a “completed act” ... It is not a process still going on, even though God is certainly at work in His creation (John 5:17).*
- 4) Leon Morris, *John is saying that everything owes its existence to the Word. He does not say that all was made “by” him, but “through” him. This way of putting it safeguards the truth that the Father is the source of all that is ... The world is due to God himself acting through his Word.*
- 5) Charles Swindoll, *John points to the moment of creation, however, to say that before anything existed, Christ, who is the Creator, called “all things” into being.*
- 6) James Montgomery Boice, *... Jesus has revealed God through the incarnation, and it is there that God is known personally. God has spoken to men indirectly through his creation and directly through the Scriptures, but there is a more wonderful truth than this. God has spoken to man personally through Jesus Christ. Jesus is his best and greatest word to lost men. If we know God’s power in creation and his plans in the Scriptures, we know his personality in the Son. As we look to Jesus we see God himself.*
- 7) Grant Osborne, *Every single aspect of the created order came into being “through” (dia) him. This is even more wondrous for us, for we know that there are more galaxies out there than there are stars in our galaxy, and there are more complex cells in our body than have ever been imagined before. With all our knowledge, we know that the created universe is beyond scientific understanding, and the Word has made it all! Christ is both Creator and Sustainer of all there is.*
- 8) R. Kent Hughes, *He is our Creator. Are you resting in him? Have you entrusted your life to him? Considering the greatness of Christ, nothing else makes any sense at all.*

2. The life sourced in the Word is the light of men (4), *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
  - a. Related verses
    - 1) John 5:26, *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*
    - 2) John 8:12, *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*
    - 3) John 9:5, *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*
    - 4) John 11:25, *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,*
    - 5) 1 John 5:11, *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) Leon Morris, ... *we move on from creation in general to the creation of life, the most significant element in creation. Life is one of John's characteristic concepts: he uses the word 36 times ... more than a quarter of all the New Testament references to life occur in this one writing ... John is preparing the way for the thought that he will develop throughout his Gospel, that Jesus is the life-bringer and light-bearer.*
    - 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus was (and is) the source of life. Therefore He could impart life to the things that He created. Every living thing owes its life to the Creator: Jesus. Life for humankind consists of light (here used as a figure of knowledge and understanding). Where there is life there is light, metaphorically speaking, and where there is no light there is darkness ... In the spiritual realm, God's presence dispels the darkness of ignorance and sin by providing revelation and salvation (cf. Isa. 9:2). Jesus did this in the Incarnation.*
    - 3) Edwin Blum, *Life is man's most important asset. To lose life is tragic. John affirmed that in the ultimate sense, life is in Christ. Man's spiritual and physical life come from Him ... Jesus, the Source of "life" (cf. 11:25), is also the light of men (cf. 8:12). Light is commonly used in the Bible as an emblem of God; darkness is commonly used to denote death, ignorance, sin, and separation from God.*
    - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *Those who believe on Christ are the "sons of light" (John 12:35–36). Just as the first Creation began with "Let there be light!" so the New Creation begins with the entrance of light into the heart of the believer (2 Cor. 4:3–6). The coming of Jesus Christ into the world was the dawning of a new day for sinful man (Luke 1:78–79).*
    - 5) Charles Swindoll, *John says, in effect, "In the beginning, God the Son created humanity and filled them with life. He then came to earth as a human to bring life again to humanity, which is spiritually dead because of sin."*
    - 6) James Montgomery Boice, ... *John is saying that our physical life comes from God through the Lord Jesus ... just as Jesus is the source of physical life, so is he the source of the spiritual life that we receive when we believe on him ... he has also given us a life that is meant to be abundant even in our present circumstances.*
    - 7) F. F. Bruce, ... *what the Evangelist has in mind here is the spiritual illumination that dispels the darkness of sin and unbelief.*
  
3. Light from the Word can not be overcome by darkness (5), *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*
  - a. Related verses
    - 1) John 3:19, *And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*
    - 2) John 12:46, *I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.*
    - 3) 1 John 2:8, ... *the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.*
  - b. Comments
    - 1) Thomas Constable, *As the word of God brought light to the chaos in Creation, so Jesus brought light to fallen humankind in the Incarnation ... John did not view the world as a stage on which two equal and opposing forces engage in battle; he was not a philosophical dualist. He viewed Jesus as superior to the forces of darkness that sought to overcome Him but could not. This gives humankind hope.*
    - 2) Edwin Blum, *Light's nature is to shine and dispel darkness. Darkness is almost personified in this verse: darkness is unable to overpower light. By this, John summarized his Gospel record: (a) Light will invade the dominion of darkness. (b) Satan the ruler and his subjects will resist the light, but they will be unable to frustrate its power. (c) The Word will be victorious in spite of opposition.*
    - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *Satan strives to keep people in the darkness, because darkness means death and hell, while light means life and heaven.*
    - 4) Leon Morris, *The theme of the perpetual conflict between darkness and light is found throughout the book. People's condemnation is that they loved darkness rather than light (3:19).*

- 5) R. Kent Hughes, *The light of Christ came into the world, and darkness pounced upon the light and tried to strangle it.*
- 6) Charles Swindoll, *In the end, darkness could not suppress the Light even by placing the Light in a tomb. The verses that follow, however, appear to stress the mental deficiency of the darkness: its unwillingness to believe and therefore its inability to understand. Then, as the story of Jesus unfolds, John will show that truth is nonsense to a mind darkened by sin (8:44–45, 47; 14:17; 18:38) ... The only hope for humankind was the Source of light, who can illumine every mind because He is more than human.*
- 7) James Montgomery Boice, *The darkness certainly did not understand the light. It did not overcome it. And yet, there is another meaning of the word that I believe comes even closer to John's true meaning and is more appropriate. It is "to quench," "to extinguish," or "to eclipse," ... we can say that God's light is shining in the darkness and that it has never been eclipsed ... Light and darkness are to be understood ethically ... "light" is a synonym of goodness and truth, while "darkness" is a synonym of evil and falsehood.*
- 8) Grant Osborne, *Throughout this Gospel the light of Christ confronts the darkness of sin and forces the sinner to make a decision to accept or reject the light, and nothing can stop that light from shining.*

**TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING!**

*CONCLUSION*