

I. In the beginning

A. John 1:1-18 . . . 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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. [4] In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. [5] The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. [6] There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. [7] He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. [8] He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. [9] There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. [10] He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. [11] He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. [12] But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, [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 saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. [15] John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" [16] For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. [17] For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. [18] No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

B. Prayer

II. Challenging truths about Jesus Christ

A. These first eighteen verses of John 1, present an incredibly complex statement about the nature of Jesus Christ. And yet, to those who – by faith – accept the many mysteries surrounding God, they are both simple and clear.

1. We read these verses from the vantage point of having already heard the theological and doctrinal explanations of the dual nature of Jesus Christ, and the oneness of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – which we call the Trinity. Plus, we have the Epistles,

which add support and further clarification to the reality of Jesus being both human and divine.

2. But imagine reading these verses without ever having read one of the clarifying Epistles or having been taught one of the theological explanations that have been carefully developed within the church since these words were written.
 3. The first readers of John's gospel were in just that position. For you see, John is not only asking us to believe Jesus is our Savior, he is asking us to believe that Jesus is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is, the OT Jehovah. He is asking us to believe Jesus is our Creator, that is, that He is the God who created us. And he is asking us to believe that Jesus is both human and divine. Without question, these are mysteries.
- B. But then, these are not the only mysteries surrounding God. There are a number of mysteries related to God that we cannot fully explain.
1. For example, there is the mystery of the Trinity, and the mystery of how God exercises sovereign rule over all and yet gives mankind free will to choose what we will.
 2. And though the church has made an honest effort over the years to explain many of these mysteries, their explanations leave us with just as many unanswered questions as the mysteries themselves. For example, even our best efforts fall short of explaining the dual nature of Jesus Christ.
 3. Now the problem with explaining mysteries of this sort is not our ability to reason and think, or to gather information, or to lay out that information in an orderly manner, or even to present the information in a logical way. The problem with explaining mysteries of this sort are the limitations of our human intellect and the resulting vocabulary.
 - a. For example, the Bible teaches that God has no beginning and no end.
 - b. And though we can talk about both sides of this truth in an orderly and logical way, the limitations of our intellect and vocabulary only enable us to explain in an understandable way how God could have no end.
 - c. If you don't believe me when I say we are only equipped to understand one side of this mystery, then tell me who can explain how it is, or how such a thing could happen that God has no beginning?

- d. Oh, we can say the words, “God has no beginning” or “God always was,” but we cannot explain how God – or anything else for that matter – can exist without having a starting point.
 - e. In other words, the limitations of our intellect and vocabulary are such that, though we can explain how having no end happens, we cannot explain how having no beginning happens. It is a mystery beyond our ability to explain.
4. This is true of the Trinity as well. How can God be ONE GOD and yet exist as three distinct persons who are co-equal and of the same substance? How can God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit be three in one? It is a mystery! And though the early church made a valiant effort to explain it (the Nicene Creed is a result of one of those efforts), it remains a mystery to this day.
5. Which brings me to the dual nature of Jesus Christ.
- a. When we say that Jesus is fully God and fully man, we are stating a truth, and yet our words cannot explain how it is that Jesus could have a dual nature, and how it worked in the earthly world and how it works in the heavenly world.
 - b. For example,
 - (1) Are there times when Jesus is God and times when He is man, or is He always both?
 - (2) If Jesus is always both, how could He be tempted in all ways just like us (Hebrews 4:15) when the scripture says that God cannot be tempted by evil (James 1:13)?
 - (3) And if Jesus’ humanity and deity are separate entities, how is that He was sinless? Doesn’t the Bible say that all (that is, all human beings) have sinned and come short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23)? So how is it that the human Jesus Christ was without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21)?
6. Again, my point here is that there are mysteries surrounding God and Jesus Christ that we must accept by faith if we are going to live according to them. Our other alternative is to reject them.
- a. But I am convinced that such mysteries need never diminish our faith in God, or honoring and praising God according to what we know about Him, or our living according to how He wants us to live.
 - b. Therefore, whether we are first century or twenty-first century Christians, John 1:1-18 is a powerful, yet challenging introduction to a gospel that tells us who Jesus is in words and ways that leave us with some unexplainable mysteries.

III. Who Jesus is, according to John's gospel.

- A. John 1:1 . . . In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 1. The first thing I want to point out is that
 - a. Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy of Jesus.
 - b. Mark begins his with a prophesy from Isaiah and a short explanation of John the Baptist's role in the life of Christ.
 - c. Luke begins his gospel explaining the circumstances surrounding John the Baptist's birth and Jesus' birth.
 - d. John begins his gospel with a profound explanation of Jesus' deity, and in doing this, points to Jesus' dual nature.
 2. The next thing I want to point out is that John does not use the name "Jesus" until vs 17 of the first chapter. Instead, John begins referring to Jesus as the Word. Which raises the question, WHY – why does John refer to Jesus as the Word?
 - a. Before answering that question, I want to point out that John is the only NT writer to refer to Jesus as the Word.
 - (1) And he only refers to Jesus as the Word in two places, here in John 1:1 and in John 1:14.
 - (2) Beyond that, John refers to Jesus as the Word of Life in 1 John 1:1, and as the Word of God in Revelation 19:13.
 - b. Now the reason John refers to Jesus as the Word is because Jesus, who is God in human flesh, explains God to us in ways that our human intellect can understand and our vocabulary can handle.
 - (1) John affirms this explanation in John 1:18 . . . No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He (Jesus) has explained Him (God).
 - (2) The writer of Hebrews said something very similar in Hebrews 1:1-3a . . . God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, [2] in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. [3] And He is the radiance of [God's] glory and the exact representation of [God's] nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power (this shows Jesus to be God, for just as God spoke creation into reality, so Jesus holds it all together by speaking).
 - c. Therefore, Jesus is the Word because He makes known the will of God, the thoughts of God, the ways of God, and the character of God in ways we can understand.

3. Returning to the first words of vs 1, we read: “In the beginning was the Word.”
 - a. In the beginning of what? In the beginning of time and the universe, that is, in the beginning of life, the world, and the vast universe as we know it. In other words, at the very first instant of creation, Jesus already was.
 - b. Jesus himself declares this to be true in what has come to be known as His High Priestly prayer.
 - (1) John 17:5 . . . Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.
 - (2) John 17:24 . . . Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.
 - c. And in talking with a group of Jews, Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am “ (John 8:58). In other words, Jesus is telling them that even though He is standing there talking to them, He was alive before Abraham was born, which was about 2000 years before).
 - d. Paul says something similar in Colossians 1:16-17 . . . For by Him all things were created (which confirms Jesus existed before creation), both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. [17] He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.
 - e. The important point here is that Jesus existed before creation just like God existed before creation. And as we read on, we learn that Jesus is God – which is why both Jesus and John say He, that is Jesus, existed before creation. And then John affirms that Jesus is God by telling us that Jesus created everything that has come into being – not as a separate or distinct being from God, but as God himself.
4. Moving on with vs 1, we read that the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John gets only six words into his gospel before presenting two sides of the Trinity.
 - a. First, John says that God and Jesus are with each other, indicating that God and Jesus are two distinct beings in close proximity and in a mutual relationship with each other.
 - b. Then John says that God and Jesus are each other, indicating they are one being.

- c. Therefore, in just two short statements, John brings together the fact that Jesus and God are distinct beings, and yet the same being.
- B. John 1:2 . . . He was in the beginning with God. These seven words are, in essence, a summary statement of vs 1. John is simply adding emphasis to the fact that Jesus is a divine being who is distinct from God while being one and the same with God.
- C. John 1:3 . . . All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.
 - 1. In the OT, God speaks of creation as proof of His omnipotence, and therefore as a reason to trust in Him rather than trusting in idols who are unable to create or effect anything for the good of mankind (Isaiah 40:18-28; Jeremiah 10:3-16).
 - 2. Here in vs 3, John speaks of Jesus as the creator, and in doing so, John is stating that Jesus' power to create is further proof that He is God, even though He came to earth in human flesh.
 - a. And John drives his point home by stating that, "apart from Jesus nothing came into being that has come into being."
 - b. In other words, everything was created by Jesus, without exception!
 - 3. And though we have read these words already, Paul says this in Colossians 1:16 . . . For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.
- D. John 1:4 . . . In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.
 - 1. You may be wondering why the translators use the word "was." Why do they say, "In Jesus was life, and this life was the Light of men?" Isn't Jesus still – to this day – life and light for all mankind?
 - a. Yes, He is still life and light, today and forever. And yet, there are ways in which Jesus was life and was Light.
 - b. For example, He is no longer living among us as one of us, and He himself said, "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world" (John 9:5), which implies that Jesus was the light while He was here. But now that He is gone, the Holy Spirit, the written word, and the church have taken on that responsibility of being the light of Christ to the world.

- c. A second example comes from creation, and John just affirmed that Jesus is God by pointing out He is the Creator. Therefore, if we go back to Gen 2:7, we read, “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed (past tense) into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”
2. However, Jesus not only was the life, He is the life. And John confirms this truth further on in his gospel where he quotes Jesus as saying:
 - a. I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, [26] and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this? (John 11:25-26)
 - b. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).
 - c. “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life” (John 8:12).
 - d. “I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness” (John 12:46).
3. Now you may be wondering how the life and light of Christ go together. Life is found only in the Light just as death is found only in the darkness.
 - a. Jesus brings life because He is the light. The devil brings death because he is the darkness.
 - b. Therefore, we are wise to believe that the abundant life now (John 10:10) and eternal life in the future are only found in the Light. Anything outside the Light is darkness and produces death, in this life and the next.

IV. Conclusion

- A. In summary, we have seen that
 1. Jesus is the Word – the One who explains God to us in words and ways we can understand.
 2. Jesus is both a distinct person and yet God – at the same time.
 3. As God, Jesus is the creator of all that has been created.
 4. Jesus brings us life, and this life is found in the Light – the light that leads us out of the lies of Satan and his darkness and into the truth of God and godly living, which in turn produces the abundant life God has for those who trust Him and obey Him.