

“JESUS IS...” #1 New Beginnings

John 1:1-18

I. Background

- A. **Author: John** Evidence identifies the writer as John as the son of Zebedee (& brother of James). The gospel indicates the author was (1) an apostle (1:14; 2:11; 19:35), (2) one of the 12 disciples (“the disciple whom Jesus loved”), & more specifically, (3) John the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” with Peter).
- B. **Time & Place:** Between AD 70 (destruction of Jerusalem temple) and AD 100 (the end of John’s lifetime).
- C. **Theme:** Jesus is the promised Messiah & Son of God. By believing in Jesus, people have eternal life. “*Jesus did many other signs ...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)

II. John & the Other 3 Gospels

- A. Dates: Matthew—late 50’s; Mark—mid to late 50’s; Luke—early 60’s; John—early 90’s (30-35 years later)
- B. Emphasis
 1. Matt. – King; son of David (Matt. 1:1; 9:27; 21:9) – kingdom - living
 2. Mark – Servant (Mark 10:45) – focus on deeds, not teaching - serving
 3. Luke – Man; son of Man (Luke 19:10) – humanity – compassion on all
 4. John -- Jesus as God (John. 20:31)
- C. John and his Gospel
 1. Fisherman, brother, & partner (Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:10). Young apostle, leaned on Jesus’ breast (John. 13:23, 25)
 2. Severe (Luke 9:51-55); Exclusive (Mark 9:38-40; Luke 9:49-50)
 3. Exiled to Patmos (Rev. 1:9)
- D. Why John wrote
 1. Not to correct the 3 prior Gospels
 2. To correct a growing trend among believers
 3. Spiritual account-- Clement of Alexandria stated, “*Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain [in the other 3 Gospels] ... composed a spiritual gospel*” (in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.7)
 - a. Turns focus from outward observance to inner, spiritual
 - b. No birth of Christ mentioned like Matt & Luke – boils it down to “the Word became flesh” (Jn. 1:14)
 4. Why we need John’s reminder
 - a. Our tendency
 - b. Our distractions
 - c. Our need to dig deeper

III. Jesus Is... (John 1:1-18)

- A. The Word is God and with God in the most intimate way (Jn. 1:1-2, 18a)
- B. The Word came to earth as God’s life & light, & full of grace & truth (Jn. 1:4-5, 9, 14, 16, 17)
- C. The Word came to make God known (Jn. 1:1, 18b; Heb. 1:1-2)
- D. The Word came to invite each one of us into an intimate relationship with God (Jn. 1:11-13)

IV. Prologue (1:1-18) The Incarnate Word (who is God) becoming Flesh (human).

In the prologue John presents Jesus as the eternal, preexistent, now incarnate Word (vv 1, 14) & as the one-of-a-kind Son of the Father who is himself God (vv. 1, 18). God’s revelation & redemption in & through Jesus are the culmination of the history of salvation, which previously included God’s giving of the law through Moses (v. 17), God’s dwelling among his people in the tabernacle/temple (v. 14), & the sending of the forerunner, John the Baptist (vv. 6-8, 18). It introduces many of John’s major themes, e.g., Jesus as the life (v.4), the light (vv 5-9), the truth (vv. 14, 16-17); believers as God’s children (vv. 12-13); & the world’s rejection of Jesus (vv. 10-11). [ESV Note]

V. “In the beginning was the Word ...and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

- A. “**The Word**” The term “the Word” (Gk. *Logos*) conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech & has a rich OT background. God’s Word is effective: God speaks, & things come into being (Gen. 1; Psa. 33, etc), & by speech he

relates personally to his people. John's concept of "the Word" is superior to a Greek philosophical concept of "Word" (*logos*) as an impersonal principle of Reason that gave order to the universe. [ESV Note]

- B. **"The Word was God"** affirms that this Word was also the same God who created the universe *"in the beginning."* Here are the building blocks for the doctrine of the Trinity: the one true God consists of more than one person ["with God ...was God"], they relate to each other, & they have always existed. From the Church Fathers' period (Arius, c. a.d. 256–336) until the present day (Jehovah's Witnesses), some have claimed that "the Word was God" merely identifies Jesus as a god rather than identifying Jesus as *God*, because the Greek word for God, *Theos*, is not preceded by a definite article ["the"]. However, in Greek grammar, Colwell's Rule indicates that the translation "a god" is not required, because lack of an article doesn't necessarily indicate indefiniteness ("a god") but rather specifies that a given term ("God") is the predicate nominative of a definite subject ("the Word"). This means the context must determine the meaning of *Theos* here, & the context clearly indicates that this "God" that John is talking about ("the Word") is the one true God who created all things (see Jn. 1:6, 12, 13, 18) for other examples of *Theos* without a definite article but clearly meaning "God").
- C. **The Word & Creation** (Jn. 1:3) *"All things came into being through him"* includes the whole universe, indicating that (except for God) everything that exists was created & that (except for God) nothing has existed eternally. *"Made through him"* follows the consistent pattern of Scripture in saying that God the Father carried out his creative works through the activity of the Son (e.g. Heb. 1:2). This verse disproves any suggestion that the Word (or the Son, Jn. 1:14) was created, for [in that case] the Father would have had to do this by himself, & John says that nothing was created that way, for *"without him was not any thing made that was made."*
- D. **His own People** [i.e. the Jews] didn't receive him (Jn. 1:11). The Jewish rejection of the Messiah, despite convincing proofs of his messianic identity (esp. the "signs"), is a major emphasis of John's Gospel.
- E. **All who receive him**, who believed in his name, become children of God (Jn. 1:12) *"Receive him"* implies not merely intellectual agreement with facts about Jesus but also welcoming & submitting to him in a personal relationship. "Believed into" (Gk. *pisteuō eis*) implies personal trust. *"His name"* refers to all that is true about him, & therefore the totality of his person. *"Born, not of blood ...but of God"* makes clear that neither physical birth nor ethnic descent nor human effort can make people God's children, but only God's supernatural work.
- VI. **The Word became Flesh** (John 1:14)
- A. **Incarnation:** *"The Word"* continues the opening words of v. 1. *"Became flesh"* does not mean the Word ceased being God; rather, the Word, who was God, also took on humanity (cf. Phil 2:6-7). This is the most amazing event in all of history: the eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, infinitely holy Son of God took on a human nature & lived among humanity as one who was both God & man at the same time, in one person.
- B. **Dwelt/Tabernacled among us:** *"Dwelt among us"* means more literally "pitched his tent" (Gk. *skēnoō*), an allusion to God's dwelling among the Israelites in the tabernacle (cf. Exo. 25). In the past, God manifested his presence to his people in the tabernacle/ temple. Now God takes up residence among his people in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ (cf. 1:17). Thus, the coming of Christ fulfills the OT symbolism for God's dwelling with man in the tabernacle/ temple. Later, through the Holy Spirit, Christ will make into a temple both the church (1 Cor. 3:16) and a Christian's body (1 Cor. 6:19). The references to God's *"glory"* refer back to OT manifestations of the glory of God in theophanies (appearances of God), in the tabernacle/ temple [ESV Note] "For centuries mapmakers put Jerusalem at the centre of the earth. That matches what most 1st century Jews believed about Jerusalem, & its Temple. The Temple was the heart of everything, the holiest spot on earth. It was the focal point of Israel's holy land... Jerusalem's Temple was viewed as the place where God himself had promised to come & live. *This was where God's glory, his tabernacling presence, his Shekinah, had come to rest.* That's what the Old Testament said..." [N. T. Wright, *Simply Jesus*] John says Jesus is the reality of that!
- C. **The "only Son from the Father."** Jesus is the "Son of God," not in the sense of being created or born (1:3), but in the sense of being a Son who is exactly like his Father in all attributes, & in the sense of having a Father-Son relationship with God the Father. The Greek word underlying "only," *monogenēs*, means "one of a kind, unique," e.g. Isaac, who is called Abraham's "one-of-a-kind" son in Heb. 11:17 (in contrast to Ishmael). Thus "only" is a better translation than "only begotten" (made familiar through its use in the KJV Bible). [ESV Note]