

Harmony Of The Gospels

Lesson #2

The Preexistent Christ

John 1:1-18

I. **The Eternal Word (John 1:1-5)**

A. Jesus was the Word.

1. The Greek for "Word" is *logos* which literally means, "to pick words in order to express one's thoughts." It speaks of a word uttered by the human voice which embodies a conception or an idea -- personality in communication.
 - a) Jewish and Greek philosophers spoke of a mediator between God and man as the "Logos." John tells them that this mediator unknown to them is our Lord. Our Lord is the Logos of God in the sense that He is the total concept of God, deity speaking through the Son of God, not in parts of speech as in a sentence composed of words, but in the human life of a divine Person.
 - b) He is the creating, directing, and guiding power of God. He is the medium by which God broadcasts His will and issues His commandments. He is the revealer of God's wisdom and power.
2. "With God" indicates friendship and intimacy with the Father, so as to partake of His glory (John 17:5).
3. Lest it be supposed that Jesus was an inferior being, John states that He was God. There is no more unequivocal declaration in the Bible than this, and there could be no stronger proof that the sacred writer meant to affirm that the Son of God was equal and identical with and yet distinct from the Father.

B. Jesus was in the beginning with God.

1. The Word has been in a relationship with God the Father from eternity (cp. 1 John 1:1). Christ did not at some point in time come into existence or begin a relationship with the Father.
2. Both the Father and the Son are God, yet there are not two Gods. This explains the plural pronouns used of God in Genesis 1:26 during the creation process.

C. Jesus created the world.

1. Jesus is Creator (John 1:10; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2). Everything was made by Him, whether spirit or matter, terrestrial or celestial, visible or invisible, mighty or weak.
2. Although the Bible affirms that God spoke the world into existence (Psalm 33:6, 9), God made all things through the agency of His Son. Jesus was not only called God, but He did the works of God.

3. There is no higher proof of omnipotence than the work of creation; and therefore God often appeals to that work to prove that He is the all-powerful, true God (Psalm 24:2; 89:11; Proverbs 3:19). Thus the deity of Jesus is affirmed since He is one who possesses the divine attribute of omnipotence.

D. In Jesus there was life and light.

1. God is declared to be life, or the living God, because He is the source or fountain of life. This attribute here is ascribed to Jesus Christ. He not only made the material world, but He also gave it life.
2. John uses this word 35 times in the gospel to denote spiritual life. Thus, He who is the source of all physical life (Genesis 2:7) came into the world to give eternal life to those who believe. There must be more to "eternal life" than just duration; there must also be a certain quality in the life.
3. Light is how we see objects. Light here involves intellect and understanding. The eternal life that formed and governs the creation around us, enlightens men as to the existence and power of God by that very creation (Acts 14:16-17). The Word is the source of all knowledge, particularly the greatest knowledge which is the pursuit of man's right relationship with God.

E. The darkness did not comprehend the light.

1. Darkness commonly denotes ignorance or guilt. Jesus came to teach an ignorant and wicked world. His efforts to enlighten and save man have been like light struggling to penetrate a thick, dense cloud. John prefers the exchange of "light" and "darkness" (3:19-21; 8:12; 11:9-10; 12:35-36, 46; 1 John 1:5; 2:8-9).
2. Other versions translate the word "comprehend" as "overcome" or "extinguish." Although men did all they could to obscure and extinguish the light of God in Christ, they could not quench it. In every generation the light of Christ still shines in spite of the efforts of men to extinguish the flame.

II. ***The Role Of John The Baptist (John 1:6-8)***

A. John was sent from God.

1. Jesus' formal ministry was preceded by John the Baptist, who was divinely commissioned by God and who announced the coming Messiah (John 1:20-23). Isaiah 40:3 is a prophecy of John as the Messianic forerunner or "voice in the wilderness" (Matthew 3:1-3; cp. Malachi 4:4-5).
2. The Jewish crowds regarded John as a prophet (Matthew 21:26; Mark 11:32; Luke 20:6), and that is how Jesus also described him (Matthew 11:9; Luke 7:26).

3. Therefore, if John the Baptist is the prophesied forerunner, and if John pointed out Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, then it necessarily follows that Jesus is the coming One. The connection here yields proof to the deity of Jesus.
- B. He bore witness of the Light.
1. John did not bear witness to the facts of Jesus' history, but to the person of Jesus as the eternal Son of God (John 1:15, 34). Thus John the Baptist has come to bear witness to the Word as the light of the world (John 1:8).
 2. When Jesus came, men fully saw what God was like. He not only showed us the right way, but He also enabled us to walk in it.
 3. In John's gospel, John was never called "the Baptist." There is no mention of his preaching of repentance, nor any actual descriptions of his baptizing people (neither his baptizing of the crowds nor his baptizing of Jesus, even though there are references to the fact that he did both). The reason for this might be that the writer wanted to emphasize that John's purpose in being sent from God was to bear witness of Jesus and God equipped Him for that task (John 1:31-34).
- C. He was not the Light.
1. This was an explicit declaration designed to satisfy all the disciples of John who apparently wanted to elevate John the Baptist to a position that would encroach upon that of Jesus Himself.
 2. John is careful to point out that while John's place in the scheme of God's plan is high, he is nevertheless still subordinate to Christ (John 3:25-30; cp. Matthew 11:11). Interestingly, every reference to John the Baptist in the gospel of John is a deprecating reference. Perhaps certain people were giving John a higher place than he ought to have had.

III. ***The Light Of The World (John 1:9-13)***

- A. The true light enlightens every man.
1. Jesus was not a false, uncertain, and dangerous guide, but was one that was true, real, and worthy of our utmost confidence.
 2. A true or genuine light does not deceive us, but removes darkness, error, and ignorance from our path.
 3. Jesus came to enlighten all, both Jews and Gentiles (Luke 2:32). This does not mean that every individual of the human race is enlightened with the knowledge of the gospel. But it does mean that the light was extended to all.
- B. The world did not know Jesus.
1. This is a repetition of what was stated in vs. 3. Jesus came as a man performing miracles and teaching the multitudes in ways that

produced astonishment, yet they did not know or recognize Jesus as their Messiah and they did not understand God's eternal wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6-8).

2. How deeply ironic it was that the very Creator of the world and everything in it came to earth as a man and the world did not know its own Maker.

C. The world did not receive Jesus.

1. Jesus came to His own country or Palestine. This was a land that was particularly God's land and it was God's people. They should have welcomed Him with open arms and threw the door wide open for Him or they should have welcomed Him as a long lost sojourner (Luke 4:24).
2. However, the people rejected Him and put Him to death in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:3-4. The Jews had an abundance of the mercies of God, yet they killed Him anyway.
3. It is tragic when a parent works and sacrifices for a child, and then they refuse to grasp their opportunities. This is what happened to God.

D. He gave those who believed the right to become children of God.

1. Though the nation of Israel in general rejected the Lord, there were a few souls who believed on Him.
2. To the ones who did believe on Him, they were granted the right or privilege to become children of God. Faith is the first step (Galatians 3:26-27; 4:4-7).
3. There are two kinds of sons. The first one uses their home, taking everything they can from their parents. The second one is thankful for his home, doing everything he can to capitalize on his opportunities and continuing to love his parents. Both are children, but one is a son in the sense that the first one never was. We are all God's children by virtue of creation, but we become His sons in a special, spiritual sense when we obey the gospel.
4. We are considered sons of God because we are adopted by Him and we resemble Him (1 John 3:2) and we are united to the Lord and are regarded as His brethren (Matthew 25:40).
5. "Name" indicates "nature" (cf. Psalm 9:10; 20:7). We know what God is like. We put our trust in what He is.

E. Children of God are born of God.

1. We do not become children of God by virtue of illustrious ancestry which the Jews supposed. Nor does our justification lie within the scope of human achievement. God offers the right, but we do not have to take it.
2. God produces the change and confers the privilege of being called His children. The heart is changed by His power alone (Romans

1:16). No privilege of birth or works of man can produce this change. "Born of God" will mean being born of the Spirit, as will be seen in chapter 3.

IV. ***The Word Became Flesh (John 1:14-18)***

A. The Word became flesh.

1. This statement expresses the reason why John wrote his gospel. It affirms both the divinity and the humanity of the Lord. The term "flesh" is used to indicate His human nature, the fact that He became a man (Hebrews 2:14; 10:5). The full manhood of Jesus as well as the full Godhood of Jesus was gloriously proclaimed in John 1:1-3.
2. "Flesh" is not used of Jesus in a restricted sense merely to indicate that He had a fleshly body. It is used as a synecdoche -- a part for the whole. That is, Jesus became a human being with all of its weakness and temptation to sin.
3. "Dwelt" means "to dwell as in a tabernacle or tent." This has allusion to the glory, or the visible symbol of God, called the "Shekinah," which first appeared in the cloud that led the Israelites, resided in the tabernacle, and then in the temple (Exodus 16:16; 24:16; 40:34; 1 Kings 8:11; Isaiah 6:8; Ezekiel 1:28). Jesus is now God's final manifestation of His glory upon the earth (5:41; 7:18; 8:50, 54; 11:4). However, He was with untold multitudes for years and they interacted with Him in such a way so as to make no mistake that He was a man.
4. Peter, James, and John also had the unique experience of viewing His true glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-6). "Beheld" is always used to mean physical sight. If you wanted to see this magnificent creating Word and controlling reason, look at Jesus of Nazareth. His glory was also seen in His teaching, miracles, life, and resurrection from the dead.
5. To the Greek, it was impossible for God to take a physical body. To the Greek the body was a prison house in which the soul was shackled; a tomb in which the spirit was confined. The fact that eternity could appear in time as a man was radical. There were even some in the church who could not believe it. They were called Docetists. These people held that Jesus in fact was only a phantom; that His human body was not a real body; that He could not really feel hunger and weariness, sorrow and pain; that He was in fact a disembodied spirit in the apparent form of a man (cp. 1 John 4:2-3).
6. The "only begotten" is used by John to describe Jesus only (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). It means "unique" or "one of a kind." He

- was full of grace which means that He was always concerned with the welfare of mankind who were undeserving and He was full of truth which was in contrast to the false prophets and Messiahs that abounded in that day. One can know truth (8:31-32; 18:35), and one must act upon truth (3:21).
- B. John yielded to Jesus.
1. He readily acknowledged that he was not the Christ. Even though John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus and his public ministry began before Jesus, Jesus was superior to John because His divine nature has existed from eternity.
 2. We learn from John to keep ourselves out of view and to exalt the Savior. We should lay all at His feet and direct our hearts to Him as the undivided object of affection and honor.
- C. We have received all of Jesus' fulness.
1. In Jesus dwelt the totality of wisdom, power, and love of God (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). The more we know Him they more wonderful He becomes.
 2. Jesus did not come to talk to men about God; He came to show men what God is like so that the simplest mind might know Him as intimately as the scholar.
 3. In the Lord we have the abundance of the mercy and favors of God. "Grace for grace" is a superlative expression which depicts grace in its highest degree. We have derived from His abundant truth and mercy grace to understand the plan of salvation, to preach the gospel, to live lives of holiness; we partake of the numerous blessings which He came to impart by His instructions and His death.
- D. Grace and truth were revealed by Jesus.
1. The Old Testament economy was revealed by Moses with all of its burdensome rites and ceremonies. It was a good system of law (Romans 7:7; 1 Timothy 1:8), but, in the end, it was a system of law and shadows.
 2. The New Covenant was the reality, full of grace and truth. In the gospel we have the discovery of the greatest truths to be embraced by the understanding as well as the richest grace to be embraced by the will.
- E. Jesus explained God.
1. No human eyes have ever seen God (Exodus 33:20), but Christ had a knowledge of God which could be expressed and comprehended by man. The prophets delivered what they heard God speak, but Christ delivered what He knew of God as His equal and as fully understanding His nature.
 2. "Bosom" is a Hebrew idiom expressing the tender affection found between a parent and child or the intimate association of close

friends. In fact, it is the deepest intimacy possible. Jesus had a knowledge of God like one friend of another. Jesus fully revealed Him. God will never be a stranger to us again.