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## John 1:1-18

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John begins his gospel with an eighteen verse introduction known as the PROLOGUE – It contains a summary of John's most profound convictions about our Lord. It focuses on the central fact of the Christian faith: Christianity is not a philosophy; it is about a Person, and that Person is central to the Christian faith. To take Jesus out of Christianity would be like taking numbers out of mathematics, like taking doctors out of medicine, or like trying to think of daylight without the sun. Jesus is absolutely central to Christian faith. All the other great religions of earth center upon the teaching, the ideas, the philosophies that are represented in them, but not Christianity. Christianity centers upon the most beautiful, remarkable, astonishing Person, Jesus!

Jesus was easily the most shattering, the most radical and truly revolutionary character that ever has appeared in human history.

We know about Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, but we don't mark time by them. Instead human history is dated as either happening before the birth of Jesus (B.C.) or as happening after the birth of Jesus (A.D. - Anno Domini). Have you ever wondered why? Why is it that human beings have never been able to forget Jesus of Nazareth? Why doesn't Jesus fade into the dim past as others have? Why is that? Why is he the most powerful personality ever to appear on this planet?

That is what John is answering for us in this prologue to his gospel.

Before we dive into John's Prologue we need to do a bit of historical homework to set the stage for what we are about to discover about Jesus.

John wrote his account of the life of Jesus before the end of the first century A.D., while living in Ephesus. By the time of John's writing, Christianity was no longer predominantly Jewish; in fact, it was overwhelmingly Gentile. The vast majority of new believers were coming from a Hellenistic background. (Barclay, William. *The New Daily Bible Study: The Gospel of John, Vol. 1*. Revised ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975. Print.) Simply, there was a CLASH OF CULTURES. In that new context Christianity had to be restated. It was not that the TRUTH of Christianity had to be changed, but the terms and categories in which it was expressed had to be changed. For example, the Greeks had never heard of a Messiah. While the preaching of

the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria began with that very category, it meant nothing to Greeks outside of Judaism. John sought to remain loyal to the Old Testament Scriptures, priests and prophets, and above all to Jesus, while still seeking to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the larger world scene, which was dominated by Greek philosophy and language. HOW was this task going to be accomplished?

Unlike Jewish culture, the Greek world was not obsessed with theology. Greek culture was obsessed with philosophy. While Matthew's Gospel spoke to an audience that traced its roots back to Abraham as father, John's account was written to reach an audience that traced its roots back to a man named Heraclitus, the father of Greek philosophy. Here is how John's account would bridge this great cultural divide.

John, carried along by the Holy Spirit, wrote his biography of Jesus in the Greek language and began with a concept that was at the heart of Jewish theology and Greek philosophy, "*In the beginning was the Word!*" To the Hebrews, the Word of God was the presence and action of God breaking into human history with unparalleled power and authority. Their sacred Scriptures declared that creation had its origins in the Word of God, "*and God SAID, let there be light... and it was so.*" They understood that the Word of God was never given without accomplishing its purpose (Isa. 55:11). For the Hebrew, God's speech and action were one and the same. They believed that their sacred Scriptures were indeed the very Word of God. In the *New International Commentary on the New Testament* on the Gospel of John, Leon Morris gives insight into the Jewish concept of "the Word" from the Jewish Targums (Old Testament paraphrases) where Jews substituted "God" for "the Word of God" out of reverence for his name. For example, where the Bible says, "Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God" (Ex. 19:17), the Targum reads ". . . to meet the Word of God." So the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had a very clear and a very high view of THE WORD.

The father of Greek philosophy, Heraclitus (540-480 B.C.), taught that the creation of the world, the ordering of all life, and the immortality of the human soul were all made possible solely by what he called *the word* (or logos) , the invisible and intelligent force behind all that was seen in this world. He went so far as to say that truth and wisdom, the great aim of Greek existence, could only be found not in a knowledge of many things, but instead a deep and clear awareness of one thing, the word, or logos.

John begins his account of the life of Jesus with a declaration that both Hebrews and Greeks would have agreed with that before the creation of the world and time, the Word existed eternally.

### **So let's begin our study of this account given by John**

It has been called "a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant may swim."

It is a story that is simply about God. The glory of His character, His life and His nature, and his desire to share that life with fallen man. It is about God come among us, and the mixed response He received to His offer of divine life.

Unlike Matthew and Luke, John does not ease us into the life of Jesus with genealogies and the accounts of childhood. John starts plunges us into the heart of the revelation by

*1In the beginning*

INTERESTING - Luke dates his narrative by Roman emperors and Jewish high-priests; John dates his *in the beginning*.

Luke begins with Judah, Nazareth and Bethlehem.

John's Gospel begins with Heaven, but it doesn't stay there; it brings heaven to earth. John he goes all the way back to a period of timelessness. Before there was time, back in eternity, before there was anything.

QUOTE: Alexander Maclaren

*Genesis and John both start from 'the beginning,' but, while Genesis works downwards from that point and tells what followed, John works upwards and tells what preceded*

Tells us WHAT was there BEFORE creation, BEFORE time.

*1In the beginning was the Word*

## THE WORD: Eternal

So first of all, John explains to us that THE WORD is ETERNAL in nature!

QUOTE: Ron Rhodes

*"'In the beginning' (Greek, en archei) refers to a point in eternity past beyond which it is impossible for us to go. Moreover, the verb was ('in the beginning was the Word') is an imperfect tense in the Greek, indicating continued existence"*

*1....and the Word was with God,*

Writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John carefully constructs this verse to expound on the nature of the LOGOS. He tells us that THE WORD / LOGOS is not only ETERNAL, but from eternity past the LOGOS has been WITH God.

By way of this Greek preposition, PROS (with), John attributes two more essential attributes of THE WORD.

1. The Greek preposition *pros* implies two distinct persons. To be *with* God means that the Word is distinct from God. In other words, THE WORD is not the Father and the Father is not THE WORD. Therefore, while the Father and the Logos are not the same, they do belong together as one.
2. The word *pros* is used to indicate not just proximity, but intimacy and relationship!

At this point, John would have the Jews with him, and he would have had the Greeks with him. The Jew would've said, "Yes, the Word of God is with God before creation, and it was through his Word that He created. We believe that." The Greeks would have believed that same thing, that the word existed before creation. They would've understood that as well.

In his next breath John is going to blow both groups away. The WORD is not only pre-existent/eternal, WITH God from eternity past, *John declares that*

*1....the Word was God.*

## THE WORD: Divine

With in a single verse John blows the minds of both the Jews and Greeks by declaring that THE LOGOS is divine.

Don't miss this, we have in ONE verse the nature of THE WORD and the relationship of THE WORD to God.

- There is THE WORD.
- THE WORD is eternal (*In the beginning*)
- THE WORD is with God in intimate relation with God, belongs in the company with God, yet is distinct from God.
- THE WORD is plainly called God (*the Word was God*).
- The doctrine of the Trinity declares that there is ONE God, who eternally exists in three distinct persons,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each fully and equally God.

Now that John has blown up every pre-existing concept of THE WORD that the Jews and Greeks have held, he gives further clarity to THE WORD.

*2He was in the beginning with God.*

With the word “he”, John now ascribes PERSONALITY to THE WORD. John says that THE WORD is not just some objective, neutral, detached thing like the Hebrews understood. Neither is THE WORD some unexplainable force as the Greeks understood. He says that THE WORD IS A PERSON. John calls the LOGOS, HE! Before anything was made, HE was there with the Father.

### **THE WORD: Creator of all things**

*3All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

John then explains that the word is not merely the invisible force of the Greeks, or the agent of God’s action for the Hebrews, but a person through whom all things were created.

*Col. 1:16-17 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. 17And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

They evolutionist says that we come from nowhere, exist for nothing and when we die we go nowhere, and from that we are find a meaningful and purposeful life! If you came from nowhere and you are going nowhere, you are here for no reason, and life is short and nasty, where is the hope? What is the point?

Here John answers the cry of every man’s heart, where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?

John says that we have come from Jesus, we are here for Jesus, and by His grace we are headed to a forever with Jesus.

It really is ALL ABOUT JESUS!

### **THE WORD: Source of Life and Light**

*4In him was life,*

Not only is THE WORD the creator, He is the source of life.

NOTE: In HIM is life! Life is NOT in religion of philosophy or in anyone or anywhere else apart from Jesus. The night before He died Jesus would say, *“I am the way, the truth and the LIFE! (John 14:6).* THE WORD of God is life.

*4...and the life was the light of men. 5The light shines in the darkness,*

THE WORD is light, as opposed to the darkness in which we find ourselves. He shines into our darkness!

All of that is summarized in John’s thinking on the word.

- ETERNAL

- WITH God
- IS GOD, the CREATOR of the heavens and the earth.
- The AUTHOR and SOURCE of LIFE and LIGHT.

It isn't that the Word "contains" life and light; He is life and light. Therefore, without Jesus, we are dead and in darkness. We are lost. It is significant to note that man has an inborn fear towards both death and darkness. Jesus, THE WORD, is the answer to man's greatest fears!

Then he says that there was reaction to THE WORD as it came into the world. That the world didn't just see THE WORD of God and then ignore Him or haphazardly walk away from Him. There was active resistance to Him and the LIGHT that He is and that He brought.

*and the darkness has not overcome it.*

(KJV – and the darkness comprehended it not).

There's a word play there in the Greek text.

The word is katalambano =

- lay hold of so as to make one's own
- to seize upon, take possession of as in evil overtaking someone or thing
- to lay hold of with the mind – to understand, perceive, learn, comprehend

Does John mean that the light has not been understood by the darkness, or that the light has not been overcome by the darkness? The Answer is YES! The world is filled with darkness; sin, death, separation from God, hatred, violence, jealousy, selfishness, greed, pride, lust! Moral and spiritual darkness that is rotting out the fabric of humanity.

THE WORD, who IS God and IS light, shines His light into the darkness of the world (which we are a part of). The darkness doesn't understand that light, can't *comprehend* it. And, as a result, it becomes fearful of it and wars against it, seeking to do away with it. But THE WORD is stronger than the darkness and the darkness is unable to overcome the light.

Mark Driscoll gives a great illustration of this:

*It's almost as if you are out in the middle of the night and there's just absolute and total pitch darkness and you can't see a thing, and then all of a sudden, from overhead, and enormous light just shines right on top of you. You are exposed, you're found. The question is - is that a blessing or is that a curse? It depends. Are you lost, or are you a criminal? If you're lost, your joyous! You've been found. If you're a criminal, you're terrified because you've been found.*

Those are the reactions that the world has to Jesus. As we walk around, lost, stumbling in darkness, God shines His light upon us. Some of us respond like criminals caught in the act! We run and hide. We scurry out of the light. But others respond like a person who knows they are lost in the darkness, want to be found and are overjoyed because they've have been discovered.

So, John says that the darkness doesn't understand the light, so it runs away from it. It tries to over come it, but it can't because the light is stronger than the darkness.

*10He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.*

The God who spoke creation into existence came as part of his creation. Amazing humility, God who is

eternal, comes in time. God who is spirit, takes on human flesh. God humbles himself and comes into the darkness. And, when He comes, the world that was MADE by Him looked at him and said, “We don’t know you!”

Think of that, of course the world didn’t recognize him. If he knocked... hello, I am the sovereign God of the universe. You’re like, “no... no, you’re not.” I don’t know what God is like, but I know when he comes, he’s going to be more impressive than that.

*Isaiah 53:2 he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.*

Jesus comes from a backwater, hick town like Smartsville or maybe Marysville! He is born to a teenage girl, who claims to be a virgin. He is raised in a blue collar family, works with his hands. From the age of 30 until He died He is homeless and unemployed. To the ears of the sophisticated citizen of Jerusalem He has a major, kind of mountain drawl.

“Hello, I am God!”

“No, you’re not, you’re Ross Perot!”

*11He came to his own,*

That is the Jewish people

*And His own people did not receive him.*

John is speaking of the descendants of Abraham, who have been waiting for a Messiah for all these years, who have all of the prophecies concerning His coming. They know what God says. They’re waiting, they’re anticipating. Jesus comes and they say, “that can’t be the guy.” The Jews did not receive Him because they struggled with preconceptions of what the Messiah would do.

*12But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

This is a spiritual birth, being born again. We are born physically but we need to be born again spiritually. We are born physically alive, but spiritually dead. To be born again is having a new heart, new life, new passions. Born ONCE, Die TWICE! Born TWICE, Die ONCE!

THEN HE COMES TO THE HEART of the Prologue. To the CRUX of the book!

The word, the great concept of the totality of Greek thinking, the totality of Hebrew thinking, John says something amazing about that WORD.

*14And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*

THE INCARNATION! This Logos, eternal, creator, eternally in face-to-face relationship with the Father, who was Himself from eternity Divine, became a human being. He took upon himself flesh and *dwelt among us* Literally, PITCHED HIS TENT ( TABERNACLED) among us

Many of you studied through the Book of Exodus with us. Amazingly, we find in that book that God wanted a

tent, and that He wanted to PITCH His tent right in the midst of His people, in the midst of their everyday life.

When the Tabernacle, God's tent is constructed, God's glory descends upon the tabernacle and God's glory is present among God's people, dwelling, and living in a tent. That is what John says happened in the person of JESUS, THE WORD.

The God of Glory comes down and dwells among us. God throws his lot with ours and walks around on the dust of the earth with his creation. Only now, God's tent is a body of human flesh.

WHEN JESUS, THE WORD, shows up this is what John says they saw

*14...and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

They saw TWO beautiful things; grace and truth.

Jesus comes to

1. Bring us the truth  
The truth about God  
The truth about us  
The truth about everything.
2. He brings us God's grace.  
God became man in order to bring to us everything that we could NEVER earn, everything we DON'T DESERVE. THAT is grace!

The eternal Word, who was WITH God and who IS God came to live in a tent of flesh in order to speak TRUTH into our lives

- He came to unflinchingly, even sternly, speaking truth into the darkness of our world, into the darkness of our own soul.
- He confronts our pride, our sin, our self-sufficiency.
- He is completely truthful.

The eternal Word, who was WITH God and who IS God came to us overflowing with grace

- The infinite loving kindness, mercy, compassion and affection of God demonstrated in action.

So, Jesus comes bearing gifts of grace and truth, directly from the Father.

*16And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.*

God took on flesh, became INCARNATE to give grace upon grace

- blessing upon blessing, grace upon grace, mercy upon mercy, love upon love, affection upon affection.
- For 22 years of my life I lived apart from Jesus – in darkness. And living there I NEVER saw or understood God's grace – God's loving kindness. That does not mean that it is wasn't there – I just means didn't have eyes to see it.

*17For the law was given through Moses;*

We read in the New Testament (James 2:10) that if you transgress any little portion of law, you've blown the whole thing. The problem with the law, it comes as one package deal. It's all or nothing, perfect or imperfect. God doesn't grade on a curve. We have failed to keep His Law, we have sinned, and we have

fallen short. That sin has created an infinite and absolute distance between us and God. There is NO WAY for us to make ourselves RIGHT before Him. For us to be saved will require God doing for us something that we do not deserve and could not earn! What we need is GRACE!

*17....grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

The GRACE that we NEED comes through Jesus. Don't you love that? Every point you fall short, Jesus gives grace. At every point you fall short he also gives truth. He tells you that you have fallen short of the law, and then he forgives you. BY GOD'S GRACE you can become a new person. Ultimately, you will begin to change. BY GOD'S GRACE you will begin to obey the law. Not to earn salvation, but because it's been given to you as a gift.

When Jesus died on the cross, God placed your sin, my sin upon Him. God the Father, knew our sins past, present and future and placed ALL of them on Jesus. He was punished in our place. We deserve the full, holy, hot angry justice of God. But God, in a human body, human flesh, endured it in our place. Then He gave to us the truth of the Gospel that says, You're not good, but you're loved.

He gives grace, grace upon grace, an unending well of this kind, loving, merciful affection that is wrapped up in JESUS, THE WORD.

*18No one has ever seen God;*

No one has ever seen God, that's the point of His coming. Apart from Jesus, all we have is philosophical and religious speculation!

*18....the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

In Jesus, we have the revelation of God in Christ.

People say, "IF I COULD ONLY SEE GOD!"

YOU CAN! John tells us that this revelation of God to man was accomplished in the incarnation, in the birth of Jesus. Jesus reveals the heart of the Father. What is the Father like? Look at Jesus. What is God like? Look at Jesus.

