

The Gospel of John

Introduction & Chapter 1:1-5

December 8, 1996

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**
 - Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
- **Introduction**
- **Authorship** Although the book does not name the writer, he is indicated as 'the beloved disciple' (21:20, 23, 24) and the close companion of Peter. The testimony of the ancient church is to the effect that this is John, the son of Zebedee (cf. 21:2). Irenaeus is the chief witness. Some scholars have questioned whether one who was unschooled and inexperienced (Acts 4:13) could have written such a work. Time, motivation, and the enablement of the Spirit ought not to be underestimated in evaluating the ability of John and the overcoming of handicaps.
- **Time of Writing** The actual date of authorship is unclear. For years many have thought the book to be written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 a.d. but the way that John speaks of the landmarks in Jerusalem it appears that they were still standing when he wrote about them. Nevertheless, it is presumed that he wrote the book from Ephesus where he fled with our Lord's mother as he was entrusted with her care.
- **Recipients** It appears that John was writing to Christians in the region.
- **Purpose** One of the greatest debates early on in the church was the humanity and divinity of Christ. John states in chapter 20 verse 31 that the purpose of his writing is so that the readers may confidently believe that Jesus is the Christ. The heresy called Docetism was prevalent in Ephesus and perhaps this book was a treatise refuting the heretical teaching.
- **Exposition**

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

- John begins his writing by hearkening back to the similar kind of language found in the first chapter of Genesis. Many have pondered what is meant by "beginning" but it must mean the beginning of the creation because we know that elsewhere the scriptures teach that God has no beginning. At this beginning the Word was. The Word did not become, He *was*. We see here as we discussed last week the eternal self existence of our triune God. There has never been a time when God with the Word was not. Note also that in the first few verses of Genesis, we see the Spirit hovering over the creation giving us a picture of the purposes of each person of the Trinity.
- It is remarkable that John reveals here that this person of the Trinity is called the Word. We can understand this term to mean the Wisdom of God or the Revelation of God. In God's wisdom, He made Himself known through the Word. Both as the mechanism of creation where we know that we have an indisputable general revelation of God's eternal attributes and in the specific revelation of the written word, God has made His wisdom known. In addition, as John goes on to teach that the Word one day becomes flesh, in the form of Jesus of Nazareth and through Him, we have a much greater detailed revelation of the attributes of God.
- Given that the Word was with God prior to the creation is a strong defense of the eternal existence and divinity of the Word. Just to make sure he is clear, John says further that not only was the Word *with* God, the Word *was* God.
- The Mormons will destroy the meaning of these verses by inserting the indefinite article "a" before the last word of the verse so that it becomes "... and the Word was a God." By doing so they clearly do away with the Trinity and they support their polytheistic view of God. Of course however, this would be just fine and understandable if the indefinite article were there—but it is not.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

- Again John reiterates, the Words pre-existence but also note that He carefully continues to distinguish the two persons of God. The three persons of our Triune God are distinct, they have different roles but they are all God and share a common

purpose.

3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

- Now we seen a special function of the Word—creator. Our Lord Jesus is the creator of all things but it occurred before the incarnation, the taking on of flesh. John speaks so clearly and succinctly when he communicates that the Word is the creator of all things (except those things which are pre-existent, the uncreated).
- This gives us great understanding when we consider the prayers of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane where He prays that the father would restore the glory they had together before the foundations of the earth were laid. In Colossians, where Paul teaches that all things are created by Him and in Him all things are held together, we can begin to understand that the incarnation did not occur before time began, rather it happened at a point in time in our history. Prior to that point in time, Jesus existed for eternity past as the Word. But the Word was hidden until the creation. Since through Him all things were created it was only after the creation that the Words existence was distinguished by anything other than God Himself.

4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

- Not only were all things created by Him, for Him and through Him, it was through Him that life came to anything. All things were created and to some of the creation He gave life. Our Lord created all things and then those things existed. But beyond their existence life was given to them so that they remain in their condition and thrive.
- Here John has said generically that the Word is the source of all life but most importantly, we see that the Word was the source of life of mankind.
- At the fall, Adam died because he was separated from the life through Sin. As God gave him dominion over the creation, his fall subjected all of the creation to decay. In addition, given that all subsequent life comes through seed and that the nature is passed on through the seed, all subsequent creation was subjected to the fall of Adam as well. It is only fitting then that the Word would be the means by which the creation would once again be made alive. Acts 17:28

5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. NKJV

- The fact that light overcomes darkness and drives it away is not just the way things happen to be. Clearly, the Word could have made the creation with any attribute that he saw fit. But the fact that our Lord is referred to as light reveals an attribute of Him which teaches that no matter how dark the darkness becomes, nothing is hidden from Him and He is able to see all things. The more dark the darkness becomes the greater the exposing power of the light.
- The mind of man is blinded such that it may be justly pronounced to be covered with *darkness*. He might have used a milder term, and might have said that the light is dark or cloudy; but he chose to state more distinctly how wretched our condition has become since the first fall of man.
- Man's condition is so far decayed that even as he currently exists, light will not make him righteous. Even a large amount of light will not regenerate man because his mind (which God gave him for understanding and comprehending) is so far wretched and distant from the righteousness of God that something more drastic would be necessary for man to see again—a new birth. It wouldn't be enough to just give the old nature more light because that nature hates light but God, in His wisdom, renews our nature by putting to death, on the cross, the old nature and giving us a new nature which can comprehend the light. What a glorious plan of salvation!