

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

Introduction to John: The Gospel attributed to John is unique from the previous three synoptic gospels. They, in considerable degree, parallel each other as they present the life and ministry of our Lord. John, on the other hand, presents aspects of Christ's life and ministry nowhere else recorded. One reason may be that John wrote later than the other three synoptic gospels. Historians have generally taken the position that the Gospel of John was written between A.D. 85 and 90. John no doubt was acquainted with the other three. As the Holy Spirit led him, he presented aspects of Christ's ministry the others did not. Because John had more than a half a century to reflect upon and understand the transition to grace, his gospel is perhaps the most spiritually mature. This is particularly so in respect to his clear presentation of salvation.

The theme of the Gospel is clear in the initial paragraphs. Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God. He is the eternal Word and, in fact, is God. His advent was through His incarnation, a revelation of God as man. The other resounding theme is how one might have eternal life through Christ by trusting Him as Savior. Two words are prominent throughout: "believe" and "life."

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Overview of John 1: *John 1 forms a prologue to the book. The synopsis of the entire book is contained therein: (1) Jesus clearly is God. (2) He is Creator, life, and light. (3) Through faith in Him comes sonship and salvation. (4) He is the incarnation of the eternal Word. The Apostle then continues his introduction of the life and ministry of Christ. He begins with the ministry of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ. More detail is given concerning the incarnate Logos, including John's description of Him as the Lamb of God and His baptism.*

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The eternity and the Deity of Jesus Christ is forcefully set forth. At the beginning, the Word already was. Or, when the beginning began, the Word already was. The term translated as **Word** is the Greek (λογος) *logos*. It is a comprehensive term usually translated as *word*, but also can convey the idea of 'thought' or the 'mind.' Verse 14 makes it clear in what sense John used it. There it is recorded, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." No question is left that "the Word" is none other than Jesus Christ.

Notice the first phrase, "In the beginning was the Word." It is the assumption of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. When the beginning began, the Word already was. What clearly is implied is that He had no beginning. The word translated as **beginning** (αρχη *arche*) has the sense of origins, or of that which is first. When things were originated, Jesus Christ already *was*. He is eternally pre-existent.

The second phrase, "and the Word was with God," alludes to the Trinity. Genesis 1:1 begins with the assumption of God—"In the beginning God." Then notice in Genesis 1:26, "And God said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." As early as Genesis 1, a clear plurality within God is found. (That is, there is more than one personality in the composite entity called

God.) Here in John 1:1, the individual called the Word was *with* God.

Moreover, “the Word was God.” The Deity of Jesus Christ is set forth forcefully. He is more than divine. He is Deity. That is, He is God. Again, the Trinity is clearly implied. Not only was Jesus Christ *with* God, He himself *was* God as well. Again, the plurality of the Godhead is in view.

The Received Text is clear. “The Word was God.” The grammar and syntax allow no other honest translation. The Jehovah Witnesses have brazenly and presumptuously altered their prejudiced translation at this point. Though *most* other translations convey the Deity of Christ at this point, the Jehovah Witnesses in their own little New World Translation pervert the text to say ‘and the word was a god.’ That is blasphemy conceived in the mind of Satan.

1:2 The same was in the beginning with God. The Holy Spirit impressed upon John to reenforce the truth set forth in verse 1 by reiterating it. “The same” is direct reference to the Word who was in the beginning with God. Notice the development. (1) The Word was present *when* the beginning began. (2) The Word was in fact God. (3) The Word was *with* God. What is clear is not only the Deity of Jesus Christ, but also the fact that He is part of a plurality within the Godhead.

1:3 The truth of the Deity of Christ is further expanded. **All things were made by him; and without him was not any things made that was made.** Refer once again to Genesis 1:1. There Holy Writ states, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 2 and 3 go on to describe the rest of His creative work. John says that in fact, the Word made all things. Notice first that the Word is referred to as *him*. Clearly, the Word is a person of the masculine gender. Then notice how John 1:3 *complements* and not *contradicts* Genesis 1. The

personality within the Godhead, which the Father delegated to do the actual work of creation, was Jesus Christ, the eternally pre-existent Word of God. John 1:3 in fact gives additional detail describing which part of the Trinity did the actual work of creation. The remainder of the New Testament further develops this point. See Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:16, and Revelation 4:11. Jesus Christ, as God was the actual Creator.

1:4 John moves on to additional truth. **In him was life; and the life was the light of men.** Jesus Christ, the pre-existent Word of God *is* life. He is the source of life. He is the creator of life. He is the giver of life, both physically and spiritually. See John 14:6.

Moreover, He who has given life is also the “light of men.” Light is that which reveals the way. It gives guidance. It dispels darkness and fear. It encourages. In other places in John, Jesus is called light. See John 1:9, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46 et al. John 1:14 alludes to His glory. The essence of glory is of brilliant blinding light. At His transfiguration, He was seen in brilliant light. In His post-ascension appearances, He was revealed as light powerful enough to blind (e.g., Saul on the road to Damascus and John on Patmos). He is light.

1:5 **And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.** Verse 5 is a sad commentary upon how the light of Jesus Christ has been received to this day. The phrase, “And the light shineth in darkness” could literally be translated as ‘and the light is shining in darkness.’ The verb translated as **shineth** (φαίνω *phaino*) is in the present indicative tense. It implies ongoing action. The light of Jesus Christ continues to shine to the present in a dark world. However, “the darkness comprehended it not.” The word translated as **comprehended** (καταλαμβάνω *katalambano*) could also be translated as ‘apprehended.’ The idea is not so much that the