

Introduction

Having looked at several introductory elements regarding John, let us turn to the book itself. The first 18 verses are loaded with edifying truth about the “Word” of God, a figure representing the Lord Jesus Christ as the living Word, the Logos.

I. The Word and God, v. 1-2

The idea of “Word” has two important notions back of it. First, “the Word” was a common Jewish way to refer to God. In Aramaic translations and commentaries on the Scriptures, the name of God was often referred to as “the Word” because the Jews were afraid of breaking the third commandment (taking the name of God in vain) and so they referred to “the Name” or “the Word” instead of the actual word used to signify God’s name. (Aramaic is a cousin language to Hebrew. It came to be used by Jews in Palestine after they returned from the Babylonian captivity.)

Second, the “Word” brings to mind the idea of a message or a communication. The Bible equates Jesus and “Word.” That is because Jesus is the communication of divine light and wisdom into the world. He personally reveals exactly Who God is. He is not just the “Great Communicator,” but is the communication! He is truth itself! He is the exact image or replica of God. The first verse tells us three essential truths about this Word.

A. The Word is Pre-existent and Eternal “In the Beginning was the Word”

In the beginning points us back to Genesis (and forward to 1 John 1:1). At that time, the Word already was in existence. The Word did not come into being “in the beginning”—rather, he already was being at that time! This means that the Lord was already in existence before anything else was (pre-existence), and that he is outside of time (eternal). From our time-bound perspective, we say that the Lord always was, is, and always will be. Of course, to Him, He just IS, since time is His creation and under His control. John the Baptist affirmed this in John 1:30 when he said that the Lord was “preferred before me, for He was before me,” knowing full well that he was about 6 months older than Jesus in physical age!

B. The Word in Perfect Fellowship with God “and the Word was With God”

“With” could be translated as “before.” No one is “before” God who is not perfect in being, and this was before anything was created. We must be talking about the second person of the Trinity. He is personally distinct from God the Father.

C. The Word is God “and the Word was God”

All that God is, the Word is. This does not deny a personal distinction between the Word and God, for they are not the same person as shown in the previous phrase. But they are of the same essence. It does NOT teach that the Word was a god. No No No No NO! There is only ONE God, and Jesus partakes of the essence of that one God.

Taken together, the three phrases pack the Bible’s teaching on the Triune God into one short verse. It is the simplest Greek, yet at the same time the most profound. A lifetime is spent in the knowing of this wonderful person. But the point is simple: the Word existed in the beginning, and the Word existed in the presence of God, and the Word existed as God. The Word existed in the beginning in the presence of God, as Himself God. This is summarized by verse 2, emphasizing that the Word is not a creation but Himself was with God in the beginning.

II. The Word and Creation, v. 3

There are two statements in this verse, looking at the Word’s involvement with creation from two perspectives. Notice that the verse personalizes the Word now as “Him.” One involved in creation cannot be an “it” but is a personal being.

A. The Word Made All Things

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. That was Genesis, written by Moses, about 1,540 years before John wrote his gospel. We are now informed that it was the Word who was God’s agent in the creative work. Now we can see more clearly what was going on in Genesis with the Spirit of God hovering over the waters and the “let us” statement of 1:26. The additional information and clarity John provides is characteristic of progressive revelation. New and more revelation is given which complements earlier revelation. We see that all three members of the Triune God were involved in creation. (Similarly, all Three are involved in your salvation – 1 Peter 1:2, Eph. 1:3-14.)

There are other passages that affirm the same truth about our Lord’s role in creation: Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:16-17, Heb. 1:2. Think of this dear friend: Christ created you, and he redeemed you. He owns you on both counts! What are you doing thinking that your life is your own? Of course it is not! (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

B. All Created Things Owe Their Existence to the Word

The Word was not bypassed in the creation of anything. There is no created thing that can say the Word was not involved in its creation. This very effectively cuts the legs out from the Jehovah’s Witness argument that Christ was the first creation of God. If he belongs to the set of things that were made, then he had to be created by the Word, but the Word is Christ, and the Word did not create itself, because he WAS in the beginning.

Notice how this fits in with other areas of theology. God planned, produced, preserves, and providentially guides the universe.

1. Planned it. Eph. 1:11.
2. Created it. 1 Cor. 8:6.
3. Upholds or preserves it. Heb. 1:3. See also Jer. 10:10-13.
4. Guides it. Psalm 103:19.

III. The Word and Man, vv. 4-5**A. Life and Light, v. 4**

We’ve already said in the introductory material that John’s gospel is the gospel of eternal life. That theme is introduced here. This verse means that any kind of life, whether physical or spiritual, is truly sourced only in the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of his creative and life-giving power.

This life is equated with light, and this light lights every man that comes into the world (v. 9). Therefore we are not restricted to speaking only of believers here.

Everyone who has physical life but is spiritually dead has some level of light from God. They have the ability to see general revelation to some extent or another (Ps. 19:1-6, Rom. 1:19-20). They have a conscience that lightens their way as to what is right and wrong (Rom. 2:14-16).

The Bible often pictures death as darkness, by the way. See Job 3:1-6, 16; Job 10:21-22; Eccl. 6:3-4; Psalm 23:4. Light and life are the opposite of death.

B. Light and Darkness, v. 5

Now even though every man has some light, the whole of mankind is basically in darkness because of spiritual death (separation from God due to sin). So when the bright light comes, those whose eyes are accustomed to the darkness of sin and unrighteousness squint and cannot apprehend what the Light means. It is unfamiliar and unwanted.

So in verse 5 we move to the spiritual meaning of light. The light of life (John 8:12) is necessary to not walk in darkness.

Conclusion

We cannot avoid the conclusion that without the Word, something big would be missing in the world—God would not be God as He is; creation would not be; and men would not have the light of life. We’re all dependent on the Lord Jesus, aren’t we? MAP

What about the firstborn idea of Col. 1:15? We can easily integrate this into our understanding if we do not over-emphasize the "born" part of firstborn but the whole "firstborn" idea. In the OT, the firstborn son has the place of prominence in the family, in the inheritance, etc. In fact, the one who gets "first born" status is not necessarily even the chronologically first son (witness Isaac, as compared to Ishmael, who was obviously born first by a number of years). The Lord is the most prominent of creation: the first son, if you will.

Correlate Matthew 11:12 with verse 11:14 (if you will receive it, suggesting that they did not receive it). Also with Matt. 23:13 which teaches that the leaders of the nation were shutting up the kingdom of heaven from men by their false teaching, not going into the kingdom themselves, and when they saw others going in, they just could not allow it. They had to work against them. This is the violence that the kingdom was experiencing. Correlate this also with Luke 16:16.