

The Word of God

John 1:1-5

INTRODUCTION

- A. Illustration about the sculptor telling the statue's viewer to kneel, *Stories for Preachers and Teachers*, "To See Christ," sv, "Christ," sv "Entertainment."
 - 1. This morning, we want to kneel and see the Lord Jesus.
 - 2. We need to behold the Lord Jesus, for he is our Savior and our Sovereign.
- B. The opening of John's Gospel has been the center of much theological debate over the past two millennia.
 - 1. We don't really desire to delve into the speculative and theological debates which have plagued this passage.
 - 2. We want to explore this passage in order to learn more about our Savior: the divine Word, the creating Word, and the life-giving Word.

THE DIVINE WORD, v. 1

- A. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
- B. "In the beginning" obviously reminds readers of the opening passage of Genesis.
 - 1. In fact, not only does our passage begin by speaking of the beginning, but the passage mentions the Creation in v. 3.
 - 2. The annals of church history are full of divergent opinions as to what is meant by "Word" or "Logos."
 - a. There are divergent opinions, because the philosophies in vogue at the time of Christ used the term "logos" differently.
 - 1) The Stoics said that "logos" was the rational principle by which everything exists and the "logos" was the essence of the rational human soul.
 - 2) Philo, a Jew from Alexandria, was influenced by Plato, and made a distinction between the ideal world, which Philo called "the logos of God," and the real world which is a copy of that world.
 - 3) "Logos" can also refer to inner thought, thus reason or science; logos can refer to outward expression or speech, and thus the use of "word."
 - b. The most likely understanding, however, of "Word" is that John borrows from the Old Testament where Wisdom is personified.
 - 1) "Does not wisdom call, does not understanding raise her voice?" (Prov. 8:1).
 - 2) Thus, as the Word, based upon the OT idea of wisdom, Jesus is the personification of God's wisdom.
 - 3. The Word was "in the beginning."
 - a. "Was" is in the imperfect tense in the Greek; this demonstrates that the Word was in a continual state of existence before the Creation.
 - b. This is important, for the Jews taught that Wisdom had been created shortly before the Creation.
- C. The Word was with God — He was in the presence of God.
- D. The Word was God.
 - 1. The sentence structure in Greek demonstrates that the point is that the Word has the very nature of God.
 - 2. But, the sentence does not mean that the Word is just a god or just divine, for there is another word

for “divine;” the point of the passage is that the Word is equal with God, he is God.

- E. The Word, then, is preexistent, present with God, and divine.
 - 1. This is vital, for John says, in v. 14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.”
 - 2. Thus, in the Incarnation of Jesus, we do not have the revelation of a divine being, but we have the revelation of God himself.

THE CREATING WORD, vv. 2-3

- A. “He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”
- B. The Word was in the beginning with God — He was present at the Creation.
- C. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.
 - 1. John’s point may very well be that Jesus is not a created being.
 - a. There have been heretics throughout the history of Christianity that said that Jesus was the very first thing God created — there were such heretics in Christianity’s earliest days, and we have the Jehovah’s Witnesses today.
 - b. John may be combating some of that error here and saying, “No, Jesus is not a created being, because everything that was made was made through him.”
 - 2. Notice also the contrast between “was” in v. 1 and “made” here.
 - a. “Was” is in the imperfect and denotes a continual existence in the past; “made” is in the aorist tense and denotes that something came into being at some point in the past.
 - b. Thus, as Jesus is Eternal and uncreated, he is the Creator of all things.
- D. Jesus Christ, as the Word, was the instrument through which God created the world.
 - 1. “In him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities — all things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1:16).
 - 2. Thus, you and I were created through Christ and for Christ, and this is the same One who assumed human flesh (v. 14).

THE LIVE-GIVING WORD, vv. 4-5

- A. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men,” v. 4.
 - 1. We should not at all be surprised to find Jesus as the One who has life, because he is the One who created life!
 - 2. Jewish teachers of this era — based upon promises of the Old Testament of long life if Israel obeyed God — said that eternal life was the reward for obeying God.
 - a. For example, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you” (Ex. 20:12).
 - b. John says that the eternal life of which Jewish teachers spoke was not so much found in the Old Testament, but that life is found in a Person, Jesus Christ.
 - 3. John records for us many of Jesus’ statements about the life he gives.
 - a. “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn. 4: 14).
 - b. “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn. 11:25-26).
 - c. “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6).
- B. “The life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it,” vv. 4-5.

1. There may be two ways in which we are to understand “light” in this passage.
 - a. Light allows you to tell where you are going. You turn the headlights on your car at night so that you can find your way.
 - 1) Jesus came and illuminated the way to God; through his teaching, we can tell where we are going.
 - 2) “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps. 119: 105).
 - b. There is also a sense in which light gives hope.
 - 1) Imagine you are in a burning building, and you can’t see a thing. Finally, a firefighter arrives, and you are able to see his light through the dense smoke - you’re going to have hope!
 - 2) Jesus brings hope into the world.
 - a) “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined” (Is. 9:2).
 - b) Ernest Hemingway once said: “Life is just a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness. There is no remedy for anything in life, Man’s destiny in the universe is like a colony of ants on a burning log.” No so; Jesus came to give hope!
2. The darkness has not overcome the light.
 - a. The Greek term for “overcome” is a somewhat ambiguous term.
 - 1) The term often means to seize with hostile intent or to overcome.
 - 2) But the term can also mean to seize with one’s mind, i.e., to understand — the NKJV has “the darkness did not comprehend it.”
 - b. John may have purposefully used an ambiguous term so that we see both meanings in the term.
 - 1) The world has not overcome the light even with its best efforts — the light shines two millennia later even though skeptics have tried to extinguish it.
 - 2) The world does not understand the hope and the faith and the light we have.

CONCLUSION

- A. Jesus Christ is quite amazing. He is the Word of God. He is the divine Word, the creating Word, and the life-giving Word.
- B. You know precisely where this passage is going: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (v. 14).
 1. There were heretics in John’s day who taught that the flesh was evil and the spirit was good. Thus, Jesus did not become flesh, but he only looked that way.
 2. John says, “Wait a minute. Jesus truly became flesh.”
 - a. The divine Word became God in the flesh, the creating Word became a creature, and the life-giving Word came to give life.
 - b. Because Jesus became flesh, he was able to suffer and die for us. Have you taken hold of the grace that came to man when Jesus assumed flesh?