

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 1

“ JOHN 1:1 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² The same was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”John 1:1-3)*

IN THE BEGINNING

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to discerning and believing in Jesus Christ, we at once are outside the domain of human experience and aptitude. In order to believe on Christ a work of considerable magnitude must be done within men. First, there is not a shred of evidence extant in the world that can confirm the existence of Jesus, the effectiveness of His life and death, the reality of His resurrection, the realness of His presence at God's right hand, or the exceeding greatness of the power He is now exerting toward His people. Further, all of these lie outside the perimeter of human experience, making it impossible for them to be comprehended by the natural man. If God had not done something about this situation, it could not possibly have been resolved.

That this is true is attested by God's dealings with Israel – an exclusive people whom He created, and with whom He exclusively worked for a period of fifteen hundred years. Before their very eyes He worked miracles, the magnitude of which, was not done before nor since: The exodus of an aggregate nation in the millions in a single night (Ex 12:41); Israel crossing of the Red Sea on dry ground (Ex 14:22); the drowning of Pharaoh and his armies (Ex 14:28-29); the systematic supply of miraculous bread from heaven every day for forty years (Ex 16:35); the giving of the Law, attended with ten thousands of angels (Deut 33:2), and much more. Yet even after being *“hewed by the prophets”* (Hos6:5), they displayed the limited extent of human aptitude by breaking God's covenant with them (Jer 31:32), and being a *“stiffnecked people”* (Ex 32:9) that *“believed not”* (Psa 78:22).

However, now we are living in the new and different era of the New Covenant. Sin has been put away, Satan has been soundly defeated, and evil principalities and powers have been disgraced and displayed for what they really are. Because of this, a new message has been given for delivery to men. It is a message that, unlike the Law, has power – power unto salvation (Rom 1:16). The power inherent in the Gospel is necessary if men are to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That belief, which is the expression of faith, enables the individual to see Jesus as He really is, and to appropriate the benefits He really gives. No matter how thoroughly we may think we believe, there is room for growth – room for our faith to *“increase”* (2 Cor 10:15). That increase will be directly proportionate to what we actually know and comprehend of Jesus Christ. That is why He is referred to as *“the Author and Finisher of our faith”* (Heb 12:2). John's Gospel is intended to bring us to a strong faith (John 20:31).

IN THE BEGINNING

John 1:2a ***In the beginning was the Word . . .***

The theme of this book is Jesus Christ. Its aim is **not** to convince men of what they ought to do. It is **not** to present a novel approach to the humanity of Jesus, so that men may regard Him as a kind of Hero, or resolver of human dilemmas. In fact, what John writes is not even a human view of Jesus. It will focus on things Jesus did that could **not** be done by anyone else – for until Jesus is seen in that manner, men will not *“believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His*

name" (John 20:31). John does not write to lead us to believe Jesus was "just like us," or to accent His human likeness to us, so to speak. He was made "*like unto His brethren*," to be sure (Heb 2:17). However, that likeness was not in order to sooth our minds, or make Him more precious to us. His humanness was in order that He might die for us (John 10:17-18; 1 John 3:16), and also that He might be a "*merciful and faithful High Priest*" for us "*in things [pertaining to God]*" (Heb 2:17). While men often labor to make Jesus more like us, John will labor to show us Jesus of Nazareth was **not** "just like us." Rather, He will establish, what is elsewhere affirmed, that Jesus was and remains "*separate from sinners*" (Heb 7:26).

IN THE BEGINNING. Other versions read, "*from the first*," ^{BBE} "*Before anything else existed*," ^{LIVING} and "*in the beginning [before all time]*," ^{AMPLIFIED} This is "*the beginning*" of Genesis 1:1.

John takes us to the proper beginning point for godly thought. **The Mormons** take us to a time of previous existence in some other form. Thus they declare, "WE WERE FIRST BEGOTTEN AS SPIRIT BABIES IN HEAVEN AND THEN BORN NATURALLY ON EARTH." JOURNAL OF DISCOURSE Vol. 4, p. 218 And again, "IN YOUR LIFE BEFORE BIRTH, BEFORE THE EARTH WAS CREATED GOD PRESENTED A PLAN TO HIS CHILDREN FOR THEIR ADVANCEMENT. YOU WERE FREE TO ACCEPT OR REJECT THIS PLAN OF SALVATION. THOSE SPIRIT CHILDREN WHO ACCEPTED HIS PLAN WERE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE ON EARTH; THOSE WHO REJECTED HIS PLAN WERE NOT PRIVILEGED TO ENTER MORTALITY." THE PURPOSE OF LIFE, BYU Campus

The proper consideration of both man and the Lord Jesus Christ begins at the creation – the point at which a revelation for humanity commenced. **The fact that God is declaring something or someone that existed before time means that it is relevant, or pertinent to us.** This is done out of God's gracious consideration of we mortals. This puts the revelation within our range, and enables us to perceive the working of God that is directed toward us. There is no other reason for the revelation given than this: It is something that men need to know. It is something that will provide a context for proper thought.

Whatever was in existence at the time "*the beginning*" (Gen 1:1), is not affected by time. It is not in any way impacted by human thought, or by anything that was commanded "*in the beginning*," when "*God created the heaven and the earth*" (Gen 1:1). This means that circumstance, which, so far as men are concerned, has to do with time, has no power to alter, or change the nature of, what existed prior to time. That even applies to cherubim, seraphim, the living creatures, holy angels, and even Satan and his hosts.

By speaking of One Person, or even a determination, that existed before time, the door of thought is opened to consider such things as an **eternal purpose** (Eph 3:11), **predestination** (Rom 8:29-30; Eph 1:5,11), **election** (Rom 9:11; 11:5,7,28; 1 Thess 1:4, 2 Pet 1:10), and **foreknowledge** (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:2) – for these are all Divine expressions that **preceded** time.

WAS THE WORD. Other versions read, "*there was Christ*," ^{LIVING} "*the one who is called the Word*," ^{CEV} "*God expressed himself*," ^{PHILLIPS} "*The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word*," ^{MESSAGE} and "*the Word (Christ)*," ^{AMPLIFIED}

The comparison with Genesis 1:1 at once reveals the uniqueness of what is being said. Moses begins by saying, "*In the beginning God created*." John begins His Gospel by saying "*In the beginning WAS the Word*." It ought to be obvious that He is speaking of the Lord Jesus prior to Him coming into the world. For later He says of this "*Word*," "*all things were made by Him*" (1:3), "*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men*" (1:4), and "*the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us*" (1:14).

You will not find much help in understanding the term "*Word*" (logos) in the Greek lexicons. The lexical meaning is "SPEECH, A WORD UTTERED BY A LIVING VOICE, ETC." ^{THAYER} The more focused thought is that of **expression**. Within the scope of the Gospel we understand this to mean the Lord Jesus is the One through whom God now speaks: "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds*" (Heb 1:1-2). By saying "*in the beginning was the Word*," God is preparing us for a proper view of the creation – that the ultimate expression of God

was through the pre-incarnate Christ. The evolutionists with their theories, never take *"the Word"* that was in the beginning into their consideration.

Furthermore, Jesus is now known as *"the Word of God"* (Rev 19:13). It is He that is bringing the eternal purpose of God to its intended culmination. *"The beginning"* was actually the launching of project humanity – the *"so great salvation"* of God.

THE SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD

¹¹ 1:1b *"... and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."* Other versions read, *"He was in the beginning,"* ^{NKJV} *"This Word was from the first in relation with God."* ^{BBE} *"He was already with God"* ^{GWN} *"He existed in the beginning,"* ^{NLT} *"He is the One who was face to face with God in the beginning,"* ^{WILLIAMS} *"From the very beginning,"* ^{CEV} *"He was there with God,"* ^{ERV} *"in readiness for God from day one,"* ^{MESSAGE} and *"He was present originally with God."* ^{AMPLIFIED}

AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD WAS GOD. This is what the Savior was before He entered into the world. There was a distinction of persons in the Father and the Word, but not of their character or their will. They were unique Persons, yet were Divine, eternal, Sovereign, and immutable. They were together in both nature and purpose. The Word was not a creation, but the means of the Father's expression – particularly as regards men. This is why we read such expressions in Genesis as, *"let US make man"* (1:26), *"Behold, the man is become as one of US"* (3:22), *"let US go down, and there confound their language"* (11:7). Speaking of God, Isaiah saw a vision in which the Lord said, *"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for US?"* (Isa 6:8). Both are eternal. Both are Omnipotent. Both are Omniscient. Both are Omnipresent. Yet, in redemption we are brought to *"the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ"* (Col 2:2).

John is establishing at the very first of his Gospel that the God of Scripture, and the Lord Jesus Christ with whom we are now acquainted, have always been together. For us, nothing can be received that does not come from Christ, according to the will of God the Father. And, nothing can go from us to God that does not go through the exalted Son of God. Whatever we think of Jesus Christ is what we think of God the Father. However we respond to the word of Christ is how we respond to the Father. This is why Jesus said, *"he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me"* (Matt 10:40); *"whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me"* (Mark 9:37); *"he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent Me"* (Luke 10:16). Jesus referred to *"Him that sent Me"* fifteen times. He always did so highlighting that He was on a mission from God, was doing the will of God, and would eventually return to God. He is *"the Word of God,"* the expression of God, the appointed means through which God communicates to men.

JESUS REFERRED TO BEING WITH THE FATHER PRIOR TO HIS ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD

HE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN. *"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven"* (John 3:13). *"For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"* (John 6:38). *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven"* (John 6:51). John the Baptist said of Jesus, *"He that cometh from above is above all"* (John 3:31). Jesus referred to Himself as *"the true Bread from heaven"* (John 6:32). And again, *"For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world"* (John 6:33). And again, *"This is that Bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever"* (John 6:58).

Men must not consider the Lord Jesus as primarily being like them. They must see Him as coming down from heaven, and being sent from heaven – sent to provide a foundation for men to come to God through Him. Earth is not the primary location, and life in this world is not the fundamental life. If that was the case, Jesus would have remained here.

This means that our thoughts concerning Jesus Christ must not be within the

circumference of our lives, our circumstances, and our needs. We must strive to think of Jesus as coming down from heaven to do the Father's will, not His own – and surely not ours.

JESUS REFERRED TO BEING WITH THE FATHER PRIOR TO COMING TO EARTH. It would seem to me that no mortal is capable of comprehending how fervently the Son of God longed to be with His Father while He walked among men. This accounts for some of those long vigils He spent in prayer (Lk 6:12; Matt 14:23; Mk 6:46). Think of these expressions: *"And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was"* (John 17:5). *"Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world"* (John 17:24).

When the Lord spent three days in the region of the dead, He was hoping – looking forward to being with the Father. The Psalmist foreshadowed this longing, as declared by Peter on the day of Pentecost: *"Because thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life; Thou shalt make Me full of joy with Thy countenance"* (Acts 2:27-28). That was the outgrowth of being with the Father in the beginning.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM

" 1:3C "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."

John is identifying Jesus, the Messiah, to his readers – He is Jesus of Nazareth, who came from heaven, and is now in heaven. Forty three times John refers to the *"Son"* – *"the only begotten Son," "the Son of God," "the Son of man," "His Son," "the Son," "the Son of the Living God,"* and *"Thy Son."* From Genesis through Malachi there are few references to the Messiah as the *"Son,"* and they are not attended with much clarity (Psa 2:7,12; Isa 9:6; Dan 7:13). In fact, when Jesus dwelt among men, the religious authorities balked at the very thought of Him being *"the Son of God"* (John 5:18). If, as is generally believed, this Gospel is written to the Jews in particular, John's approach is of special significance. He takes a fundamental reality that no believing Jew questioned – the creation – and will establish that it was accomplished by the One who was *"made flesh and dwelt among us"* (John 1:14).

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM. Other versions read, *"all things were made through Him,"* ^{NKJV} *"All things came into being by Him,"* ^{NASB} and *"All things came into existence through him."* ^{BBE} This includes seen things and unseen things, persons, and things impersonal. All created things owe their origin to He who was the Word, appeared as Jesus as Nazareth on earth, and is now exalted to the Father's right hand. When these *"things"* are seen, or in any way sensed, they are to remind us of *"the Man Christ Jesus"* who is now maintaining and upholding them (Heb 1:3). By virtue of Him being their Creator, all of these things belong to Him. He uses them in the execution of His will, and we are to ever be mindful of it. He has even marshaled created things to work for Him in the overthrow of His enemies (Gen 7:4; Ex 14:27-28; Josh 10:11; Judges 5:20), and the sustenance of His people (1 Kgs 17:4-6). Because He was the One who created bread and fish, Jesus used what was created to miraculously feed a multitude of people (Matt 14:19; 15:36-37).

In Scripture, much is made of Jesus being the Creator. *"He was in the world, and the world was Made by him"* (John 1:10); *"one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him"* (1 Cor 8:6); *"God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"* (Eph 3:9); *"His dear Son . . . For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist"* (Col 1:13-17); *"His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds"* (Heb 1:2); *"But unto the Son He saith . . . Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands:"* (Heb 1:8-10).

The scope of what was created by "*the Word*," who "*became flesh*," is magnificent, and stretches our minds.

- ◆ The world
- ◆ Things in heaven
- ◆ Things on earth
- ◆ Visible things
- ◆ Invisible things
- ◆ Thrones
- ◆ Dominions
- ◆ Principalities
- ◆ Powers
- ◆ The world
- ◆ Foundation of the earth
- ◆ The heavens

Those who theorize about the creation are dealing with Jesus, for all things were made by Him, "*and **FOR** Him*" (Col 1:16). They are to be used for His service, as opposed to being used strictly for men and their enjoyment.

Generally speaking, it is revealed that God's "*eternal power and Godhead*" are clearly seen in the things that are made (Rom 1:20). Other versions read, "*eternal power and Divine nature*," ^{NIV} and "*eternal power and Deity*." ^{RSV} Things belong to the Son of God, as well as to God Himself. His "*eternal power*" unfolds the power of **His Word** – that what He speaks causes things to happen. It reveals the power of **His will**, that He can, and does, whatever He wills to do. We also can perceive that He has power **over obscurity** (darkness–Gen 1:2-3), **chaos** (without form–Gen 1:2), and **emptiness** (void–Gen 1:2). He can cause life to spring up simply by saying, "*LIVE!*" (Ezek 16:6). He can command multiplicity (multiply–Gen 1:22). He can summon things into being by simply saying, "*Let there be!*"–Gen 1:3,6,14).

WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANYTHING MADE THAT WAS MADE. There is no such thing as something disassociated from Christ Jesus. Nothing that was "*made*" is independent from Him. He has authority over it all, to use it for blessing or for cursing, building up or taking down, advancing or retrogressing.

Now, transfer that over into the kingdom of God's Dear Son, into which you have been translated. What is required of you that is not possible in Christ Jesus? What do you face that is not under His control? What possible reason can you adduce for not living for Him, striving to please Him, receiving from Him, and being directed by Him?