

JOHN

John: The Gospel of Gospels

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John 1:1

Lesson 2: Understanding John 1:1

On April 13, 2017 America dropped the largest bomb of all, the Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB, commonly known as "Mother of All **Bombs**") on Afghanistan. When the bomb hit the ground it penetrated, devastating the area, sending a huge plume of smoke and fire into the sky and a shock wave, like earthquakes, across the town. The quake showed that something extraordinary occurred.

One resident described his experience this way: I heard a big explosion, the whole place shook violently. I thought the world had come to an end. (Mind you, the bomb weighed about 21,000 lbs.)

Ah, the tremor of that bomb was nothing compared to Mount Sinai's experience 3,500 years ago. There God descended upon the mountain in a cloud of smoke. Moses recorded that majestic display of God's power in Ex. 19:18.

The mountain covered with smoke quaked and trembled violently. When Moses spoke to God He answered with thunder. In light of all this, it was fitting that John, one of the fearless apostles whom the Lord nicknamed "the sons of thunder" would be the one God would use to record a majestic thundering message in the pages of New Testament Scripture.

John 1:1

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

It would have been interesting if John 1:1 had been the first sentence of the New Testament, just as Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” is the first statement of the Hebrew Bible. Both verses say “In the beginning,” and both refer to a new creation.

To place John 1:1 in context, let us read the first 5 verses of the first chapter of John:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

A Philosopher from Plato’s school of thought was overheard to say that “the first five verses of John were worthy to be written in letters of gold.”¹

When Francis Junius (a theologian and a scholar 1545-1602), read this passage, in a Bible he stumbled upon as an unbeliever, he “observed such a divinity in argument, such an authority and majesty in the style, that his flesh trembled, and he was struck with such amazement that for a whole day, he scarcely knew where he was or what he did; thence he dates the beginning of his being religious.”² In other words, He credited the passage with his conversion experience.

In this context, it’s my uttermost desire that at the end of John’s prologue, that’s John 1:1-18, that our understating, and knowledge of God’s revelation of Himself to the church will have as lasting an impact on our lives as it did on Francis Junius and others, both now and forevermore!

Before we uncover the truth of these eighteen verses in Chapter One, let us first consider John’s fourfold purpose in writing his Gospel.

1. To demonstrate that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man (John 1:1, 14).
2. To lead the unsaved to faith in Christ alone for eternal life (20:31).

¹Henry, Matthew, “Commentary on the Whole Bible” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/john/1.html>, August 30

² Henry, Matthew, “Commentary on the Whole Bible” <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/john/1.html>, August 30

3. To lay a solid foundation for spiritual living (John 13-16).
4. To bring believers to the altar of divine prayer (John 17).

In The Beginning

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1 NASB): Our understanding of this passage will give us a greater appreciation and reverence for God’s Son, for His impeccable role in our so great salvation.

The *Aramaic Bible in Plain English* translates it this way: “In the origin The Word had been existing, and That Word had been existing with God and That Word was himself God.”

John begins his Gospel with the ultimate revelation, “In the beginning was the Word.” No doubt, the phrase “In the beginning” of Genesis 1:1, was in John’s thought when he began this powerful Gospel with the phrase “In the beginning was the Word.”

Both beginnings speak of creation. In Genesis 1:1, God created heavens and earth. In John 1:3-4, the Word-God created all things, with emphasis on new life as John 3 reveals. Paul calls it a new creation in 2 Cor. 5:17. Dr. A. Carson, a commanding authority on the Gospel of John, aptly calls the *Word*, “The originator of all things.”³

Comparison of the beginning of Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1.

The difference between the two beginnings, is that “In the beginning” of Genesis 1:1, was an actual beginning with a date known to God. At a point in time, the Creator-God stepped into time and history and created our universe. Whatever our creation theory we can derive a historical date for Genesis 1:1 because it had an actual date of beginning.

But *the beginning* of John 1:1 was quite different. NASB translates it “In the beginning” and the *Aramaic Bible* translates it “In the origin.” Both translations, and others, struggled to convey the true meaning of the Greek word, *arche* as John intended. “In the beginning, which was not really a beginning, in eternity past,” was John’s intended translation.

³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 114

In the beginning [in eternity past] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Let us not forget; God has no beginning. In eternity past, when there was no beginning, was the Word. The Word has always been in the bosom of God. In the beginning [in eternity past] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” What a revelation!

Pause here and celebrate with me, as the angels did, when they first heard the revelation of the second member of the Godhead. The Apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:12 that the angels long to investigate these mysteries, which God had hidden for ages.

Importance of “With God”

The phrase “was with God” distinguishes between two separate objects. It does so in the same way that I can say I have been with my wife since we got married; we are one, as God declares a married man and woman, but we are still two separate individuals. The preposition “with” means that we have been inseparably united in mind and purpose and have been together in marriage. But our marriage had a beginning.

By the same token, John comes along and lights the world with this amazing statement “In the beginning [in eternity past] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” As A. T. Robertson points out: “the word was is the imperfect of [the Greek word] eimi used three times to denote “continuous existence” or “timeless existence.”⁴

John underscores the truth that the Word was not from the beginning but rather, it was in the beginning. This is important. John was saying to both Jews and Greeks, that this Word has always existed. There was never a time when it did not exist. His statement echoes what we said last time regarding Christ’s claim: I am the beginning [of beginnings]; I am the Alpha; I am the Omega; I am the first; I am the last. Besides Me, there is no other God in existence.

Christ goes on to ask the Father in His prayer in John 17:5 to restore to Him the glory He shared with God the Father before the world existed. There is the revelation of His Deity! Asking for an equal share of God’s glory is a request only

⁴ A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament Volume V, The Fourth Gospel and Epistle to the Hebrews (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1932), p. 3

God can make. Isa. 42:8, reading from *Good News Translation*, “I alone am the Lord your God. No other god may share my glory; I will not let idols share my praise.” The truth of His Deity is echoed by the apostle Paul in Phil. 2:5-8.

This truth should abolish every idea or teaching that the Word was outside of God or was created by God. I will keep on saying this until this truth is understood. In eternity past, when there was no beginning, the Word has always existed and has always been with God. Both the Father and the Word had no beginning.

Interestingly, Jews and Moslems are monotheists. They believe in one God. Their concept of God may differ. Hindus, Buddhists, and a handful of other religions are polytheists. They believe in multiple gods. Where does this leave Christians? This is a question John strives to answer with his famous injection, “In the beginning [in eternity past] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John strikes a chord on the revelation of a tri-union God, known as the triune God—a God, who exists in three distinct persons, co-eternal, co-infinite, and co-equal in attributes. I cannot wait to unveil the revealed God of the Bible as John, the son of thunder, did in John 1:1.

The supreme question is who is the Word of John 1:1? How can Jesus say that He knows the thoughts of the Father? Of course, He knows perfectly well the thoughts of the Father because He was and is God’s thoughts Himself, the very Word that was in the beginning. The Deity of Jesus Christ according to John 1:1 is the coming message. We will see how this Word, the very Word of God, who has been with God the Father was instrumental in the creation of the Adamic world. We will see how the same Word is the creator of new life, the author and finisher of our faith. He is the Great I Am of the Old Testament. He is the one who is, who always was and who is still to come. Celebrate the Almighty God!

