

Growing Christians

MINISTRIES

Talks for Growing Christians Transcript

The Deity of Christ

John 1:1-2

John 1:1-2 - *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God."*

Background Notes

As we begin our study of the Gospel of John, let's look at some background notes for these first two verses, and also for the entire Gospel as well.

Who was the author of the Gospel of John? You might say, "That's easy – John! After all, it's the Gospel of John." Yes, but **which** John? There are several Johns mentioned in the New Testament. Was it John the Baptist? No. Throughout this Gospel the writer referred to himself as "*the disciple whom Jesus loved*."

In the last chapter of the book, John the disciple said that he wrote the book. *"Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true"*(John 21:20-24). So we believe, then, that John the Apostle, the beloved disciple, wrote the Gospel of John.

When did he write this gospel? John wrote five books of the New Testament: the Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. We believe that the Gospel of John was written between 85-90AD, from Ephesus. He wrote the epistles (1 John, 2 John, and 3 John) in the early 90s AD. Then, from the island of Patmos where he was exiled, John wrote the book of Revelation around 95 - 100AD.

Why did John write this Gospel? After all, there are three other Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke - and these books would have already been written when John wrote the Gospel of John. Why **four** Gospels? Well, I think most of you realize that each Gospel has a different theme. The theme of Matthew is "Jesus Christ the King." The theme of Mark is "Jesus Christ the Perfect Servant." The theme of Luke is "Jesus Christ the Son of Man." The theme of John is "Jesus Christ the Son of God."

Each Gospel emphasized a different aspect of the Person and work of Christ. These different themes emerge at the beginning of each Gospel, in the genealogies that are given early in each book. In Matthew the theme is Christ the King -

the Messiah, and His genealogy goes through David, the king of Israel, right back to Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. In Mark the theme is Christ as Servant, so no genealogy was given, because a servant's genealogy is not important for servants. In Luke the theme is Christ as the Son of Man, and the genealogy traces all the way back to Adam, the beginning of the human race. And in John, the genealogy of Jesus Christ as the Son of God goes all the way back to eternity; "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*"

We don't have to read very far in the Gospel of John to realize that "the Word" in verses 1-2 is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Look at verse 14: "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" Why did John use this term "Word" (the Greek word *logos*) to refer to Jesus Christ? John wanted to use a term that would communicate with both Jews and Greeks, and what better term to use? We express ourselves through "words," and our words reveal our minds and thoughts. The Lord Jesus Christ is the visible expression of God. As the "Word," He revealed God to us - who God is, and what God is like. Jesus Christ is the Revelation of God.

There's much more we could say about the background of the book, but let's move on. In the doctrinal or teaching points we'll look at three doctrinal points that are taught about "the Word."

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. The Word is eternal.

The first phrase of verse 1: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" John didn't say, "In the beginning the Word began, or came to be." No. He said: "In the beginning the Word was." That is, when the beginning began, the Word already existed! It reminds us of Genesis 1:1, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" God didn't have a beginning. He **always was**, and the Word always was. "*In the beginning was the Word.*" So the preexistence of the Word is taught here.

The Word didn't begin at Nazareth, when Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Word didn't begin at Bethlehem, when Jesus was born. The Word always was! What happened at Nazareth and at Bethlehem? Verse 14 tells us: "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" That's what the incarnation was all about.

The eternal Word took on flesh when He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and He came to dwell among us. The eternal Son of God, the Word, the **eternal Word** became man, to live among us! The Son of God, the Word, did not begin at Bethlehem. He **always was**. The Word is **eternal**.

2. The Word is a distinct Person.

Look at the second phrase in verse 1: "...and the Word was with God." That is, the Word is a distinct Person in the Godhead. The next phrase of verse 1 revealed that the Word is fully God, but the fact that He is a distinct Person in the

Godhead was taught in this second phrase, “*...and the Word was with God...*” The Bible teaches that God is a trinity, or a tri-unity - one God, but three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is One in essence, or substance, but three Persons. Not parts, but Persons.

The one true God does not reveal Himself in three different “*modes*.” For example, He is not described as the *mode* of the Father, the *mode* of the Son, and the *mode* of the Holy Spirit – no! That is heresy! The one true God does not reveal himself in three different “*roles*.” He doesn’t take on the *role* of the Father, the *role* of the Son, or the *role* of the Holy Spirit – no! That, too, is heresy! God reveals Himself as three distinct “Persons.” John 1:1 emphasized that the Word is a distinct Person in the Godhead.

Another Scripture emphasizing the eternal distinction between the Persons of the Godhead is found in John 17:24, in the high priestly prayer of our Lord: “*Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*”

Notice that there was a love relationship between the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son **before the foundation of the world!** That’s before the incarnation. That’s before Bethlehem.

Now back to John 1:2, “*He was in the beginning with God.*” This verse also emphasized the same truth as the second phrase of the first verse - the great truth that the Word is a distinct Person in the Godhead. Notice that verse 2 did not say “**It**” was in the beginning with God. No. Verse 2 said “**He**” was in the beginning with God. The Word didn’t begin when He was conceived at Nazareth or when He was born at Bethlehem. The Word didn’t become a Person at Nazareth or at Bethlehem. He became **human** at the incarnation, but he **always** was a **Person**. His Son-ship didn’t begin at Bethlehem either, or at some time after the beginning. **He always was the Son of God**, a distinct Person of the Trinity.

3. The Word is fully God.

This truth is found in the third phrase of verse 1, “*and the Word was God.*” Not “a god,” not “a part of God,” not “a form of God,” or not “godlike,” but **God - fully God.** The rest of the New Testament certainly backs up this truth. Let’s take just one verse: “*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*” (*Colossians 2:9*).

You couldn’t say it any more clearly or in plainer terms that **all three Persons of the Trinity are fully God**. The Word is eternal. The Word is a distinct person. The Word is fully God.

Practical Application

Don't be fooled by the “Jehovah's Witness” interpretation of John 1:1.

The Jehovah's Witness translation of John 1:1 reads: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god!" Why do they translate it that way? Well, as you know, Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe that Jesus is fully God. They say He is the son of God, they say He is divine, they say He is the redeemer, but in essence they say that Jesus Christ is **not fully God**, that there was a time when He was not fully God. So if a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses come knocking at your door and you want to get into a discussion with them, you could start with John 1:1.

The Jehovah's Witnesses on your doorstep will use all this "god-like" language about Jesus Christ, but you should pin them down by saying, "Was there a time when He **was not** – when He did not exist?" If they know what their system really teaches, they will have to live up to what their presuppositions are - that Jesus Christ is really only a "creature" - a created being. When you quote John 1:1 to show that Jesus is fully God, they will say, "Oh no, it doesn't say that - it says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was "a god." They will tell you it should be "a god" because when there is no article used before the word "god" in the Greek language, so it should be translated "a god," with a "small g" - but when you have the article before the word "god" it should be translated "God," with a "capital G."

Well, that's just ridiculous! They don't know what the Greek language is all about! Even a beginning Greek student knows that, throughout the New Testament, sometimes the noun 'God' has the article, and sometimes it doesn't. Look, for example, at John 1:6, "*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*" Now if you look at that verse in the Greek Bible, there is no article before the word "God." Even in the Jehovah's Witness translation of the Bible, they don't translate that verse as: There was a man sent from 'a god,' whose name was John. Don't be fooled by the Jehovah's Witness interpretation of John 1:1.

So if Jehovah's Witnesses come to your door and you get into a discussion with them, I would suggest that you turn **first** to Colossians 2:9, "*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" But if you want to get into John 1:1, don't be fooled by the Jehovah's Witness incorrect interpretation of John 1:1!