

Studies from the Gospel of John

The Prologue of John's Gospel - John 1:1-14

It is like a Preamble.
It is like the Overture of an Opera.
It is like the prologue of a great book.
It is ???

John's prologue is perhaps the highest pinnacle of religious statement ever achieved.

It is like a hymn: Col 1:15-20, Phil 2:6-11

It is like poetry: John 1:1-5, verses 10-11 and verse 14 with prose inserts that concern John the Baptist

It uses staircase parallelism, where one word in one phrase links to the word in the next phrase.

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2The same was in the beginning with God. 3All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

By AD 60 there were many more Greeks in the Christian Church than Jews. In fact there may have been 100,000 Greek Christians for each Jew Christian. John needed to present Christ in a way the Greeks could understand. To do this, he used the term Logos. The link to the Hebrew "Word" for the Greeks was Logos.

In Greek - Logos = Mind, Order, Reason

Heraclitus of Ephesus 600 BC coined the term to define the innate order of the Cosmos. He said "It was impossible to step into the same river twice". And that Logos explained the great plan of reason of God to make all of the constantly changing Cosmos work toward the design of God – "The profound unity of things".

Philo of Alexandria as a Hellenistic Jew of Christ's time. He wrote allegories of the books of Moses, interpreting them in the light of Greek philosophy. He referred to Logos as the divine reason, the model of the universe, the Governor or Superintendent of the universe and the first born son of God.

Word = Logos = Logic = Christ

The logos/mind of God came to earth in Human form (Jesus). When you look at Jesus, you see what the mind of God is like. You see how God thinks and acts. You see His Logic and Reason.

Hebrew = Word = Logos = Greek

The Word was with God "in the Beginning" = Genesis 1

The Word was God. The word was with God in the beginning. The word made all things

4In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

Spiritual Life = zoe. Physical life = bios. The Greek word used here is zoe. Jesus had spiritual life. Spiritual life was in him (self existent) and not something he obtained. He did not achieve spiritual life, indicating a time when he did not have it. It was already there, as with God = self existent.

Life was in him = light of men. The life that was in him was the light of men.
His spiritual life was light. There are differences, but the spiritual life and light cannot be separated.

**For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.
(Psalm 36:9)**

The Light is God's image, His reason, His Logos, manifest in Jesus Christ.

**But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.
(2 Corinthians 4:4)**

Continuing in John's Prologue:

**5And the light shineth in darkness;
and the darkness comprehended it not.**

Intellectually, Light = Truth, Darkness = Falsehood

Morally, Light = Holyness, Darkness = Sin

Spiritually, Light = Jesus Christ, Darkness = Satan

Until man comes into the Light, man exists in Darkness. However the darkness cannot overcome the light. Jesus shined in the darkness and the darkness did not (Overcome) him

A Sudden, Abrupt Shift in the Prologue

6There was a man * sent from God, whose name was John. 7The same came for a witness **, to bear witness of the Light*, that all men through him might believe. 8He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.**

John (the Apostle) was a disciple of John (the Baptist) before he began to follow Jesus.

* John the Baptist was sent from God. He was the first true prophet to Israel in over 400 years. He came as the result of a miraculous conception and birth through Zacharias and Elizabeth Luke 1:7, 36

** We call him John the Baptist, but Scripture calls him "John the Witness".

*** These words are the understanding of the Apostle John regarding John the Baptist's mission. Lest anyone doubt, John the Baptist was not the Light. He was sent to bear witness to the light.

"That all men through him might believe."

John (JTB) was a witness (martureo)

The word witness is used 113 times in the NT and 77 times by John (Gospel, epistles and Revelation)

Look at the word “witness”. This is a legal term.

The word witness comes to us from the legal sphere and is derived from a root meaning "to bear in mind;" "to remember;" "to be careful." Thus a witness in the field of law is one who has knowledge of something by recollection and experience, and who can tell about it accurately.

A witness relates to fact, not opinion.

The testimony of a direct witness is given great credibility in a court of law.

He was the first of 8 witnesses John the Apostle uses in his case.

- 1 – JTB John 1:6-7
- 2 – The Father John 5:37
- 3 – Jesus' words John 8:18
- 4 – Jesus' works John 5:36 and John 10:25
- 5 – OT scripture John 5:39
- 6 – Some who met him John 4:29
- 7 – His disciples John 15:29, John 19:35 and John 21:24
- 8 – The Holy Spirit John 15:26

See John 19:35

The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. (John 19:35)

See John 21:24

This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. (John 21:24)

John the Baptist was sent by God to bear “Witness of the Light”.

**9That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.
10He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
(John 1:9)**

The True Light:

**You are my lamp, O LORD;
the LORD turns my darkness into light.
(2 Samuel 22:29)**

The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear?

**The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?
(Psalm 27:1)**

**For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling,
that I may walk before God in the light of life.
(Psalm 56:13)**

**Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD.
(Psalm 89:15)**

**You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.
(Psalm 90:8)**

**Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
(Psalm 119:105)**

**The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.
(Psalm 119:130)**

**he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring
back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my
salvation to the ends of the earth."
(Isaiah 49:6)**

**After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied ;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.
(Isaiah 53:11)**

**"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness
covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory
appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
(Isaiah 60:1-3)**

The World:

World = Kosmos = physical world, humanity, satan's domain. John always uses "the world" in a negative way.

He was the true light that the world did not know.

- Who can't see the light? The blind.
- Who can't see the spiritual light? The spiritually blind.
- Humanity - men under the dominion of satan - were blind to the light.

Back to John's Prologue

**12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them
that believe on his name: 13Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will
of man, but of God.**

But - This is a dramatic shift in the prologue. This is always the way the word “but” is used.

As many as – There is no limit, or condition placed here.

Receive Him – Take hold of him. Grasp Him, Obtain Him

“to them gave he power to become” - It is not earned, not purchased, not bargained for. It is a gift of grace.

“the sons of God” – Adopted Sons. Appointed sons, Designated sons. Named Sons.

Believe on His name – Totally accept him. Son of Man and Son of God – all that he was and is and did and does.

“Which were born”

- Not of Blood – Heritage, ethnic, race, background
- Nor of the will of flesh – Personal desire
- Nor of the will of man – Any kind of manmade system, program, or anything earned.
- But of God – Impossible without God.

Conclusion of Prologue:

14And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Verse 14 presents the highest statement of God’s plan for humanity, under the new covenant and of the calling of His Son.

God became Man through His Son and experienced all of humanity, while never departing from his position as God.

Only begotten = monogenes (in Greek) = Singularly Unique, One of a kind.

Monogenes = John 1:18, 3:16, 3:18, Psalm 2:7, Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5, 5:5, 1 John 4:9

“Dwelt Among Us”

Dwelt – *Skenoo* in Greek, which literally means “To tent with”.

In the OT, God tented with the people of Israel throughout their time in the wilderness. His place was in the Tabernacle Tent. In 2 Samuel: 7:18 David went into the tent and “Sat down before the Lord”.

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will

**be with them and be their God. 4He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."
(Revelation 23:21-24)**

God says he will come to earth and tent with us forever.

From Ray Stedman: - "The Stranger of Galilee"

The key to Verse 14 is the word "dwelt": "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." That is an interesting word. It declares that Jesus "tented," he "tabernacled," among us. He came and lived in a tent in our midst. John saw that human tent.

There is really nothing unusual about that because everyone lives in tents. (We all live in tents lives, no pun intended!) Our bodies are what might be called "earth suits." Like the astronauts who have space suits designed to enable them to function in space, we have been given "earth suits" which are marvelously designed to enable us to function in the conditions found on this planet. But we ourselves are inside those suits. What you are seeing this morning is my earth suit functioning according to my control. As I wave my arms and flap my lips, you are seeing but the outside tent in which my spirit dwells. I'm looking at your tents as well, some of them much better looking than mine, some functioning much better, but they are nevertheless earth suits. That is what John saw when he looked at Jesus.

But what caught John's attention was the glory that he saw inside. That is what he says was remarkable. Have you ever walked around a campground at night and seen lights inside the tents glowing like jewels in the darkness as they shone through the fabric? That is descriptive of what John saw when he saw Jesus: he saw a glory inside. In four remarkable images, John tells us what was that glory:

First, it was the Word made flesh; that eternal Word, that marvelous articulation of the mind and thought of God, that speaking of God that brought all things into existence, become a soft, baby flesh. That is a staggering thought. In the Greek text those two words appear side by side: "the logos became sarx"; or, literally, "logos sarx became." Sarx is the Greek word for flesh; the meat, the soft, yielding flesh of our human bodies. The Word, the energy of the universe, was contained in a baby's body.

Yet, in the mind of God, that is what he intended from the beginning. The most remarkable thing about our race is that God designed man to be the bearer of himself. Man has a capacity for God; and that makes him unique. No animal has that capacity; no animal has any idea or concept of God as men have and share universally. Let evolution explain that if it can! Why is it that we are so different from any animal?

Every human being has a capacity for God and a hunger after God. Whether we know it or not, we are longing, searching constantly all through our life for something that will meet what Pascal called, "the God-shaped vacuum" in the human heart. That capacity was designed of God, for God intended man to be the dwelling place of God. Now, at last, in human history that actually takes place: God becomes man; God becomes flesh, in an amazing blending together of these two concepts.

In his letters, John the Apostle says that fact is so fundamental to our faith that a denial of it constitutes an anti-Christian heresy: "If any man deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, that is the spirit of anti-Christ," {1 John 4:3}. That truth is so central to our faith that if you want to test any

other religion or cult, ask yourself, "What do they teach about Jesus? Was he God made flesh, or not?" That is the test of heresy. The glory that John saw in Jesus was the shining out into the darkness of the world of the eternal glory of the Word of God.

Furthermore, it was the "glory of the only begotten Son of the Father." Sons oftentimes look like their fathers, and sometimes you can tell much about a father just by meeting his son.

I never had the privilege of meeting Dr. R. A. Torrey, the founder of the Church of the Open Door, in Los Angeles, and the founder of the Bible School of Los Angeles (now Biola University). Dr. Torrey was an associate of D. L. Moody, and was one of the great Bible teachers of the past generation. He died while I was yet a baby, but I met his son one day. I took a picture of him and had a conversation with him. Everyone who knew both the father and the son were in agreement that the son looked exactly like the father; that the timbre of his voice, his expressions, his personality, reflected his father. Because I knew his son, I have always felt that somehow I knew Dr. R. A. Torrey.

That is what John is saying here: the glory that he saw in Jesus was the exact reproduction of the glory of the Father, because the Son reflects the Father. (John is going to come back to that at the end of this section.)

Thirdly, John gives the specific nature of that glory. What was that glory that shone in Jesus, which everyone saw as they came in contact with him? We do not have to guess. John tells us exactly: "He was full of grace and truth." Grace and truth -- that is the glory of God.

There are many definitions for grace. Someone has defined it as "that which God does within you, without you." I have always liked the acrostic that defines grace: God's Riches At Christ's Expense -- G-R-A-C-E. Perhaps the simplest definition of all is that grace is "the generosity of love." Grace is love giving itself. The greatest evidence of grace in the Bible is contained in the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," {John 3:16}. That is grace: Love giving itself.

Truth is the manifestation of reality, the unveiling of what is actually there, the stripping off of all the illusions, veils, shams, phoniness, the facades, and getting down to what is actually there. Jesus was full of both grace and truth. He was the ultimate revelation of what is really there in life; and he is the fullest expression of love giving itself, pouring out, reaching out to others. That is the glory that John saw in Jesus.

These words relate back to Verse 4, to the words, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Grace and truth are really nothing more than life and light. What is life if it is not love? Life at any level is a revelation of the love of the Creator, the giving of the Creator to his creatures, the sharing of his life with them. We have come to understand that love is an absolute necessity for human beings. We cannot function without it. Those who are deprived of love, either by circumstances or by their own mis-choices, lose the capacity to perform, to live, to do anything; they huddle in a corner, or they assume a fetal position, unable to do anything, because love is life. Grace, therefore, is the source of life.

And what is light if it is not truth? Light is the comprehension of reality. Have you ever said, "I wish I had more light on this subject"? By that you mean, "I wish I understood it better; I wish I saw more clearly what was there." Truth is light. The glory within the tent of Jesus was grace and truth, life and light; and in him it was full; he was "full of grace and truth."