

## BIBLE SERIES: **"EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"**

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### **JOHN 1 – THE PREEXISTENCE OF JESUS CHRIST AS THE WORD**



We start in the New Testament where the apostle John begins Jesus' biography—in a moment when time, matter, and energy as we know it *didn't exist*. Only two Divine Beings existed—God and the Word.

We read, "In the beginning was *the Word*, and the Word was *with* God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning *with* God. *All things* were made *through Him*, and *without Him nothing* was made that was made...and the Word *became* flesh and *dwelt* among us" (John 1:1-3, 14).

*Expositor's* explains, "The use of *logos* implies that John was endeavoring to bring out the *full significance* of the *Incarnation* to the Gentile world as well as to the Jewish people. He does not adopt the Greek concept in its entirety, but he uses this term to indicate that Jesus had universal rather than local significance and that he *spoke* with ultimate authority. He was *preexistent*, involved in the *act of creation*, and therefore *superior to all created beings*. This presentation lifts Christ above the materialistic, pagan concept of deities just as the Incarnation brings the Hebrew concept of God into everyday life. The preposition '*with*' in the phrase 'the Word was with God' indicates both *equality* and *distinction* of identity along with association. The phrase can be rendered 'face to face with.'"

What kind of relationship did the Word and God (the Father) have? John 1:18 tells us, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten *Son*, who is in the *bosom* of the *Father*, He has *declared* him."

John uses this same expression of being in the "bosom" of someone later on. John 13:23, 25 says, "Now there was leaning *on Jesus' bosom* one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved... Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast..." It thus means having a warm, intimate relationship with another person.

*Expositor's* explains, "'*At the Father's side*' is substantially the *same* expression as that used in John 13:23 concerning 'the disciple whom Jesus loved,' who 'was reclining next to him.' It shows *intimate association*, which *presupposes close fellowship*. As the *confidant* of the Father, Jesus is peculiarly qualified to act as the *intermediary* who can carry the knowledge of God to men. The word translated 'is' is more accurately rendered 'being,' since it is a present participle. This implies *constant relationship and presupposes a pre-incarnate existence*."

Jesus Christ later adds, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the *glory* which I had with You *before* the world was" (John 17:5). *Barne's Commentary* notes, "There could not be a more distinct and clear declaration of the *pre-existence of Christ* than this. It means before the creation of the world; *before there was any world*. Of course, the speaker here must have existed then, and this is *equivalent to saying that he existed from eternity*. The glory which he had then was that which was proper to the Son of God, represented by the expression 'being in the bosom of the Father' John 1:18, denoting intimacy, friendship, united felicity." Besides revealing the basic relationship between God the Father and the Word, who later became the Son, there is something else shown—the *absence* of a third person. Since this is the section that best describes who existed in the beginning, it would be inconceivable to leave out a third member of the God family—if he in fact existed.

*Matthew Henry's Commentary* adds, "In respect of *essence* and *substance*; for *the Word was God*: a distinct person...for he was *with God*; and yet the same in substance, for he *was God*, Heb. 1:3. In respect of *complacency* and *felicity*; there was a glory and happiness which Christ had *with God* before the world was, and the Son was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his Father's bosom, and no less the Father's delight, the Son of his love."

"These passages show," writes Herbert W. Armstrong, "that the Word, in the beginning—before ANYTHING had been created—was with God, and he, also, was God. Now how could that be? There might be a man named Smith, and John might also be Smith because John is the son of Smith, and Smith is the family name. Yet they are two separate persons. The only point of difference in that analogy is that the Word, at the time of John 1:1, was not, yet, the Son of God. But he was *with* God, and he also was God. They were not yet Father and Son—but *they were* the God KINGDOM! That family is composed, now, of God the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, and many begotten humans who already, NOW, are begotten sons of God (Rom. 8:14, 16; 1 Jn. 3:2), forming the Church of God" (*Mystery of Ages*, pp. 42-43).

So the Word became "the Son" and God became "the Father" only when Mary was impregnated by the

Holy Spirit and had Jesus Christ, thus becoming “Immanuel” or “God with us” (Mt. 1:23).

Now, how did the Word create all things? He carried it out through the instructions of God the Father. Notice Heb. 1:1-2, “God...has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...*through whom also He made the worlds.*”

Mr. Armstrong notes, “Ephesians 3:9: ‘...God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.’ Let me explain. In the first week in January, 1914, I was sent by a national magazine to Detroit, Michigan, to interview Henry Ford to obtain material for an article on his sensational new \$5-a-day wage policy. I saw Henry Ford in the administration building, wearing a business suit with white collar and necktie. Then I looked across the breezeway into the giant factory and I saw perhaps thousands of men in overalls, working at machines powered with electrical energy. Mr. Ford was called the *maker* of the Ford car. But he made the cars *by* these workmen, who used the power of electricity and machines.

“In the same manner, God the Father is the Creator. But he ‘created all things by Jesus Christ.’ Jesus is the Word. It is written, ‘He spoke, and it was done’ (Ps. 33:9). God tells Christ what to do (John 8:28-29). Jesus then speaks, as the workman, and the Holy Spirit is the POWER that responds and does what Jesus commands” (op. cit., pp. 43-44).

So in these first five verses, we have gone back to a moment in eternity when only God and the Word existed. Afterwards in time, we go on to the creation of the angels and the physical universe (Job 38:4-7).

Through modern technology, astronomers are able to detect the “echo” of that initial explosion of space, time and matter, called “the Big Bang.” It appears all the universe is expanding and its origin can be traced back by various means to some 14 billion years ago when *matter* came into existence. Astronomer Robert Jastrow admits, “The answers provided by the astronomers are disconcerting and remarkable. Most remarkable of all is the fact that *in science, as in the Bible*, the world *begins* with an act of creation” (*Until the Sun Dies*, 1977, p. 19).

Astronomer Stephen Weinberg adds, “In the beginning there was an explosion. Not an explosion like those familiar on earth, starting from a definite center and spreading out to engulf more and more of the circumambient air, but an explosion that occurred simultaneously everywhere, filling all space from the beginning, with every particle of matter rushing apart

from every other particle” (*The First Three Minutes*, p. 5). They add this explosion came *out of nothing*.

From that remote past, John brings us forward to some 2,000 years ago--to the birth of Christ. He says: “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and *the world was made through Him*, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own [the Jews], and His own did not receive Him [in general]. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:4-13).

So becoming a child of God is a process that *begins* with baptism and receiving God’s spirit, but it only *finishes* by entering the kingdom of God at the time of the resurrection and becoming a spirit being.

John now explains what the Word came to do: “And the Word *became 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” (1:14).

It’s important to clear up that when the Word “became flesh,” this is technically called the “incarnation” or the act of being made flesh. It should not be confused with “reincarnation” which is a Hindu belief that at death, a person begins a new life “in the flesh” of a human or of another creature.

When it says the Word “dwelt among us,” the Gk. term is *skenu*, which means “pitch a tent or to dwell temporarily.” *Expositor’s* comments: “This is the basic statement of the Incarnation, for Christ entered into a *new* dimension of existence through the gateway of human birth and took up his residence among men. He left his usual place and accepted the conditions of human life and environment, with the attendant temporal limitations that all humans experience...As the preexistent Son of God, he was the Creator of the world and the Executor of the will of the Father. As the incarnate Son of God, he exercised in his human existence these same powers and revealed effectively the person of the Father.

“The writer indicates that he is not speculating on a philosophical concept but is bearing witness to an

experiential reality. 'We have seen his glory' implies a personal observation of a new reality. Probably there is an allusion to the Transfiguration (Matt 17:2-8), when Jesus appeared with a divine radiance and the voice of God acknowledged him as his beloved Son. His incarnation was the full manifestation of grace and truth because it was the greatest possible expression of God's compassion for people and the most perfect way of conveying the truth to their understanding. The 'one and only Son' represents the Greek *monogenes*, which is derived from *genos*, which means 'kind' or 'species.' It means 'literally 'one of a kind,' 'only,' 'unique' (*unicus*), not 'only-begotten....The emphasis is on the thought that, as the 'only' Son of God, He has no equal and is able fully to reveal the Father.'" How inspiring is this truth!

John continues, "For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (1:17-18).

The first thing to notice here is the conjunction "but" is *not* in the Greek (better "and"). As *Harper's Commentary* says, "Conceivably, the giving of the law through Moses is to be construed as grace to which the grace (and truth) of Christ is *now added*."

Yes, Moses admirably did his part, but now it is the far superior Word that comes and directly reveals the full truth of who God is. Moses only saw God the Word's back but now it is the very Word who intimately knows the Father that comes to humanity to give His perfect example, die for their sins and fully reveal who is the Father and who is the Son.

When it says no one has seen God, it is referring to *God the Father*, which now the Son is going to fully reveal. This truth was not well known in the Old Testament, for it had not been the right time. But only when the Word descended from heaven was this understanding given. This further explains the enigmatic term "Elohim" (Gen. 1:1) referring to God in the plural yet usually with a singular verb. Most of the Jewish people rejected the revelation there are two eternal, intimate and loving Beings in the Godhead, and this truth was repudiated by the Jewish leaders and ultimately sealed Jesus' fate. Stephen was likewise killed when he declared there are two divine Beings in heaven. He said, "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and *Jesus* standing at the right hand of *God*, and said, 'Look! I see the heavens opened and the *Son of*

*Man* standing at the right hand of *God*! Then they cried out...and stoned him" (Acts 17:55-57). Although the world doesn't understand these precious truths, we do and our goal is to one day be part of that God family and forever enjoy an intimate relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

So John the Baptist was sent to bear witness to the coming Messiah and prepare the people to accept his coming through their baptism. Then, the time came to meet this Messiah and witness about Him.

We read, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me...And John bore witness, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven *like a dove*, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God" (1:29-34).

Consequently, John the Baptist received from God clear evidence of who would be the Messiah.

*Expositor's* notes: "The manifestation of the presence of the Spirit in Jesus' case was visible... Luke's Gospel preserves the testimony of eyewitnesses who reproduced the actual scene. The phenomena of the descent of the Spirit and the voice from heaven identified Jesus *unmistakably* as the predicted Messiah...John's avowal that he had seen the descent of the Spirit on Jesus and that he is the Son of God is the *climax* of his testimony."