

Exposition of John

Message #1

John 1:1-2

Today I need to introduce this book. I think it's best we start by asking and answering 5 questions.

Question #1 - Why are we studying this book?

I'll give you 5 reasons why we are studying this book.

Reason #1 - This book is part of the Word of God.

Reason #2 - This book is a prelude book to the Church age and is a critical book for the Church.

Reason #3 - This book clearly and carefully describes the doctrine (Biblical teaching) of eternal life and thoroughly explains what is necessary for a person to have eternal life.

Reason #4 - This book teaches the reader the truth of who Jesus is.

The most critical question in life also demands the most precise answer. True doctrine versus false doctrine most often hinges on this very question that Jesus asked His disciples in Matthew 16:15 *"but who do you say that I am?"* If you get Jesus wrong, you miss out on life.

Reason #5 - This book is designed to produce and develop faith in Jesus, the only one who can provide eternal and abundant life.

Question #2 - Who wrote this book?

According to 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21, Acts 3:25; 28:25, the author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit used human authors, including their vocabulary, literary style, and personal characteristics to record words selected by God so that Scripture is written by man, but it is a product of God. The evidence points to the apostle John, the brother of James and son of Zebedee, as the penman of this book.

Question #3 - When was this book written?

There is no date specifically given within the text, but all the commentators who I read to research this will agree that the logical conclusion is that John wrote this as an old man sometime between A.D. 85 and A.D. 100. At large, the Church has historically concluded John wrote this later in life. The best internal evidence I would like to provide to confirm this is found in John 18:10 and 21:18-23. If Peter had already died when John began writing, John would certainly be in his later years of life as well, potentially anticipating his own death due to his age (John 21:23).

Question #4 - Who is this book written to?

This book is written to whoever God, in His sovereignty, chooses to have read this book.

Question #5 - How does this book begin?

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” John 1:1-2 ESV

This is what we learn immediately in the opening sentences of John’s gospel.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN THE ETERNAL GOD.

There are 4 statements made in these two verses that clearly defend that Jesus has always been the eternal God.

Statement #1 - In the beginning there was eternally existing “the Word.” **v.1a**

What does he mean by the beginning? When God created the heavens and the earth. The opening words of this book read exactly like book of Genesis. John, having grown up a devout Jew, knowing the Hebrew Scriptures, would not have begun his book like this on accident. He knew what he was doing by referring back to what Moses wrote, *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”* John doesn’t start with the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry like Mark. John doesn’t start with the beginning of Jesus’ earthly life like Luke. John doesn’t start with Jesus’ earthly lineage like Matthew. John knows that Jesus’ story is back to beyond the beginning.

There is something perplexing about the opening sentence of the Bible. In Genesis 1:1, we see a perplexing word used to describe and name God. The Hebrew word is *Elohim*. This word is strange because it’s a plural noun. The first time God is mentioned in Scripture is in a plural form, not singular. Now what’s more perplexing is the next Hebrew word. The verb *bara* is the Hebrew word that translates into English as “created,” and it is a singular verb. We find in the opening verse of Scripture a plural God performing a singular action. What is difficult about this is that the overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that God is one. Deuteronomy 6:4 says *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” ESV*. How can God be one God, doing singular creative actions, and yet still be plural? I believe John explains in the opening of his book.

John says that in the beginning there *was* the Word. That word *was* is key because in Greek, it is written in the imperfect past tense. What that means is that the Word John is describing has no timeline. In the beginning, this Word had already and always continually forever before been the Word that it is. This Word never had a beginning. This Word is fully and completely eternal. This Word is not measured by any sort of time. This Word has always existed.

John breaks down the perplexing issue of the plural nature of God (*Elohim*) by explaining that there is more to God than you might think. There is more than one Person within the one God of the Bible. John then builds from this first statement to help clarify what he is communicating.

Statement #2 - This Word was eternally in fellowship with God. **v.1b**

John continues with this phrase “the Word.” This time he says this Word *was with* God. Again, the verb *was* describes a perpetually never changing existence that had no beginning. Now John clarifies that this Word *was with* God. This idea of *with* means there is and always has been an eternal communion and perfect fellowship between the Word and God. There is unity between the two.

Because the Word is described as being with God, we have to conclude that there is a distinction in some way between the two.

Statement #3 - This Word was eternally God. **v.1c**

John takes it one step further. He prefaced this statement by saying that there is a distinction between the two, but now he clarifies the equality and unity between the two. The Word was God.

This is the third time we see the verb *was* and it is still in the imperfect past tense. The Word John is describing forever always was and forever continues to be God. What!? This explains the plurality of God that Moses wrote about in Genesis 1:1.

Now, in the Greek manuscripts, there is no article “the” before the noun God. Some religious camps would say that we can render this in English to say “and the Word was *a* God”, but not *the* God. Now that makes sense in English, but Greek Grammar rules are not the same as English. I’ll use the words of Pastor David Thompson, who actually knows what he is talking about with Greek: “When the article “the” is used in Greek, it specifies and particularizes. However, when there is no article what is stressed is the character and quality of everything something is. In English, an article or lack thereof tends to make something more or less important. That is not true in Greek. In Greek, an article stresses one thing and a lack of an article stresses another thing. Now this text literally may be understood this way - ‘and the character and quality of all God continually was and is, the Word.’ ”

This Word cannot be a God while not being the God. There is only one God. There is no possibility for another to be a God. Deuteronomy 4:39 makes this very clear: “*know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other*” *ESV*. If the Bible teaches there is the God and there is another God that is a God, then the Bible is contradicting itself.

Statement #4 - This Word is an eternal Person who was with God in the beginning. **v.2**

What is a word? Well, the simple understanding of a word is that it is the communication of a thought. If I want you to know what I am thinking, the best way to communicate my thoughts to you would be to tell you through the use of words, whether spoken or written. The Bible claims to be the Word of God, and I believe it is. I believe the Bible is God’s communication to man. The Bible tells man what God thinks. But there is more to this Word than meets the eye.

I want to take a minute and show you why I think John chose to use this phrase “the Word.” Look at Hebrews 11:3. “*By faith, we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible*” *ESV*. Now go back to Genesis 1. Look at verse 3. “*And God said, ‘let there be light,’ and there was light*” *ESV*. Look at verse 6, “*And God said.*” Verse 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, and 26 “*And God*

said". God spoke the universe into existence. The Word of God made all things. God was silent, and He was thinking. When He wanted to reveal His thoughts, He spoke and by His Word, He made everything that is.

In the Bible, there is a Person who is called the Word of God. We see that in Revelation 19:13, and we see it here in John 1:2. The personal pronoun "he" is used to define who the Word is. John has been referring all this time to a Person. This Word is a Person. He is an eternal Person. He is a Person that has no beginning or ending. He is a Person who has always been in unity with God. He is a Person who is eternally fully God and yet is distinct from the Father. He is a Person who was with God in perfect fellowship from all eternity in the beginning.

This eternal God is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. As we continue to study this book that fact will become plainly evident. We are talking about Jesus. What we have learned here today about Him is this:

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN THE ETERNAL GOD.